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Stefanos Chasapoglou

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Betreut von / Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Claudia Rapp

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Andreas Külzer

Mitbetreut von / Co-Supervisor:

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1. Introduction

Scope and objective of the present thesis, terminology and definitions

The present doctoral dissertation “Comparative economies: patterns of trade and communication in Byzantium 641 – 741 / 1025 – 1095” intends to give answers concerning the background, nature and evolution of trade and communication during times of political and financial crisis. Both periods under research were characterised by critical internal and external developments that significantly affected the empire. The present study analyses the patterns that connect the geopolitical developments with the evolution of trade and communication and in which way and to what extent these elements were influenced by and adapted to the changes that affected the empire.

The choice for undertaking a comparative study on the subject of trade and communications in Byzantium was initiated by the noticeable longevity of this state with a history spanning from the fourth to the fifteenth century thus offering a versatile historical development. The fundamental transformation of the seventh and eighth century evoked a decisive retrenchment in terms of political geography and a deep shift in terms of urban, economic and social geography while the turning point of the eleventh century, although starting initially as economic development in a status of peace and geopolitical expansion, was soon transmuted into a territorial contraction and a temporary, although peculiar, economic recession.

It is beyond doubt that recent research has significantly enriched the data regarding trade and communication in the Byzantine world. The results either led to a better understanding of Byzantine history as a whole and helped to explain in detail phenomena within a limited chronological frame. What has not yet been attempted is an analysis that cuts across time and compares different regions. This is what this dissertation hopes to contribute. A comparative approach to different eras can broaden the knowledge of economic structures and mechanisms in general. Thus, in the title of the thesis, the term “comparative” specifies the parallel study of two critical periods in the course of Byzantine history giving the opportunity to examine the adaptability of trade and communication to conditions dictated by internal and external factors. Such a working method will allow us to gain a “birds-eye view” over these complicated issues that are also present in the modern world.

Geographical boundaries

The geographical regions analysed in the present work are coastal regions that allow the investigation of maritime trade in connection with overland routes. We focus on a) those described by J. Koder as the “core areas” or “heartlands” (*Kerngebiete*) of the Byzantine empire, namely the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea and b) the region of the Caucasus. The latter was added to the present analysis because of

its immediate proximity to the Black Sea and its function as bridge between the Mediterranean and the Asian steppes. The coastal regions of Thrace up to the Danube Delta, the northern coast of Asia Minor and the southern coast of the Crimean peninsula are the core areas of the Black Sea. The Aegean Sea, with its sixty continuously inhabited or habitable islands, the western shores of Asia Minor, the eastern parts of mainland Greece and the Peloponnese and the southern parts of Thrace and Macedonia are the core areas of the Aegean Sea. The Aegean is connected with the Black Sea through the straits of the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmara and the straits of the Bosphorus. The continuous possession of these two “heartlands” from the Byzantine state was a prerequisite for its existence. If any of the these broke away then the entire geopolitical unity of the eastern Roman empire was under jeopardy (maps 1 and 2).¹

From these “heartlands” the coastline with its hinterland have been selected as survey areas following the conclusions of the Dumbarton Oaks symposium with the thematic “Trade and markets in Byzantium” that has settled three tiers of trade: 1. local trade defined as a one-day transit time, or within a radius of less than c. fifty kilometres by land or the distance of one day’s sailing, to a maximum of two or three day’s travel on foot; 2. the regional level of trade delineated between three and ten days of travel or by a distance between 100 and 300 kilometres. Regional trade involves professional traders, whereas local trade is still partly or mostly in the hands of the local producers themselves; 3. interregional trade that connects two different regions, systematically coterminous or not, each having a radius of 100 to 300 kilometres. This tier of trade is often, although not always, international; on the contrary regional exchanges might cross over political boundaries.² The survey areas³ in the present thesis are falling within the limits of the first two tiers of trade, namely the local and the regional, at a maximum distance of c. 100 kilometres from the respective shore as the crow flies. It is self-evident that (inter)regional or even international trade fairs examined in this study extend beyond these limits. Furthermore, geomorphology has been taken into consideration since some coastal areas are virtually cut off from their hinterland because of the relief while others have unhindered access to the inland.

The present study does not include the so-called “economic region of Constantinople”, that is the region of the Byzantine capital and its hinterland, a definition first given by N. Oikonomides.³ This decision was based on the fact that the economy of (middle-Byzantine) Constantinople was inevitably (and one could say obviously) the first to draw the attention of modern scholarship especially after the

¹ KODER, Χώρος, 18—22.

² MORRISSON, Introduction, 4—5.

³ OIKONOMIDES, Economic region, 221—223; KÜLZER, Ostthrakien, 226—228; BELKE, Bithynien, 305; MANGO, Introduction, 1—6; for the ideological aspect see indicatively, MAGDALINO, Outside world, 149—162.

discovery of the Book of the Eparch and the lively discussions it has generated.⁴ On the contrary, the provinces, rather neglected until the last decades of the twentieth century and / or (often) examined under the “standard” motif of late antique crisis, “Dark Age” decline and “arrested development” after the ninth century create a more fertile ground for the examination of patterns of communication and trade.⁵

Periodisation

The selection of the two periods in the present thesis has been based on their significance not only for the Byzantine state itself but also for the entire eastern Mediterranean. Both periods witnessed profound geopolitical changes that (re)shaped the map of Byzantium and its neighbouring regions with long-term consequences. The year 641 is often used as a symbolic mark for the end of (late) antiquity in many levels including the extinction of the ancient Persian state, in its Sassanid realisation, and the definite fall of the Graeco-Roman Middle East at the hands of a polity with a new religion and culture in consequence of the Arab invasions. In the conquered regions of Syria, Palestine and Egypt a certain degree of continuity under the Umayyads can be clearly traced at least until the end of the seventh century. However, the results of the Muslim conquest were felt in the *longue durée*, setting the stage for the events of the second period under research, that is the years 1025 – 1095. In the first four decades of this period, Byzantium reached one of its apogees in territorial, military, economic and cultural terms. A period of crisis followed, reaching its debacle between 1071 and 1085. The last decade of this period witnessed the restructuring of the state apparatus and the reorganisation of the crumbling economy including the establishment of a new numismatic system. In 1096, the warriors of the First Crusade made their appearance in Byzantine territory on their way to Syria and Palestine, the regions that had been lost from Christian hands to the Muslims almost five centuries earlier. Thus, a new era was rising that would reshape profoundly the eastern Mediterranean in the centuries to come. In this respect the year 1095 is a suitable chronological limit.

However, a further elaboration concerning periodisation is necessary. The majority of the written sources, namely historical works and chronographies, were composed by the educated elite of Constantinople and as such they centred primarily, if sometimes not exclusively, on the capital and its surrounding region. The provinces are mentioned only in conjunction with military operations and

⁴ Book of the Eparch (KODER). For the secondary literature until 2010 see the modern Greek rendition with commentary, Book of the Eparch (KOLIAS – CHRONE), 304–328.

⁵ For the Byzantine province see indicatively, SVORONOS, Βυζαντινή επαρχία, 57–79; NEVILLE, Provincial society, 165–167; ANAGNOSTAKIS, Byzantium and Hellas, 16–29; KONTOGIANNIS – UYAR, Communities, xix – xxix; see also the various contributions in: Transformations of city and countryside in the Byzantine period, ed. BÖHLENDORF-ARSLAN – SCHICK; also, NIEWÖHNER, Introduction, 1–6.

diplomacy. This trend changed gradually during the closing decades of the eleventh century because of political and social developments that will not concern us here. On the contrary, hagiographical sources and archive material offer a more “decentralised” view of Byzantium being a treasure trove of information on various aspects of provincial life. Therefore, it can be argued that the periodisation of Byzantine history is based on the predominating Constantinopolitan world view that came down to us.⁶ In the present thesis it will be argued that each area under scrutiny, or even micro-area, had its own peculiar features that determined its character and development in the long run.

The evidence

The sources for the study of trade and communications, or the economy in general, in Byzantium pose several challenges. With the exception of legislation and acts of the administration there is a lack of primary sources, for example account books or commercial contracts, and when these are available, their nature is often circumstantial. The same goes for the references made on the economy in general (and as a matter of fact on trade in particular) by the Byzantine historiographers coupled with the Constantinopolitan orientation of their works. Within this context it is an irony of fate that the majority of primary evidence, mainly in the form of monastic archives, that has come down to us originates from the provinces of the Byzantine state.

With the above-mentioned in mind, the combination of written and material evidence is self-evident for the study of communications and trade (and economic history in general). The sources can be further distinguished in:

1. Written sources: Inscriptions, archival collections and legislation, along with historiography, epistolography, hagiography, toponymy and travelogues.⁷
2. Material evidence: Byzantine archaeology has made great steps forward providing a continuously updated corpus of archaeological finds: Sunken ships, excavations on land, mostly undertaken in urban spaces, and field surveys in rural areas with their respective findings, such as amphorae, glass products, metal work, coins and lead seals.⁸

⁶ For a general overview of the historiographical sources see, HUNGER, *Βυζαντινή λογοτεχνία* II, 13—29; for the period 641 – 741, BRUBAKER – HALDON, *Iconoclast era*, 168ff., and for the period 1025 – 1095, ANGOLD, *Πολιτική ιστορία*, 21—28; NEVILLE, *Provincial society*, 168—180.

⁷ For a general overview see KARAYANNOPULOS – WEISS, *Quellenkunde*, 65 ff. see also, SHEPARD, *Introduction* IV, 76—95; McCORMICK, *Byzantium on the move*, 3—29. KAPLAN – KOUNTOURA-GALAKI, *Economy and society in Byzantine hagiography*, 389—418; SARADI, *The city in Byzantine hagiography*, 419—452.

⁸ MORRISSON, *Introduction*, 5—7; KODER, *Handelsgüter und Verkehrswege*, 15—21; SCHOLKMANN – KENZLER – SCHREG, *Archäologie*, 52ff.; OLSON, *Environment and society*, 62—65; DECKER, *Dark ages*, 66—68, 150—153; IZDEBSKI, *Rural economy*, 109—115; IDEM, *Vormoderner Staat*, 47—66, 85ff.; MORRISSON, *Βυζαντινό νόμισμα*, 104—105.

As far as the middle Byzantine period, is concerned its earlier phase (c. 641 – c. 800) is much less well documented than the later one (c. 800 – 1204). In general, ceramics, manufactured products and the material evidence of state supervision in the economic life, namely coins and seals, are continuously in use. For the periods in question here, the first one from 641 to 741 is poor in written and rather rich in material evidence thanks to the important progress made by Byzantine archaeology in the last decades. For the years between 1025 and 1095, the evidence is much more ample both in written and material form. Archaeological finds are very rich thus contributing to a more complete picture. Nevertheless, for both periods in question, selected evidence from later periods has been taken into consideration to fill in the gaps.

Defining “patterns”, “communication” and “trade”

A clarification on the terms used in the title of the thesis is needed, since they are the focus of this work. The term “patterns” designates the main field of research, namely the relation between political developments and the following economic aspects: a) the re-adjustment of communication and trade routes, b) the response of the market and c) the response of the state in terms of administration, fiscal policy and legislation. “Trade” is used as a synonym of “commercial exchange”; “communication” refers to a range of means with the aim to bring into contact two or more subjects. These means can include private or diplomatic correspondence via official or unofficial channels, trade, exchange of personal or diplomatic gifts of various forms etc. Therefore, communication will be studied mainly in its relationship with trade activity. In particular, geopolitical changes altered the traditional network of sea and land communication as some routes were contested or blocked for centuries and made necessary the establishment of alternative channels, which can be traced also by archaeological finds. Byzantium benefited from its *θαλασσοκρατία* (thalassocracy, i.e., “control of the seas”) although its domination was seriously challenged by the Arabs during the first period and from the Turks in the beginning of the second one.⁹

Some issues of theory and methodology: from the “Pirenne thesis” to the present work

The interwar period brought a radical change in historiography. Until that time the reconstruction of the past was perceived as a presentation of historical events in an “ordinal” continuous way based on the close scrutiny of the primary sources. Inevitably, this historiographic method was dictated by the need to settle at a first stage the historical foundation before any further discussion and research. However, it served and concurrently was necessitated from the rising nationalist movements after the

⁹ See indicatively, KISLINGER, *Ruhm der Rhomania*, 43—52; IDEM, *Reisen und Verkehrswege*, 348—358 with older bibliography.

period of Enlightenment that encouraged and indeed resulted to the emancipation of many ethnic groups, leading to the creation of the modern nation-states.

With the end of the First World War, the ideological concerns and shifts it brought and under the influence of the Marxist thought a new methodology concerning the study of the past began to gain prominence. It combined written and archaeological evidence, while focusing on the stories and histories of the “common folk” and their daily life. In other words, society, state structures and economy were attracting the interest of scholars. The first pioneer was Henry Pirenne. Moving away from the traditional narrative history and scrutinising the written and material evidence for information on economy and society he came to a series of conclusions that would shape until today the study of the European Middle Ages. According to Pirenne, the unity of the Mediterranean world did not break up with the Germanic conquest of the West. Political, economic and cultural relations between the eastern Roman empire and the successor states of its former western part continued until the end of the seventh century. It was the Arab conquest of Byzantine Africa in 700 that initiated the dismantling of this Mediterranean unity, since the new enemy came in direct contact with the core territories of western Europe. The gradual retreat of Byzantine authority from its occidental possessions and especially Italy, deprived the Pope from his natural protector and ally, the emperor of Constantinople, leaving him with no other choice than to crown Charles I (Charlemagne) of the Carolingians as Emperor of the Romans in 800. The empire of Charlemagne had now its centre of gravity to the north where an emerging economy and society was taking the reins from the southern Mediterranean world of the Merovingians (map 1). Thus, the Middle Ages begun and for Pirenne it was “therefore strictly correct to say that without Mohammed Charlemagne would have been inconceivable”.¹⁰

The establishment of the journal *Annales d'Histoire Economique et Sociale* (today *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*) in 1929 by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch systematised the new principles for the study of history. The focus of attention was shifted from “traditional” factual history to the social and economic developments while gradually integrating geography and climate as critical components for the reconstruction of the past. The scholarly publications of both Febvre and Bloch manifested the new methodology. The *Annales* School continued to exercise its influence in the decades after the Second World War by producing scholars such as Georges Duby, Fernand Braudel and Jacques Le Goff while influencing the historical thinking of others such as Carlo M. Cipolla.¹¹

¹⁰ Pirenne developed his argumentation throughout his monograph, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*. Paris 1937. English translation, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, London 1939. Chapter III “The beginnings of the Middle Ages”, 236—285 sums-up the evidence presented in the previous parts of the book. The key-phrase that in reality is the conclusion of Pirenne’s academic research is in page 234.

¹¹ The introduction of Bloch’s *La Société Féodale*. Paris 1939, encapsulates much of the theoretical background of the *Annales* School, see p. 15—21 of the Greek translation, M. BLOCH, Η φεουδαλική κοινωνία. Athens 1987.

With all its merits and flaws, the Annalistic approach did not reach Byzantine studies until the end of the Second World War. The founders of the *Annales* although acknowledging the tremendous impact of the Arab conquest of the Graeco-Roman Middle East assumed (perhaps *ex-silentio*) that since the Roman imperial structure of Byzantium remained more or less intact the same would have happened with its economy and society. These remained somehow “rigid” until the middle of the fifteenth century. Pirenne was the only one to incorporate Byzantium into his historical analysis, however after him the Eastern Empire was marginalised since the main historical periods in the focus of the *Annales* School were the (western) European medieval and early modern ones. This was an obvious (and maybe inevitable) choice because the archival material allowed detailed scrutiny and the extraction of valuable information on a series of topics such as environmental conditions, issues of social stratification and gender, political developments at a local scale and so on. It suffices to say that the respective archival material that has survived from the eleven centuries of Byzantine history corresponds to only a fraction of the western medieval one.

However, during the 1950s it became obvious that Byzantine studies had to take the next step in order to answer questions beyond the traditional historiography. Dionysios Zakythinos and Helene Antoniadis-Bibicou, both receiving their doctoral titles from Sorbonne were among the pioneers of the “Byzantine branch” of the *Annales* School. Dionysios Zakythinos introduced the concept of historical geography in Greece in the early 1960s while Antoniadis-Bibicou was the first to extensively combine written and material evidence to produce her monograph on customs and customs officers in Byzantium. Zakythinos’ students took the Annalistic approach further; Angeliki Laiou and Nikolaos Oikonomides to social and economic history, Anna Avramea to historical geography, the first to study systematically the geography, environment and settlement patterns of a specific region of the eastern Roman empire, in this case Thessaly. Several of their works can be found across the footnotes in the following pages. In the meantime, Herbert Hunger had already announced the establishment of the *Tabula Imperii Byzantini* (*TIB*), the voluminous series dedicated to the historical geography of the Byzantine empire during the 1100 years of its existence. The *TIB* along with its parallel series established the Vienna School of Byzantine Studies to its current high standards that are internationally recognised and used as an exemplar for similar publications around the world.¹²

During the last decades, an entire new gamut of analytical methods and tools coming from the natural and technical sciences are at the historians’ disposal. They range from dendrochronology and palynology that allow us to accurately trace patterns of habitation and exploitation of the natural environment, up to the (digital) mapping of economic and social networks based on written and

¹² “<https://tib.oeaw.ac.at/history> (07.09.2022)”

material evidence, for example combining epistolography with the dispersion of settlements across a certain region. During the entire Byzantine period people were one the move carrying with them objects, ideas and even pathogens. Again, the Viennese School has placed itself at the forefront of these new, exciting and extremely useful *Hilfswissenschaften* which are also used and referenced in the following pages.¹³

The present doctoral thesis is the intellectual child of the aforementioned approaches and methods. Its author was trained in his early student years in the Annalistic environment of a small, forward-thinking Department of History based at a peripheral Greek university. Its primary focus was on late medieval, early modern, and contemporary social and economic-maritime history. Further lessons were attended on the field of economic geography and geopolitics. Many influences of this early academic education are discernible in what follows. The principles of traditional historiography are also present and used in a way that helps to understand the main theme of this dissertation, namely the patterns of trade and communication during perhaps the two most critical periods of Byzantine history. Primarily the present work could be characterised as a study of *historical geography centred on communication and trade*. Its purpose is to track as close as possible the geoeconomic developments in time and space at a regional and local level. The author has also tried to touch upon matters by postulating new hypotheses, questions and their answers.

Some clarifications on the appendix of this work are needed. In the first part I have arranged a list of maps to help the readers to orientate themselves in the (micro)world(s) of Byzantium. For reasons of uniformity and practicality, I have restrained myself to the use of two tools: the digital map viewer of the *TIB* project and the digital map of the *DARMC* project. Both are useful research tools, especially the *TIB* map viewer that has incorporated the already existing printed maps of the volumes published so far. The second part of the appendix contains two inventories of lead seals of the (*genikoi kommerkiarioi* / *basilika kommerkia*). The first inventory covers the years 641 – 741. The three most recent studies dealing with the office of *kommerkiarios*, and its clerks have been used and as such this inventory is not an original work.¹⁴ A short reference is given to the catalogue or publication of their first appearance and analysis. The inventory for the period 1025 – 1095 is an original work: all the available catalogues and studies were researched, and the lead seals were put into a chronological order. They are accompanied by references and bibliography.¹⁵

¹³ The plenary sessions of the twenty-fourth International Congress of Byzantine Studies include a number of very interesting papers on the matter see indicatively, VIONIS, Interdisciplinarity, 121—140; IZDEBSKI, Climate history, 177—190; PREISER-KAPPELLER, Symplike and Complexio, 393—422.

¹⁴ BRANDES, Finanzverwaltung, 517—557; RAGIA, Apothekai of Asia Minor, 227—236; EADEM, Apothekai of the Balkans, 109—112; MONTINARO, Commerciaires byzantines, 444—533.

¹⁵ The seals of both periods have been cross-checked whenever possible with the exemplars kept in the Systematic Library of Photographs on Byzantine Sigillography (*Systematische Photothek*) in the Department of Byzantine Research

To return to the first part of this section, I subscribe to Pirennes' view that without Mohammed there would be no Charlemagne. However, this conclusion has only a partial relation to the political and economic developments in the Byzantine heartlands. In the region of the Black Sea and the Aegean, the imperial administration and its representatives had to deal with a critical change of circumstances. The shrinkage of trade in terms of quantity and quality, the disturbance of various land- and sea communications routes across time and space even with a "phase difference", the transformation of the late antique *poleis* into the (heavily) fortified *poleis-kastra* already during the sixth century, the lack (or conversely the inflationary abundance) of coins as a medium of exchange and so on.¹⁶ For reasons already explained, Constantinople stays as much as possible out of the picture on the following pages. The more or less distant provinces have their own story to tell, a theme that I have touched upon in my postgraduate thesis¹⁷ and hopefully will be able to continue to research in the future. My main geographical manual has been the various volumes of the (V)TIB along with other works of historical geography. Where these were not available I have tried to resketch the Byzantine past from other secondary works together with digital and satellite imagery.¹⁸ Across the present work I develop specific arguments on a small scale since the lack of evidence does not allow any concrete postulations. I can only hope that even these theoretical hypotheses have their own merit and that with the rest of the theses formulated, this dissertation will contribute further to the discussion of communication, trade and economy in Byzantium. *And now it is time to begin.*¹⁹

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¹⁶ John Haldon has dedicated most of his academic research in the study of the so-called "Dark centuries" of Byzantium. His (perhaps) final conclusions on the subject can be found in HALDON, *Empire*, 283—294. For the eleventh century see, ANGOLD, *Πολιτική ιστορία*, 41—54.

¹⁷ STEFANOS CHASAPOGLOU, *Between the frontier and the hinterland: the history of Western Macedonia (1018 – 1204)* (in Greek). Athens 2013.

¹⁸ For the present realities and future challenges on the research of the historical geography of Byzantium see, POPOVIC, *Race against time*, 191—210.

¹⁹ John Scylitzes (4, 59 THURN). John Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, 3.

2. The historical context

2.1 The years 641 – 741

The heirs of Heraclius

Heraclius died in February 641 at a point when all his efforts to arrest the Arab advance seemed to have failed.²⁰ Until September 641 the issue of his succession dominated the political scene. The short reign of his son from his first marriage with Eudokia, Constantine III (February – May 641),²¹ and of his second son Heracleonas, under the regency of his second wife and niece Martina, (May – September 641)²² witnessed culminations of a clash between supporters of the rights of Heraclius' sons from his first "legitimate" marriage and those centred on Martina and her sons. In the end, the first group prevailed and Constantine III's son, Constans, was elevated to the throne.²³

Constans II (641 – 668)²⁴ governed with the assistance of the senate during the early years of his reign.²⁵ He coped successfully with two rebellions²⁶ before turning his attention to Armenia, where he campaigned against the Arabs and their local supporters between 650 / 651 and 653.²⁷ A significant event of his reign was the emergence of the Arab threat at sea, where the emperor was personally engaged in the naval battle of Phoenix (655).²⁸ Although the Byzantines were soundly defeated, the outbreak of civil war among the Arab leadership led to the signing of a treaty in 657 / 658, permitting the emperor to launch a successful campaign against the Slavs of Thrace and Macedonia in an attempt to re-open the *Via Egnatia* to Thessalonike (658).²⁹ The Arab-Byzantine treaty was renewed in 660 / 661,³⁰ but with the resumption of the Arab offensive from 663 onwards it became obvious that their

²⁰ Theophanes (341, 11—13 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 27 (76, 4—10, 13—15 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 109, 16 (163, 132—137 WAHLGREN); Zonaras XIV 17 (215, 17—216, 28 BÜTTNER—WOBST). John of Nikiu, 178; Sebeos, 99; HALDON, Seventh century, 51.

²¹ PmbZ, I, n. 3701 Konstantinos III.

²² PmbZ, I, n. 2565 Heraklonas. KAEGI, Heraclius, 106—107; PmbZ, I, n. 4842 Martina.

²³ Theophanes (341, 24—28 DE BOOR), Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 111, 1—2 (164, 2—5 WAHLGREN), John of Nikiu, 197—198, Sebeos, 104, Michael the Syrian, Chronicle, 126, MAKSOUDIAN, History of Armenia, 101. HALDON, Seventh century, 52; STRATOS, Έβδομος αιώνας, Γ', 213—220.

²⁴ PmbZ, I, n. 3691 Konstans II.

²⁵ HALDON, Seventh century, 54; STRATOS, Έβδομος αιώνας, Δ', 15—16.

²⁶ Theophanes (342, 4—20, 343, 2—5, 14—16 DE BOOR); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 112, 1 (164, 6—165, 11 WAHLGREN); Sebeos; 106, Paul the Deacon 49 (136, 26—137, 4 BETHMANN – WAITZ). STRATOS, Έβδομος αιώνας, Δ', 17—20, 66—73; PRINGLE, Byzantine Africa, 46—47; CHRISTIDES, Byzantine Libya, 40—42.

²⁷ Sebeos, 134—142. STRATOS, Έβδομος αιώνας, Δ', 34—38; GREENWOOD, Armenian neighbors, 342.

²⁸ HALDON, Seventh century, 55; STRATOS, Έβδομος αιώνας, Δ', 55—62; CHRISTIDES, Naval engagement, 1340—1342; COSENTINO, Constans II and the Byzantine navy, 586—593.

²⁹ Theophanes (347, 5—7 DE BOOR). DAPERGOLAS, Σλαβικές εγκαταστάσεις, 78—79.

³⁰ Theophanes (347, 16—18, 361, 9—13 DE BOOR); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 112, 5 (166, 27—31 WAHLGREN); Zonaras XIV 19, 19 (219, 14—16 BÜTTNER—WOBST). DÖLGER – MÜLLER, Regesten, n. 228b; LILIE, Reaktion, 68—69.

ultimate goal was the strategic isolation of Constantinople from the army corps of Asia Minor – as the incursions of that time indicate.³¹

At the same time, the emperor was attempting to resolve once and for all the religious conflict within the state. Officially, Monothelitism remained the only true and accepted dogma of the Church, but in the West, - both in Italy and North Africa - it was encountering widespread rejection.³² Constans decided that the best way to solve the entire problem would be an official prohibition of any discussion concerning the natures of Christ. The issuing of the *Typos* in 648, which prohibited further discussions about the Will or Energy of Christ, met with fierce resistance in the West.³³ As a result, Pope Martin I and the prominent theologian Maximus the Confessor were arrested and exiled.³⁴

Following these events, Constans II proceeded to secure the throne for his children by ordering the murder of his younger brother Theodosius.³⁵ This action led to general discontent among the population of the capital,³⁶ forcing him (or giving him a good pretext for such a thing) to implement his plans to move the seat of government to Italy. This decision was primarily motivated by the relative stability in Asia Minor due to the ongoing civil war inside the Caliphate, although after the final victory of Muawiya the annual raids resumed (662 / 663).³⁷ Pertinent too were the emperor's intentions to reorganize the defence and administration of Italy and North Africa against the Lombard³⁸ and especially the Arab threat,³⁹ but imperial ideology was also at work at a deeper level: a tendency to imitate his glorious grandfather Heraclius as an emperor active on the various fronts of war persuaded him to leave Constantinople in 661 / 662 and arrive at Taranto about a year later.⁴⁰

The stay of Constans II in Italy appears as a historical event insufficiently documented in the Greek sources⁴¹ that can only be evaluated from its results. He campaigned against the Lombards with moderate success, paid an official visit to Rome, where he was received by Pope Vitalian with full

³¹ LILIE, Reaktion, 68—77; TODT – VEST, Syria, 161; HILD – HELLENKEMPER, Kilikien und Isaurien, 44; HILD – RESTLE, Kappadokien, 71.

³² HALDON, Seventh century, 49, 56—57.

³³ ACO II 1 (368, 1—388, 31, 404, 1—420, 10 RIEDINGER); Idem, Akten der Lateransynode, 152—154; ZOCCA, Due Papi, 140—147; RAVEGNANI, I Bizantini in Italia, 110.

³⁴ Theophanes (344, 16—17, 347, 7—14, 21—23 DE BOOR); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 112, 4 (165, 25—166, 1 WAHLGREN); Ioannes Zonaras XIV, 17 (217, 13—218, 8 BÜTTNER—WOBST); Liber Pontificalis LXXVI, IV—VIII (337, 7—338, 21 DUCHESNE). HALDON, Seventh century, 56—59; WINKELMANN, Die östlichen Kirchen, 107—110; BRANDES, “Juristische Krisenbewältigung”, 163—173, 199—200, 205—207, 209; STRATOS, Ἐβδομος αἰώνας, Γ', 104 ff; McCORMICK, Origins, 483—488.

³⁵ PmbZ, I, n. 7797 Theodosios.

³⁶ STRATOS, Ἐβδομος αἰώνας, Δ', 199—206.

³⁷ LILIE, Reaktion, 68 ff.

³⁸ RAVEGNANI, I Bizantini in Italia, 114—115.

³⁹ CHRISTIDES, Byzantine Libya, 37—43; PRINGLE, Byzantine Africa, 43—47.

⁴⁰ KAEGLI, Muslim expansion, 171; McCORMICK, Origins, 71—73; CORSI, La spedizione italiana, 117.

⁴¹ Theophanes (347, 25, 348, 3—6 DE BOOR); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 112, 6 (166, 31—33 WAHLGREN); Ioannes Zonaras XIV 19 (220, 19—221, 4 BÜTTNER—WOBST). Latin sources: Liber Pontificalis LXXVIII, II—IV (343, 6—344, 1 DUCHESNE); Paul the Deacon V 6 (146, 16—18 BETHMANN – WAITZ); Michael the Syrian, Chronicle, 132.

honours⁴² and finally moved to Syracuse, where he established his headquarters,⁴³ but in the long term these actions were to no avail. It seems that later, when he ordered that his wife and children join him in Sicily, and with the Arabs in front of the walls of Constantinople, certain circles among the army and the aristocracy decided on his violent replacement.⁴⁴ He was murdered in September 668 and an army officer called Mezizios was instantly acclaimed emperor. This state of affairs lasted for about seven months, ending with the arrival of military forces from the exarchate of Ravenna, who captured and executed the usurper.⁴⁵

Constantine IV (668 – 685)⁴⁶ is known for dealing successfully with the first Arab siege of Constantinople (spring – summer 668) that was repulsed largely through the use of “Liquid Fire” (Υγρὸν πῦρ), an inflammable mix of crude oil, naphtha and other ingredients, which was ejected in the direction of enemy vessels through a *siphon*, a tube constructed of, or clad in, bronze.⁴⁷ After their victory, the Byzantines regained the initiative with a series of successful campaigns and battles from c. 672 onwards, culminating in a Byzantine victory over the Arabs in 678. A treaty between the empire and the Caliphate was duly signed,⁴⁸ to be renewed again in 685.⁴⁹ In the West, Constantine declared a “unilateral peace” (Δεσποτική εἰρήνη) with the Lombards (c. 680) whose exact terms are unknown though they confirmed the territorial *status quo* and probably prepared the ground for the convention of the Sixth Ecumenical Council.⁵⁰

Given the importance of naval control, the impact of the first siege of Constantinople on the organisation of the Byzantine navy is of great interest. It centres upon the establishment and evolution of an imperial fleet, generally known under the term *Καραβισιάνοι* (*Karabisianoï*). The Greek word *Κάραβος* means a (light) ship. Thus it could be suggested that the term *Κάραβος* (-οι) refers to a fleet as a structured force, while *Καραβισιάνος* (-οι) may simply refer to troops supplied by, or transported

⁴² STRATOS, Ἐβδομος αἰώνας Δ', 221—223; CORSI, La spedizione italiana, 148—166.

⁴³ STRATOS, Ἐβδομος αἰώνας Δ', 223—224; CORSI, La spedizione italiana, 166.

⁴⁴ KAEI, Muslim expansion, 182—184; STRATOS, Ἐβδομος αἰώνας, Δ', 226; JANKOWIAK, First Arab siege, 316.

⁴⁵ Theophanes (351, 13-352, 9 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 33 (84, 13-15 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 112, 7 (166, 35—39 WAHLGREN); Zonaras XIV 19 (221, 5—14 BÜTTNER—WOBST); Liber Pontificalis LXXVIII, IV (344, 1—7 DUCHESNE); Michael the Syrian, Chronicle, 133; Paul the Deacon V 6—12; (146, 16—151, 7 BETHMANN – WAITZ). HALDON, Seventh century, 60—63; WINKELMANN, Zum Byzantinischen Staat, 179; CORSI, La spedizione italiana, 167—209; HAHN, Mezezius, 62, 70; STRATOS, Ἐβδομος αἰώνας, Δ', 263—273; Idem, Ἐβδομος αἰώνας, Ε', 13—19; LEONTSINE, Κωνσταντῖνος Δ', 220, 222—223.

⁴⁶ PmbZ, I, n. 3702 Konstantinos IV.

⁴⁷ EICKHOFF, Seekrieg und Seepolitik, 21—23; LEWIS, Naval power, 60—61. For the latest developments in the research relating to “Liquid Fire” see HALDON, “Greek fire” revisited, 290 pp.

⁴⁸ JANKOWIAK, First Arab siege, 238—289; DÖLGER – MÜLLER, Regesten, n. 239; BEIHAMMER, Urkundenwesen, n. 284; LEONTSINE, Κωνσταντῖνος, Δ', 229—232; STRATOS, Ἐβδομος αἰώνας, Ε', 51—52.

⁴⁹ Theophanes (363, 1—14 DE BOOR); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 114, 1 (170, 1—4 WAHLGREN). HALDON, Seventh century, 64, 69; LILIE, Die byzantinische Reaktion, 99—106; DÖLGER – MÜLLER, Regesten, n. 253; BEIHAMMER, Urkundenwesen, n. 253; STRATOS, Ἐβδομος αἰώνας, Ε', 53, 58.

⁵⁰ Theophanes (356, 2—5 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 34 (86, 31—35 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 113, 5 (168, 32—35 WAHLGREN). DÖLGER – MÜLLER, Regesten, n. 240; LEONTSINE, Κωνσταντῖνος Δ', 235—240; STRATOS, Ἐβδομος αἰώνας Ε', 54—56.

by, ship; indeed, it may refer to soldiers who fought from ships, the latter being the usual and more logical interpretation, given the nature of the information provided by the sources.⁵¹ We may assume that the *Karabisianoι* were a central fleet based in the capital and other naval stations across the empire.⁵² Local naval commands were additionally established in the region of the southern Aegean, namely, that of *Ἑλλάς* (*Hellas*) and also that of the *Κυκλάδες νῆσοι* (*Kyklades Nesoi*) and the *Κιβυρραῖοι* (*Kibyrriaioi*) in southern Asia Minor,⁵³ where the Arab threat was imminent. Their zone of responsibility possibly extended from the straits between south-eastern Peloponnese and Crete to the waters of Rhodes and Cyprus.

The success in the war with the Arabs was overshadowed by the appearance and establishment of the Bulgarians inside the empire. After a failed attempt to repulse their attacks (680), Constantine recognized in a treaty (681) the establishment of an independent state with expansionist policies on Constantinople's doorstep that would define the Balkan policy of the empire in the centuries to come. The fluctuating relationship between the two states would have important implications within the field of trade and communications as well.⁵⁴

In his religious policy the emperor adopted a completely different approach from his predecessors. With respect to the political and religious reality of his time, he decided to end the theological strife that had plagued the state for almost fifty years. The Sixth Ecumenical Council, held in Constantinople from November 680 to November 681, condemned the doctrines of the Single Energy and the Single Will, and their instigators and supporters were anathematized. The unity of the Church was restored, and the emperor was saluted as a “new Marcian” and “new Justinian”.⁵⁵

By contrast, his actions to safeguard the throne for himself and his son Justinian caused an outcry. Under his orders, his two younger brothers were mutilated and the officers of the army who tried to secure their interest to the throne were arrested and executed.⁵⁶ Despite these events, the last

⁵¹ Liber Pontificalis 90, 5 (390, 9—11 DUCHESNE). BRUBAKER – HALDON, Byzantium in the iconoclast era, 724 – 725 and footnote 4, 730.

⁵² CONSENTINO, Constans II and the byzantine navy, 601—603; ZUCKERMAN, Learning from the Enemy, 117—118, 123—124; AHRWEILER, Byzance et la mer, 22—31.

⁵³ HELLENKEMPER – HILD, Lykien und Pamphylien, 117—119; HILD – HELLENKEMPER, Kilikien und Isaurien, 45—46; AHRWEILER, Byzance et la mer, 31—33.

⁵⁴ Theophanes (356, 18—359, 25 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 36 (88, 1-90, 29 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 113, 6 (168, 32-16, 52 WAHLGREN); Zonaras XIV (226, 16—228, 9 BÜTTNER—WOBST). HALDON, Seventh century, 66—67; FERLUGA, Byzanz auf dem Balkan, 4—5; RUNCIMAN, First Bulgarian empire, 3, 26—27; ZIEMANN, Vom Wandervolk zur Großmacht, 143ff., 160—167; DÖLGER – MÜLLER, Regesten, n. 244a; LEONTSINE, Κωνσταντῖνος, Δ', 241—244; STRATOS, Ἐβδομος αἰώνας, Ε', 102ff.

⁵⁵ ACO II 2, 1 (210, 15—18 RIEDINGER); ACO II 2, 2 (702, 11—12, 750, 3—4, 798, 10—11 RIEDINGER); Theophanes (359, 25—360, 7 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 37 (90, 1—92, 10 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 113, 7 (169, 52—55 WAHLGREN); Zonaras XIV 21 (225, 18—226, 15 BÜTTNER—WOBST); Liber Pontificalis LXXXI, III—XV (350, 4—354, 15 DUCHESNE). HALDON, Seventh century, 67—68; WINKELMANN, Die östlichen Kirchen, 110—112; LEONTSINE, Κωνσταντῖνος, Δ', 161 ff.

⁵⁶ LEONTSINE, Κωνσταντῖνος, Δ', 53—54; STRATOS, Ἐβδομος αἰώνας, Δ', 135—139.

years of his reign were marked by relative domestic stability. Constantine IV died in September 685, leaving the throne to his son.⁵⁷

Justinian II (685 – 695)⁵⁸ was an energetic but at the same time unstable personality, a combination that would have significant implications at a later stage. He exploited the favourable geopolitical situation around the empire in order to stabilize the state's borders. At the Balkan frontier, he undertook an expedition against the Bulgarians and the Slavs in the regions of northern Thrace and central Macedonia (687 / 688), achieving the main objective of securing the *Via Egnatia* between Constantinople and Thessalonike.⁵⁹ On the eastern front, it seems that the Byzantines violated the terms of the treaty of 686 / 687,⁶⁰ taking the offensive from 688 onwards and thus giving the Arabs a good excuse to return hostilities in 692 / 693.⁶¹

In his domestic policy he paid -as his predecessors had done- considerable attention to religious affairs, assembling the Quinisext or Trullan Council in 692, which dealt with a variety of ecclesiastical issues,⁶² the most significant being the authority and traditions of the seats of Rome and Constantinople and their relationship. In a series of canons, the council made clear the liturgical differences between the Churches of the East and the West, especially in declaring their equality in all matters excepting the date of their establishment.⁶³ The papacy of course rejected the canons of the council in their entirety. Justinian's response was to arrest the pope and bring him to trial in the capital, but the population of Rome moved against the Byzantine official sent to deal with the matter.⁶⁴ The emperor was not able to cope with this challenge of his authority for at the end of 695 he was deposed from the throne, since his popularity already suffered from his harsh fiscal policies.

Justinian's successor was one Leontius,⁶⁵ formerly a patrician and *strategos* of the *Anatolikoi* army. Leontius had been imprisoned for a time after being accused of conspiracy, and finally rebelled while preparing to embark on a flotilla to take over his duties as *strategos* of *Hellas*. He was proclaimed emperor in 695, and with the help of the senate and the palatine troops he arrested Justinian and his

⁵⁷ Theophanes (352, 10—23, 360, 18-20, 361, 15—16 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 37-38 (92, 10—2 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 113, 2 (167, 8-12 WAHLGREN); Zonaras XIV 21 (228, 6—9 BÜTTNER—WOBST); Michael the Syrian, Chronicle, 134. HALDON, Seventh century, 68—69; WINKELMANN, Zum byzantinischen Staat, 179.

⁵⁸ PmbZ, I, n. 3556 Iustinianos II.

⁵⁹ Theophanes (364, 10—18 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 38 (92, 5—9 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 114, 2 (170, 7—9 WAHLGREN); Zonaras XIV (239, 9—240, 1 BÜTTNER—WOBST). SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 78; ZIEMANN, Vom Wandervolk zur Großmacht, 180—182; DAPERGOLAS, Σλαβικές εγκαταστάσεις, 80—82.

⁶⁰ DÖLGER – MÜLLER, Regesten, 253a; BEIHAMMER, Urkundenwesen, n. 295.

⁶¹ Theophanes (365, 7—21 DE BOOR). HALDON, Seventh century, 71—72; LILIE, Reaktion, 108—111; Theophanes Confessor, 509—510. For the coinage see GRIERSON, Catalogue of coins II, 574—577 with relevant tables.

⁶² STRATOS, Ἐβδομος αἰώνας, ΣΤ', 58—60.

⁶³ ACO II 2, 4 (24, 1—25, 12, 39, 9—17 OHME). WINKELMANN, Die östlichen Kirchen, 112—113; STRATOS, Ἐβδομος αἰώνας, ΣΤ', 57—58, 60.

⁶⁴ Liber Pontificalis LXXXVI, VII—IX (373, 5—374, 9 DUCHESNE). STRATOS, Ἐβδομος αἰώνας, ΣΤ', 61—64.

⁶⁵ PmbZ, I, n. 4547 Leontios.

subordinates. The latter were executed, and the emperor was mutilated and banished to Cherson, only to return to Constantinople and reclaim the throne a few years later.⁶⁶

“Sons of anarchy”

The years that followed (695 – 717) were characterised by continual instability inside the empire, and in particular by constant mutinies by the army leading to the overthrow of successive emperors. There is a broadly persuasive scholarly consensus regarding the causes and results of this instability. It seems that the combination of external pressures (such as the almost continuous Arab invasions from the 640s onwards, the loss of North Africa, and the Lombard expansion in Italy) and internal factors such as the absence of an incumbent imperial dynasty together led to the disintegration of the political order. There was already a background of military unrest which had been building up since the end of the reign of Heraclius, but the ruling dynasty had been able to suppress the insurgents.⁶⁷

Leontius (695 – 698) seems to have been a popular ruler - and certainly an energetic one - but the recovery expedition he launched against Carthage, recently conquered by the Arabs (697), turned against him. The soldiers of the *Kibyrrhaiotai* fleet rebelled while waiting for orders at Crete, and proclaimed their own commander, Apsimar, as emperor. Constantinople was besieged for some months before being taken whereupon Leontius was captured, mutilated and exiled.⁶⁸

Apsimar, - taking the imperial name of Tiberius - became his successor (698 – 705). His governance saw the continuation of the Arab incursions in Asia Minor despite an offensive campaign undertaken by his brother Heraclius. There is no evidence about domestic policy except for the restoration of Constantinople's seawalls in anticipation of any external threat.⁶⁹ In the meantime, Justinian - who had ever come to terms with his fate - escaped Cherson. With Bulgarian assistance, he managed to infiltrate Constantinople, caught Tiberius and his supporters by surprise, and established himself again as emperor.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Theophanes (367, 12—369, 30 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 39 – 41 (94, 1—98, 42 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 114, 1, 4—6 (170, 1, 171, 30—172, 61 WAHLGREN); Zonaras XIV 22 (231, 14—233, 10 BÜTTNER—WOBST). HALDON, Seventh century, 73—74; WINKELMANN, Zum Byzantinischen Staat, 179, STRATOS; Έβδομος αιώνας, ΣΤ', 77—82.

⁶⁷ KAEGLI, Military unrest, 182—185, 208; WINKELMANN, Zur byzantinische Staat, 217—218.

⁶⁸ Theophanes, (369, 31—34, 370, 18—371, 9 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 41 (98, 15—100, 34 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 115, 3—5 (173, 9—20 WAHLGREN); Zonaras XIV 23 (234, 7—235, 4 BÜTTNER—WOBST). HALDON, Seventh century, 74—75; STRATOS, Έβδομος αιώνας, ΣΤ', 90—91, 94—96; PmbZ, I, n. 8483 Tiberios II. (III.) Apsimar.

⁶⁹ HALDON, Seventh century, 76; STRATOS, Έβδομος αιώνας, ΣΤ', 100—106.

⁷⁰ Theophanes (371, 14—19, 372, 26—375, 28 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 42—43 (100, 1—104, 77 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 116, 1—5, 117, 1—3 (174, 1—175, 28, 175, 5—176, 14, 19—27 WAHLGREN); Zonaras XIV 24 (236, 10—238, 16 BÜTTNER—WOBST). HALDON, Seventh century, 76—77; STRATOS, Έβδομος αιώνας, ΣΤ', 125 ff.

Justinian II's second reign (705 – 711) was something approaching a period of terror inflicted by the avenging ruler, combined with developments in religious policy which culminated in the visit of Pope Constantine I to Constantinople early in 711, and his meeting with the emperor at Nicomedia.⁷¹ This important visit, - it would be last by a pontiff, - is attested in detail (though without any reference to its results) only in the *Liber Pontificalis*, while Theophanes and Nikephoros make no reference to it at all, indicating that from the Byzantine point of view Rome was no longer such a central element of the empire. As far as the results of this visit are concerned, it seems that the outcome was the partial acceptance by the pope of the rules of the Quinisext Council, and in exchange the renewal of the privileges of the Roman Church.⁷² Some months later, Justinian II's second reign came to an end with the rebellion of a fleet sent on a punitive expedition against Cherson.⁷³ The once-exiled officer Bardanes, - now renamed Bardanes-Philippikos, - took charge of the mutiny and entered Constantinople, executing Justinian II and his son and becoming emperor soon after. The dynasty of Heraclius had finally come to an end.⁷⁴

Bardanes-Philippikos (711 – 713)⁷⁵ restored Monothelism as the official religious doctrine, again destabilising the relationship between Constantinople and Rome. In June 713, in the midst of a campaign against the Bulgarians who had invaded Thrace, the army of *Opsikion* mutinied, and Bardanes was deposed and blinded by a palatine official, Anastasios, who became the next emperor.⁷⁶

Anastasios II (713 – 715)⁷⁷ restored the Chalcedonian orthodoxy, thus also restoring relations with the Holy See, and took immediate measures to strengthen Constantinople's defences against an Arab attack; it was obvious that the Arabs were preparing for a second assault on Constantinople.⁷⁸ The measures included the commissioning of a fleet, with orders to destroy the enemy supply bases and deny them access to the forests of Lycia. The expeditionary force mutinied, however, returning to Constantinople, overthrowing Anastasios and replacing him with Theodosius, an unknown civil official who reluctantly accepted the promotion.⁷⁹

⁷¹ TODT, *Letzte Papstreise*, 24, 40—42; McCORMICK, *Origins*, 503—504; STRATOS, *Ἐβδομος αἰώνας*, ΣΤ', 144—146.

⁷² *Liber Pontificalis* 90, 5—7 (390, 12—391, 8). TODT, *Letzte Papstreise*, 43, 46—49.

⁷³ STRATOS, *Ἐβδομος αἰώνας*, ΣΤ', 167 ff.

⁷⁴ Theophanes (377, 22—381, 32 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 45 (106, 1—112, 105 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, *Chronicle* 117,5 (176, 19—27 WAHLGREN); Zonaras XIV 24, 25 (238, 8—239, 1, 240, 2—242, 17 BÜTTNER—WOBST). HALDON, *Seventh century*, 77—78; STRATOS, *Ἐβδομος αἰώνας*, ΣΤ', 181—188.

⁷⁵ PmbZ, I, n. 6150 Philippikos.

⁷⁶ Theophanes (382, 1—21, 383, 5—21); Nikephoros 46, 48 (112, 1—7, 114, 4—116, 22 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, *Chronicle* 118, 1, 3 (177, 1—6, 7—15); Zonaras XIV 26 (242, 18—244, 18 BÜTTNER—WOBST). HALDON, *Seventh century*, 78—80.

⁷⁷ PmbZ, I, n. 236 Anastasios II.

⁷⁸ LILIE, *Reaktion*, 124—127.

⁷⁹ Theophanes (383, 22—386, 19 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 49—51 (116, 23—118, 20 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, *Chronicle* 119, 1—6 (178, 1—179, 37 WAHLGREN); Zonaras XIV 27 (245, 1—247, 11 BÜTTNER—WOBST). HALDON, *Seventh century*, 80—82.

Theodosius III (715 – 717)⁸⁰ governed for only twelve months, achieving nothing more than the signing of a treaty with the Bulgarians in 716. He was replaced by Leo, general of the *Anatolikai* army, after being promised security for himself and his family.⁸¹

Rise of the Isauri

Leo III (717 – 741)⁸² was the most capable military officer of his time, thus making him an excellent choice to defend Constantinople from the second Arab siege (717 – 718). In August 717, the Arab fleet appeared in front of the walls of the capital, but the strategic use of “Liquid Fire” in combination with the defection of Christian crews from the Muslim fleet and the assistance of the Bulgarians turned the tide in favour of the Byzantines. In August 718, the siege was lifted⁸³ and the victorious imperial fleet went on the offensive, raiding the Nile Delta twice during the 720s. It is in this period that the naval forces of the empire acquired their final shape. As a result, the provincial fleets of *Hellas*, *Kyklades Nesoi* and *Kibyrrhaiotai* were re-established as naval *Θέματα (Themata)*, with their own territorial and recruitment bases. The final form was given to the structure of the Byzantine navy, which now consisted of the central fleet, - based in Constantinople and deployed as needed - and the thematical (provincial) fleets, with designated zones of responsibility and the primary task of patrolling the coastal waters and deflecting the Arab threat and occasional pirate activity.⁸⁴ This new structure would soon prove its value in 747, when a powerful Arab naval detachment was eliminated by the Byzantine fleet of the *thema Kibyrrhaioton*. After a century of intense naval warfare, the Byzantine *dromones* would dominate the sea for the next seventy years.⁸⁵

With the successful repulse of the Arab attack, Leo III turned his attention to domestic affairs. He is known for three major acts: the issue of the law codification of the *Ἐκλογή (Ecloga)* in 741; an extensive fiscal reform; and for initiating (but not officially establishing) Iconoclasm, the great religious, political and social strife that was to dominate the life of the empire for more than a century.

The *Ecloga* represented a revised and very much abridged version of the Justinianic codification, with an emphasis on issues relating property, inheritance and penal law. Its purpose was to provide the administration with a practical handbook and reference work rather than replace the

⁸⁰ PmbZ, I, n. 7793 Theodosios III.

⁸¹ Theophanes (386, 20—390, 26 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 52 (120, 1—24 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 120 (180, 1—12 WAHLGREN); Zonaras XIV 28 (247, 12—248, 9 BÜTTNER—WOBST). HALDON, Seventh century, 82.

⁸² PmbZ, I, n. 4242 Leon III.

⁸³ Theophanes (367, 1—397, 31 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 44, 47, 49—50, 52—54 (104, 1—24, 114, 10—14, 116, 1—5, 120, 1—124, 39 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 114, 1—4, 116, 1, 119, 1—3, 4, 120, 2, 121, 10—12 (170, 1—171, 29, 174, 2—3, 178, 1—11, 180, 2—6, 184, 8—185, 106 WAHLGREN); Zonaras XV (252, 9—253, 14). HALDON, Seventh century, 71—84; LILIE, Reaktion, 112—133.

⁸⁴ AHRWEILER, Byzance et la mer, 33—35; BRUBAKER-HALDON, Byzantium in the iconoclast era, 729—730.

⁸⁵ Theophanes (424, 3—7 DE BOOR). EICKHOFF, Seekrieg und Seepolitik, 31—38; LEWIS, Naval power, 66—70; ARHWEILER, Byzance et la mer, 36—37.

earlier codification,⁸⁶ but it nevertheless also introduced substantial changes, especially regarding the family and in the system and nature of punishment. The aim of this codification was to come to grips with the problems of Byzantine society and to address the changes which had taken place in terms of social ideas and morality since the sixth century.⁸⁷

The fiscal reforms initiated during the third and fourth decade of the eighth century are shrouded in ambiguity since the sources misleadingly tend to connect them with the iconoclastic policy of the emperor.⁸⁸ What becomes clear is that a census was carried out with the following objectives in mind: first, in order to update the tax register of the state so that the hearth tax of the *καπνικόν* (*kapnikon*) could be imposed;⁸⁹ and second, on a local level to ensure that the possessions of the empire would be able to defend themselves, as much as possible relying on their own financial resources.⁹⁰

Concerning religious affairs, at the beginning of the eighth century the conflicts inside the Byzantine state and society had come to an end, but with the rise of Leo III to the imperial throne the religious history of the empire entered a new phase. Recent scholarship has tended to re-evaluate the events that led to the establishment of the so called “Iconoclasm”. It seems that the emperor first made his thoughts clear on the issue after the great volcanic eruption of 726 on the islands of Thera and Therasia, interpreting this as a sign of divine wrath on account of the idolatrous practices of Christians. By the 730s, some of the clergy appear to have gravitated to this interpretation. As could be expected the papacy rejected the emperor’s declaration, thus initiating a period of tension between Rome and Constantinople, but by the beginning of the 740s it seems that good relations had been restored in the face of Lombard expansionism within Italy.⁹¹

The last major achievement of Leo’s reign was the defeat of an Arab detachment in Akroinon (741) in central Asia Minor by an army led by himself and his son Constantine. He died on June 18th 741, marking the end of a long period of transformation not only for the Byzantine state but also for the entire Mediterranean region as well.⁹²

⁸⁶ PIELER, Νομική φιλολογία, 316; TROIANOS, Quellen, 118—120.

⁸⁷ HALDON, Seventh century, p. 85—86; Ecloga, 1—4, 9—12; TROIANOS, Quellen, 120—126.

⁸⁸ BRANDES, Finanzverwaltung, 368—369.

⁸⁹ BRANDES, Finanzverwaltung, 379, 380.

⁹⁰ BRANDES, Schweigen des Liber Pontificalis, 131, 148—150.

⁹¹ BRUBAKER – HALDON, Byzantium in the iconoclast era, 89.

⁹² Theophanes (391, 3 ff. DE BOOR); Nikephoros 53 ff. (120 ff. MANGO); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 121 (180 ff. WAHLGREN); Zonaras XV 1 ff. (248, 10 ff. BÜTTNER—WOBST). HALDON, Seventh century, 84.

2.2 The years 1025 – 1095

The sins of the brother

With the death of Basil II, a period of uncertainty for the domestic affairs of Byzantium begins. It had its roots in the lack of a direct male successor. Basil II was never married, and his brother Constantine had three daughters. Two of these, Zoe and Theodora, were suitable for succession but were beyond childbearing age. Thus, when Basil passed away the empire faced a problem that was diametrically opposed to that after the death of Heraclius. In the latter case, there were a number of direct male heirs (albeit with conflicting interests) to ensure the continuation of the dynasty. In the case of the Macedonians, except for the elderly Constantine there was none.

This situation led to the formation of various factions that vied amongst themselves for influence and eventually for the throne itself. There were two principal groups: the first was centred on the rightful heirs, Zoe and Theodora. It staunchly supported the right of the Macedonians to the throne until the final days of Theodora's reign in 1056. But they were internally divided between the two sisters, as events would come to show. The other faction was that of the so called Paphlagonians (named after their place of origin), and their aim was to replace the ruling dynasty. The pivotal figure was John, who exercised influence from c. 1030 until 1041 / 1042. He dominated the political life of the empire and pursued a careful policy of establishing his own family. Ironically, he was subsequently persecuted by his nephew, the emperor Michael V, whom he had elevated to the throne. And so, the web of the family's supporters rapidly faded away leading to the overthrow of Michael V and to the end of the Paphlagonians as well.

Constantine VIII (1025 – 1028)⁹³ was a competent individual but at the same time insecure and uneasy at the slightest hint of disobedience.⁹⁴ He appointed people in his personal trust to the most important civil and military offices, and ensured the undisturbed collection of taxes including those suspended by his brother as a measure of relief for the poor.⁹⁵ Thus his subjects had to pay within three years the amount of taxation that would have counted for five, the wealthier and the church being the most burdened because of the *allelengyon* tax.⁹⁶ Subsequently, the *doux of Vaspourakan* Nikephoros Komnenos⁹⁷ was arrested and punished on the charge of conspiracy against the emperor, and his case was followed by a series of preventive measures against the most prominent members of the military

⁹³ PmbZ II, Konstantinos VIII., n. 23735. John Scylitzes (370, 21—22 THURN); Psellos II 1 (24, 1—6 REINSCH).

⁹⁴ John Scylitzes (370, 22—25 THURN); Psellos II 1—3, 6—9 (24, 4—26, 13, 27, 21—29, 6 REINSCH). JOHNSON, Constantine VIII, 225—232.

⁹⁵ John Scylitzes (370, 30—37 THURN); Psellos II 3 (25, 1—26, 13 REINSCH); Zonaras XVII 10, 1—11 (569, 7—571, 8 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

⁹⁶ John Scylitzes (373, 4—11 THURN).

⁹⁷ VARZOS, Γενεαλογία, 39—40 (n. 3).

establishment. These included the descendants of the old Cappadocian elite, including the Phokades, Bourtzai and the Kourkouai. Thus, Constantine VIII finished off the process that his brother had started after the rebellions of the 970s and 980s.⁹⁸

The emperor could be accused of paying insufficient attention to the crucial issue of his succession until the very last moment, but it seems that there was more at stake. Unfortunately, we lack details. The first candidate to marry the emperor's eldest daughter, Zoe, was the patrician Constantine Dalassenos, a member of a family favoured by Basil II. But other interests intervened, and the choice fell to the prefect of Constantinople, Romanos Argyros.⁹⁹

The rise and fall of the Paphlagonians

The new emperor (1028 – 1034)¹⁰⁰ came from a distinguished family. His first act was the abolition of the *allelengyon* and the reversal of the harsh policies of the past by releasing all debtors of the fisc from prison. He then compensated many church officials, made new donations to the Hagia Sophia, and reinstated many of his predecessor's victims.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, he provided remuneration to the peasants of Asia Minor through a year of bleak harvest so that they were able to stay on their properties.¹⁰² Nevertheless his balanced approach ran aground when a series of conspiracies (1029, 1032) came to light, centring on Zoe's younger sister Theodora, and implicating some of the most prominent generals and state officials. These included some of Basil II's former officers and members of the high clergy. Among the alleged plotters was John from Paphlagonia who held the office of *protonotarios*. The sources make it clear that initially he supported Theodora but later switched allegiance to Romanos III, receiving the office of *praipositos*. Most likely, he already had his own agenda.¹⁰³ All these movements were suppressed, and on the orders of her sister Theodora was confined in the nunnery of Petrion and later obliged to become a nun.¹⁰⁴

In the field of foreign affairs, the emperor followed an aggressive policy towards the emirate of Aleppo, campaigning against the city in the summer of 1030. The outcome was a disaster for the

⁹⁸ John Scylitzes (371, 54—372, 91 THURN); Psellos II 2 (24, 1—25, 32 REINSCH). ANGOLD, *Political history*, 28, 31; KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 155—157; CHEYNET, *Pouvoir* 39 (n. 26).

⁹⁹ John Scylitzes (373, 15—374, 42 THURN); Psellos II 9—10 (29, 9—30, 22 REINSCH); Zonaras XVII 10, 17—24 (572, 6—573, 14 BÜTTNER-WOBST). KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 157—158; VLYSIDOU, *Δαλασσηνοί*, 111—112.

¹⁰⁰ PmbZ II, Romanos III. Argyros, n. 26835; CHEYNET – VANNIER, *Argyroi*, n. 16.

¹⁰¹ John Scylitzes (376, 54—376, 76 THURN); Zonaras XVII 11, 1—5 (573, 15—574, 13 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹⁰² John Scylitzes (386, 65—73 THURN); Zonaras XVII 12, 14—19 (580, 10—581, 4 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, *Political history*, 31.

¹⁰³ John Scylitzes (376, 82—377, 4, 384, 12—15, 385, 41—45 THURN); CHEYNET, *Pouvoir*, 41—44 (nos. 31, 32, 34).

¹⁰⁴ John Scylitzes (385, 34—37 THURN); Zonaras XVII 11, 5—6 (574, 13—575, 2 BÜTTNER-WOBST); KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 158—160, 163.

Byzantines on account of misguided diplomatic and military handling.¹⁰⁵ The day was saved by the prominent *strategos of Telouch*, Georgios Maniakes,¹⁰⁶ and the *megas etaireiarches*, Theoktistos, who neutralized the threat from Aleppo and the Fatimid commanders in the region, thus compelling the Arabs in 1036/1037 to renew the treaty of 1001.¹⁰⁷

In the west, Byzantine activity in southern Italy and Sicily stagnated while the Muslim presence was revitalised. The Kalbites of Sicily joined forces with the Zirids of North Africa and turned against the empire. Between 1027 and 1035 they undertook a series of naval raids in the Adriatic and Aegean seas, which were repulsed.¹⁰⁸ This aggressive policy and Sicily's strategic importance convinced Constantinople to organise another expedition to reconquer the island.

The last period of Romano's III reign witnessed the establishment of the Paphlagonians on the throne. Originally of humble ancestry, they had moved to Constantinople where they made a fortune as shipbuilders and money changers, i.e., bankers. Thus, they belonged to the emerging socio-economic classes of the capital, which based their wealth on craft industries, trade, and banking activities.¹⁰⁹ The most distinguished member of the family was the abovementioned John¹¹⁰ a eunuch who had started his career as civil servant to Basil II. Around 1031 / 1032 he held the office of *praipositos* and, shortly thereafter, that of *orphanotrophos* or head of the imperial orphanage, and with this cognomen he has come down in history. His plan to take the throne was well-organised and executed. Two of his brothers - also eunuchs, Constantine (later *nobelissimos*) and George - were appointed to apposite positions. The third, Michael, entered the imperial guard. With Zoe's amorous tendencies in mind, John introduced him to the court. A love affair between the young man and the middle-aged empress began which was soon common knowledge in the palace.¹¹¹ Coincidentally or not, Romanos himself was preoccupied at this time by an illness of some description. His sister, Poulcheria, tried to bring the affair to her brother's attention, but to no effect, and members of her retinue were eliminated.¹¹² In Holy Week of 1034, and after an open assassination attempt, the emperor

¹⁰⁵ John Scylitzes (377, 13—18, 379, 75—381, 37 THURN); Psellos III 6—11 (34, 1—38, 16 REINSCH); Zonaras XVII 11, 9—12, 1 (575, 8—578, 2 BÜTTNER-WOBST); Yahya, 495—501. ANGOLD, Political history, 32; FELIX, Byzanz und die islamische Welt, 83—90; TODT – VEST, Syrien, 203—204.

¹⁰⁶ PmbZ II, Georgios Maniakes, n. 22262.

¹⁰⁷ John Scylitzes (381, 38—385, 34 THURN); Zonaras XVII 12, 13 (580, 6—8 BÜTTNER-WOBST); Yahya, 505—507. DÖLGER-WIRTH, Regesten I 2, n. 843; KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 163—164; FELIX, Byzanz und die islamische Welt, 90ff; TODT – VEST, Syrien, 204—205.

¹⁰⁸ EICKHOFF, Seekrieg, 383—385; LEWIS, Naval power, 194—195; PRYOR-JEFFREYS, Age of the δρόμων, 90; KISLINGER, Der Ruhm der Rhomania, 44—45.

¹⁰⁹ John Scylitzes (390, 71—77 THURN).

¹¹⁰ PmbZ II, Ioannes Orphanotrophos, n. 23371.

¹¹¹ John Scylitzes (369, 13—14, 389, 69, 390, 80—82 THURN); Psellos III 5 18—20 (32, 11—33, 20, 43, 2—45, 16); Zonaras XVII 13, 1—17 (581, 5—583, 11 BÜTTNER-WOBST). CHEYNET-VANNIER, Argyroi, n. 15.

¹¹² John Scylitzes (369, 67—370, 72, 86—88 THURN); Psellos III 21—25 (45, 16—48, 10 REINSCH).

succumbed to poisoning and died. Zoe immediately elevated Michael to the throne and married him on the same day, having bribed Patriarch Alexios and the clergy.¹¹³

Michael IV (1034 – 1041) - second husband of Zoe - was a man with political insight but who suffered from epilepsy. He thus invested John the *orphanotrophos* with broad powers which meant that the latter was now able to control the palace and the state apparatus.¹¹⁴ Recognising the fact that the elevation of a self-made family to the throne would provoke a reaction from the military elite, he undertook preventive measures, which indeed proved useful when a broad conspiracy was uncovered (1034). It centred on Constantine Dalassenos, already considered for the throne after Constantine VIII, and later placed under house-arrest on the orders of Romanos III. Dalassenos belonged to the new generation of the so-called Armeno-Paphlagonian group, which also included the Komnenoi and the Doukai. To strengthen ties within the group, Constantine Dalassenos married his daughter to Constantine Doukas and this alliance could hardly pass unnoticed by the central government. Consequently, Doukas was exiled along with Constantine Monomachos and others, and in fact both Doukas and Monomachos would later occupy the throne.¹¹⁵ A second plot in 1038 / 1039 resulted in the exile of the rest of the male members of the Dalassenoi.¹¹⁶

In the meantime, the emperor and principally John the *orphanotrophos* were continuing with their further designs to establish a new dynasty on the throne, gradually stripping Zoe of her retinue and special privileges, and appointing people in their trust to her private chambers.¹¹⁷ They also prioritised men from their birthplace, including their brothers, in filling the most important military posts.¹¹⁸ With the health of the emperor deteriorating, the powerful eunuch began to worry about the fate of his family and initiated the process of his brother's succession by persuading Zoe to adopt a nephew of theirs, also called Michael.¹¹⁹ The empress was convinced, and in an official ceremony that took place in front of the three “constitutional” bodies of the state (senate, army, and the *demoi*) she

¹¹³ John Scylitzes (390, 88—391, 8 THURN); Psellos III 26, IV 1—2 (49, 1—52, 21 REINSCH); Zonaras XVII 13, 17—14, 6 (583, 11—586, 11 BÜTTNER-WOBST). KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 164—165.

¹¹⁴ John Scylitzes (390, 74—77, 392, 17—18, 393, 54—57 THURN); Psellos III 22, IV 19 (46, 22—47, 16, 60, 1—61, 20 REINSCH); Kekaumenos (302, 7—28 LITAVRIN). ANGOLD, *Political history*, 56.

¹¹⁵ John Scylitzes (393, 31—394, 69, 396, 17—32 THURN); Zonaras XVII 20—25 (588, 13—10 BÜTTNER-WOBST). CHEYNET, *Pouvoir*, 45—46 (n. 38); ANGOLD, *Political history*, 56; KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 165—168.

¹¹⁶ John Scylitzes (404, 50—54 THURN). VLYSIDOU, *Δαλασσηνοί*, 113—115.

¹¹⁷ John Scylitzes (392, 17—25, 397, 64—398, 74 THURN); Psellos IV, 6 (53, 8 REINSCH); Zonaras XVII 14, 7—11 (586, 12—587, 6 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹¹⁸ John Scylitzes (390, 71—72, 395, 4—5, 397, 58—61 THURN); Zonaras XVII 14, 27, 15, 33—34 (589, 12—16, 595, 13—20 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹¹⁹ John Scylitzes (397, 63—64 THURN); Psellos IV 20—22 (61, 1—63, 19 REINSCH); Zonaras XVII 16, 1—10 (596, 1—597, 17 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

adopted Michael. With this act, the latter became connected legally with the House of Macedon and was bestowed the title of *caesar*.¹²⁰

In general, the internal domestic policy of the empire at this time was characterised by a rational approach, thanks to the firm administration of the eunuch John. Although the written sources tend to criticise his fiscal policy as injustice, it seems that its aim was to keep pace with the empire's overall economic development. John seems to have been a competent manager. Two examples can be given here. The first was the (re)imposition of the *aerikon*, a tax on domestic animals, whose liability pertained to the village community, the *koinotes choriou*, according to its wealth.¹²¹ The second example comes from the north-eastern Balkans. After a series of Petcheneg raids, the central government decided to appease the nomads by providing them with access to the commodities they needed. A series of fortified *emporion* along the Danube was thus supplied with cash and goods to facilitate trade in the region.¹²² Within this context, the government decided to abolish the provisions of Basil II which allowed the populations of the northern Balkans to pay their taxes in kind by converting them into cash obligations.¹²³

This initiative triggered the revolt of Peter Deljan (1040—1041). After his initial success, Deljan was compelled to share his authority with Alusjan, son of the last Bulgarian Tsar John Vladislav, who - after their brief collaboration - delivered him to the Byzantines, to whom he surrendered. Under the personal supervision of the emperor, the seceded regions now returned to imperial control. As a result of this expedition Michael IV's health worsened, and shortly afterwards he became a monk and died.¹²⁴

In the field of foreign affairs, the Paphlagonians continued the policy of preserving the acquisitions. The only exception was in the west, where the Arabs of Sicily fell into civil war. The Byzantines seized their opportunity and dispatched an expeditionary force under Georgios Maniakes and admiral Stephanos in 1038. At first, progress was rapid, but internal conflicts resulted in stagnation and finally defeat in 1042.¹²⁵ This was the last attempt of the empire to regain this strategically important island at the centre of the Mediterranean.

¹²⁰ John Scylitzes (397, 63—64 THURN); Psellos IV 23 (63, 1—64, 1 REINSCH); Zonaras XVII 16, 11—12 (597, 18—598, 4 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹²¹ KARAGIANNOPOULOS, Λεξικό βυζαντινής ορολογίας I, 79—80; HALDON, Aerikon, 138—139; OIKONOMIDES, Fiscalité, 80—82.

¹²² STEPHENSON, Balkan frontier, 82—89.

¹²³ John Scylitzes (412, 65—73 THURN); Scylitzes continuatus (162, 20—163, 2 TSOLAKES).

¹²⁴ John Scylitzes (414, 47—56 THURN); Psellos IV, 52—55 (78, 1—79, 6 REINSCH); Zonaras XVII 17, 38—45 (603, 17—605, 4 BÜTTNER-WOBST). STEPHENSON, Balkan frontier, 130—133; ANGOLD, Political history, 32; CHEYNET, Pouvoir, 49—52 (nos. 45, 46, 47, 51); KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 173—175.

¹²⁵ KISLINGER, Regionalgeschichte, 119—120; IDEM, Der Ruhm der Rhomania, 45—46; LEWIS, Naval power, 195—196; EICKHOFF, Seekrieg, 387—392; PRYOR – JEFFREYS, Age of the δρόμων, 77, 86; VANOLI, Sicilia musulmana, 184.

As mentioned already, Michael V (1041 – 1042) held the title of *caesar* at the time of his uncle's death. John the *orphanotrophos* persuaded Zoe to crown his nephew as emperor after the latter took an oath that he would continue to respect and obey her as his mother.¹²⁶ During the first months of his reign, the emperor followed a course that was favourable to the social classes of the capital from which he himself hailed, thus securing a wide acceptance.¹²⁷ Once he felt sufficiently confident, he revealed his true colours by sending John the *orphanotrophos* into exile, and elevating the other uncle of his, Constantine, to the high-ranking title of *nobelissimos* making him his closest advisor.¹²⁸ This move triggered no further alarm from the citizenry since the *orphanotrophos* had long been unpopular. At Easter of 1042, the ceremonial procession from the palace to the Hagia Sophia turned into a staged triumph for Michael, who then banished Zoe, ordering her tonsure.¹²⁹

His actions proved to be entirely miscalculated. The populace of Constantinople was enraged by the events and took arms against him and his relatives. The central prison in the Praetorium was stormed and the looting began. Patriarch Alexios and the senators, terrified by the events, recalled Theodora from the monastery of Petrion and crowned her empress.¹³⁰ Meanwhile, Michael reinstated Zoe and presented her in front of the crowd in the Hippodrome without success. The mob moved against the palace which fell after a short siege. The emperor and his uncle Constantine tried to seek asylum in the monastery of Stoudios, but they were extracted by force and blinded on the order of Theodora, although her sister thought to spare Michael's physical integrity.¹³¹

The reign of Michael V deserves a short comment. It is evident that he was intent on implementing the last stage of the long-term plan of his uncle, John the *orphanotrophos*, aiming to replace the two remaining female members of the House of Macedon with a new "Paphlagonian House", which would have as its primary base of support the rising social class of the various entrepreneurs of Constantinople.¹³² It can be observed that Michael IV and John were orchestrating their designs with caution and diligence. Michael V moved quickly to speed up the process, but the

¹²⁶ John Scylitzes (416, 58—74 THURN); Psellos V 1—5 (80,1—82, 8 REINSCH); Attaleiates (8, 22—9, 5 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVII 18, 1—9 (605, 5—606, 9 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹²⁷ John Scylitzes (417, 84—86, 95—10 THURN); Psellos V 16 (88, 1—8 REINSCH); Attaleiates (9, 5—14 TSOLAKES).

¹²⁸ John Scylitzes (417, 86—88 THURN); Psellos V 8 (82, 10—13 REINSCH); Zonaras XVII 18, 12—23 (606, 17—608, 15 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹²⁹ John Scylitzes (417, 4—418, 17 THURN); Psellos V 16 21 (88, 5—8, 90, 1—91, 11 REINSCH); Attaleiates (10, 1—27 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVII 19, 1—4 (609, 3—15 BÜTTNER-WOBST); VRYONIS, Byzantine Δημοκρατία, 303—308.

¹³⁰ Psellos V 23—39 (92, 1—96, 13, 99, 1—100, 12 REINSCH); Attaleiates (12, 5—13, 25 TSOLAKES).

¹³¹ John Scylitzes (418, 17—419, 47 THURN); Psellos V 47—50 (104, 11—105, 11 REINSCH); Attaleiates (13, 26—14, 15 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVII 19, 5—23 (610, 1—612, 17 BÜTTNER-WOBST); Kekaumenos (302, 29—304, 1 LITAVRIN). CHEYNET, Pouvoir, 54—55 (nos. 55—56); ANGOLD, Political history, 56—58; KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 175—178; TODT, Kaiserin Theodora, 146—147.

¹³² John Scylitzes (417, 4—10 THURN); Psellos V 16 (88, 1—10 REINSCH); Attaleiates (10, 1—21 TSOLAKES).

removal of the *orphanotrophos* proved fatal as it deprived the emperor of his natural proponents.¹³³ At the same time, a latent hostility between Zoe and Theodora had festered since the latter's exile to the monastery of Petrion (1032).¹³⁴ Amidst the atmosphere of turbulence, the supporters of Theodora decided to extract her from her confinement and proclaim her empress. It may be assumed that they were intent on trying to diminish the rights of her sister.¹³⁵ Eventually both survived the test, bolstered by their house's well-established dynastic legitimacy. As far as any real support that the Paphlagonians enjoyed amongst their own class, this is at least questionable. After all, the businessmen of the capital were indifferent as to who occupied the throne as long as he was pursuing a policy in their favour. The behaviour of subsequent emperors -many of them stemming from the military elite- would prove that the *nouveau riche* was a considerable force to be reckoned with.

Zoe and Theodora (April – June 1041) governed the state as *basileis autokratores* for two months but it soon appeared that the differences between the two sisters ran deeper than issues of governance.¹³⁶ As a result Zoe, though in her seventies, took the initiative and sought a suitable husband for the third time. After a brief search she recalled from exile and married Constantine Monomachos, who took over the state's administration.¹³⁷

“Belle époque” and crisis

The new emperor (1042 – 1055) was descended from an old aristocratic family of the capital. A ruler who was harshly judged by many of his contemporaries as being languid and unreliable, he represented the true spirit of the times in which he ruled - times of euphoria and prosperity - while yet still trying to cope with pressing needs that arose.¹³⁸

During the first years of his rule, Constantine IX Monomachos was assisted by a group of highly educated civil servants namely, Michael Psellos, John Xiphilinos, John Mauroπους and Constantine Leichoudes. Their influence burgeoned when Leichoudes was appointed *paradynasteuon* by the emperor. Under his supervision, a series of reforms (c. 1042 – 1050) was instigated, aiming to improve the overall effectiveness of the administration and of higher education. These included the creation of the *sekretion dikon idiotikon*, a widening of the professionalization of the army, and the

¹³³ Psellos V 42 (102, 3—9 REINSCH); Attaleiates (9, 21—28 TSOLAKES). CHEYNET, Pouvoir, 192.

¹³⁴ John Scylitzes (420, 75—79 THURN); Psellos V 34 (98, 3—17 REINSCH); Zonaras XVII 19, 24—28 (613, 3—10 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹³⁵ John Scylitzes (418, 35—40 THURN); Psellos V 35—37 (98, 1—100, 12 REINSCH).

¹³⁶ Psellos VI 1—11 (107, 1—111, 10 REINSCH); John Scylitzes (422, 9—26 THURN); Attaleiates (14, 17—21 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVII 20, 1—4 (613, 14—614, 9 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, Political history, 58.

¹³⁷ Psellos VI 11—14 (111, 11—113, 12 REINSCH); John Scylitzes (422, 27—48 THURN); Attaleiates (14, 21—15, 3 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVII 20, 5—19 (9—616, 13 BÜTTNER-WOBST). CHONDRIDOU, Κωνσταντίνος Θ', 49—52.

¹³⁸ Psellos VI 15—17 (113, 1—114, 9 REINSCH); John Scylitzes (423, 34—36 THURN); Attaleiates (14, 21—25 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVII 20, 11—17 (615, 5—616, 1 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, Political history, 59; CHONDRIDOU, Κωνσταντίνος Θ', 35ff.; KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 179—181.

foundation of two separate “tertiary” schools one of philosophy and another of law. But some of these measures were faced with a reaction, compelling Constantine IX to reduce the group’s role. Leichoudes was the first to be removed from office (in around 1051 becoming a monk), while Mauropous was sent as bishop to the remote city of Euchaita in north-eastern Asia Minor. Psellos and Xiphilinos were appointed to high offices and remained in the palace, but they were forced to abdicate in 1054 / 1055 after their clash with the powerful patriarch Michael Keroularios.¹³⁹

The administrative reform deserves a closer look since its causes and results had a lasting effect. At its core was the establishment of the new ministry of the *sekretion dikon idiotikon* under the *epi ton kriseon*, with the aim of coordinating provincial administration and ensuring that payment of taxes and distribution of justice would be closely controlled by the central government.¹⁴⁰ This development was a result of the transformation of the *themata*,¹⁴¹ the basis of whose organisation, the recruitment system of the *strateia*, was in steady decline from the middle of the tenth century. According to this system, the owners of lands designated as *stratitika ktemata* were obliged to maintain the necessary armour and a war horse in order to present themselves or a person of their choice when called up for service. These soldiers complemented the core of the thematic forces and the *tagmata*, both of which were manned by professionals.¹⁴² The main drawbacks were their relatively inadequate fighting skills and the overall social implications that resulted from the engagement of the male members of a household in warfare. It was probably these factors that impelled the state to generalise the commutation of the *strateia* and to hire professional soldiers who were better trained and available for operations at any given moment.¹⁴³ When the “Reconquista” of the late tenth and early eleventh century came to an end, the *tagmata* were allotted across the territories of the *themata*. Combined with the buffer zone created around the empire by client states such as Aleppo, they were deemed sufficient for the new doctrine of “active defence in depth.” The expanding monetisation of the economy and the new social conditions led to the extension of fiscalisation during the time of Constantine IX.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, the once powerful *strategos* of the *thema* now commanded only the garrison of a fortress, or a fortified city and its vicinity, while conceding his authority over civilian matters into the hands of other state officials such as the *krites* / *praitor*. Thus, the latter was now directly accountable to the new ministry

¹³⁹ CHONDRIDOU, «Η τετράς των σοφών», 409ff.; EADEM, Κωνσταντίνος Θ΄, 183ff.; KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 187—191; LEMERLE, Cinque études, 207—212, 215—221, 223—227.

¹⁴⁰ Attaleiates (18, 1—4 TSOLAKES). OIKONOMIDÈS, Organisation administrative, 134; CHONDRIDOU, Κωνσταντίνος Θ΄, 134—135; ANGOLD, Political history, 62—63; KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 190.

¹⁴¹ KARAGIANNPOULOS, Entstehung, 24ff., 55—58; HALDON, Recruitment, 38—40.

¹⁴² KARAGIANNPOULOS, Entstehung, 85—88; HALDON, Recruitment, 49—57, 64; GREGORIOU-IOANNIDOU, Στρατολογία, 55ff.,

¹⁴³ KOLIAS, Νικηφόρος Β΄, 68—76; MAGDALINO, Army and the land, 19; KÜHN, Byzantinische Armee, 123—126.

¹⁴⁴ CHONDRIDOU, Κωνσταντίνος Θ΄, 281—285; CHEYNET, Politique militaire, 66; HALDON, Military history, 63—65.

of *dikon idiotikon*.¹⁴⁵ As a consequence, the downgrading and final dissolution of the thematic forces that served as supplementary troops meant that in cases of multiple threats there was no longer an adequate pool of reserves. The continuous revolts - especially after the 1050s - along with growing financial instability, internal fragmentation and the appearance of enemies on all fronts (Pechenegs in the North, Seljuks in the east, and Normans in the west) brought the Byzantine army to the brink of collapse.¹⁴⁶

The administrative reform was not welcomed by all high-ranking officers.¹⁴⁷ In fact, the number of plotters had begun to rise, including also the military elite of the Balkans. The revolt of Leon Tornikios was the first of a series of uprisings instigated by the so-called “Macedonian” faction the officers that commanded troops stationed in the regions of Thrace and Macedonia. Their most prominent members were the Vatatzai and the Bryennioi. A relative of the emperor, named Tornikios, who was already on bad terms with Constantine IX after his unfavourable transfer to the east as *strategos of Iberia*, was accused of conspiracy, tonsured and kept under house-arrest in Constantinople.¹⁴⁸ He escaped and found refuge in Adrianople, where he was declared emperor and then marched against the capital.¹⁴⁹ But the ensuing siege failed and the rebel was isolated.¹⁵⁰ When the eastern armies arrived to confront the rebels, Tornikios and his relative John Vatatzes were arrested and blinded. Their supporters were granted a general amnesty.¹⁵¹

Constantine IX continued the policy of his predecessors, expanding the senate with members of the capital’s bourgeoisie - namely, artisans, merchants and bankers - in order to ensure their favour and support. This development had already been under way during the reign of Michael V, and Monomachos gave it its final shape. Apart from the political aspect, the financial one was also of importance because the fisc was cashing in large sums of money: anyone interested in a title had to pay a standard amount for the privilege. In return he received a fixed compensation, the *roga*, which was a submultiple of the purchase price. The revenues were used to fund the administrative reforms

¹⁴⁵ GREGORIOU-IOANNIDOU, Παρακμή, 37—40; 55—57, 78—84, 90 with detailed catalogues of the various commands; CHEYNET, Stratège, 181, 183ff.

¹⁴⁶ HALDON, Military history, 71—74.

¹⁴⁷ John Scylitzes (439, 83—84 THURN); Attaleiates (18, 10—13 TSOLAKES); CHONRDIDOU, Κωνσταντίνος Θ΄, 273—274.

¹⁴⁸ John Scylitzes (438, 79—82 THURN); Attaleiates (18, 6—20 TSOLAKES); Psellos VI 99—101 (149, 1—151, 19 REINSCH); Zonaras XVII 23, 1—12 (625, 3—626, 15 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹⁴⁹ John Scylitzes (439, 85—91 THURN); Attaleiates (18, 20—19, 9 TSOLAKES); Psellos VI 102—105 (151, 1—153, 25 REINSCH); Zonaras XVII 23, 13—15 (626, 16—627, 8 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹⁵⁰ John Scylitzes (439, 91—441, 61 THURN); Attaleiates (19, 9—24, 2 TSOLAKES); Psellos VI 105—120 (153, 1—161, 20 REINSCH); Zonaras XVII 23, 16—36 (627, 8—630, 20 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹⁵¹ John Scylitzes (441, 61—442, 85 THURN); Attaleiates (24, 2—24 TSOLAKES); Psellos VI 121—122 (161, 1—162, 16 REINSCH); Zonaras XVII 23, 37 (630, 20—631, 5 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, Political history, 59—60; CHONDRIDOU, Κωνσταντίνος Θ΄, 295—297; CHEYNET, Pouvoir, 59—61 (n. 65); KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 193—195.

already described, and the extensive construction program of the emperor.¹⁵² This included among others the vast and luxurious monastic complex of Saint George of Mangana in which the law school was housed as well as the Nea Moni monastery on Chios.¹⁵³

The wider acceptance of the emperor by the citizens of Constantinople was not unconditional. The idea of dynastic legitimacy was deeply rooted. When the emperor introduced his mistress, Maria Skleraina, to the palace, - obtaining the permission of Zoe, but not of Theodora, who silently accepted her sister's decision - the population of the capital made its resentment clear during a ceremonial procession in spring 1044. It can be assumed that the pro-Macedonian faction was worried by the sudden reappearance of the Skleroi through Maria.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, after the death of Patriarch Alexios Stoudites, Constantine IX elevated Michael Keroularios to the patriarchal seat. The latter was a courtier who had participated in a conspiracy against Michael IV. It is possible that he and Monomachos had known each other from that time. Keroularios was exiled and tonsured until he was recalled and became a patriarch in March 1043. The emperor may have thought that he had the new leader of the church under his influence, but his assumptions were entirely misguided, as future events would show.

It seemed that the empire was entering a period of peace and security. But the geopolitical situation was changing once more, and the results would prove to be of critical importance for Byzantium.

In the Black Sea region, the reign of Constantine IX saw a short-lived crisis in Byzantine-Russian relations that culminated in the Rus' unsuccessful siege of Constantinople in the summer of 1043. The exact reasons for this attack are uncertain. It seems that the new ruler of Kiev, Iaroslav the Wise, wanted to remove his state from the imperial sphere of influence. His most decisive action was the appointment, for the first time, of a native as the head of the Russian Church instead of a Greek being designated directly from Constantinople. In any case, the period of tension came to an end in 1047 or thereabouts, with the signing of a treaty between the two states and then the death of Iaroslav in 1054.¹⁵⁵

One of the reasons for the sudden rise of Russian power was the movement of the nomadic Petchenegs from the lower reaches of the Don and the Dnieper to the plains north of the Danube, which

¹⁵² CHONDRIDOU, *Κωνσταντῖνος Θ'*, 55ff.; LEMERLE, "Roga" et rente, 84—92; OIKONOMIDES, Title and income, 202—207; KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 189.

¹⁵³ DARROUZÈS, *Fondations monastiques*, 160—167; OIKONOMIDES, *St. George of Mangana*, 240—243; BOURAS, *Nea Moni*, 21—28.

¹⁵⁴ *Psellus* VI 50—61 (127, 1—129, 13 REINSCH); John Scylitzes (434, 51—71 THURN). CHONDRIDOU, *Κωνσταντῖνος Θ'*, 79ff.

¹⁵⁵ ANGOLD, *Political history*, 35—37; CHONDRIDOU, *Κωνσταντῖνος Θ'*, 369—376; KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 186; DÖLGER – WIRTH, *Regesten* I 2, n. 879a; KISLINGER, *Ruhm der Rhomania*, 46—50.

bound Byzantium's energies and left the Rus' room to assert themselves. They were driven out by another people, the Oghuz Turks, and at the beginning the Byzantines may have welcomed the instability within the nomadic communities. But in 1046, when a group of Petchenegs crossed the Danube seeking safety from their compatriots, they entangled the empire in a series of wars that only ended in 1053. Constantinople and the nomads then signed a treaty which allowed the latter to occupy a region between the Haemus and the lower Danube. Thus, they succeeded in settling on their own terms, as independent people within imperial territory.¹⁵⁶

But the most serious problems were still to come, this time from the east. In the region of the Caucasus, the Byzantines continued the policy of annexing several principalities and emirates - mainly around Lake Van - which culminated in the incorporation of the Armenian principality of Ani into the empire in 1045.¹⁵⁷ It was a precautionary step since the Seljuq Turks had already made their presence felt some years earlier.¹⁵⁸ In 1048 / 1049 the trading-centre of Artze was sacked by the Turks, but the invaders were forced to evacuate Armenia.¹⁵⁹ Another Seljuq attack on Mantzikert, which controlled one of the main invasion routes, was beaten off. At this stage, the imperial forces were holding their own against the Seljuqs, and sultan Tughril Beg signed a treaty which included his recognition by the Byzantines and his commemoration in the Friday prayers at the mosque in Constantinople.¹⁶⁰ The empire abandoned its alliance with the Fatimids of Egypt imagining that it could look forward to a new era of stability with the Muslim world, now that a strong power controlled the lands of the Caliphate.

In Italy, since 1040/1041 the Normans had gradually been consolidating a new state of affairs, and by 1050 the Byzantine possessions were in danger. The rebellion and subsequent death of the *katepano of Italy*, Georgios Maniakes (1042 – 1043) caused the situation to deteriorate further.¹⁶¹ In the aftermath of his death Argyros - son of the former agitator from Bari, Meles, and who since 1045

¹⁵⁶ Skylitzes (455ff. THURN); Attaleiates (25, 20—35, 17 TSOLAKES). ANGOLD, Political history, 37—40; CHONDRIDOU, Κωνσταντίνος Θ', 377—382; KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 192—193, 199—201; DÖLGER – WIRTH, Regesten I 2, n. 909.

¹⁵⁷ Skylitzes (435, 72—439, 5 THURN); Matthew of Edessa, 72—73; Aristakes of Lastivert, 59—62; Georgian chronicles, 286ff. FELIX, Byzanz und die islamische Welt, 146ff.

¹⁵⁸ Skylitzes (442, 87—448, 47 THURN); Attaleiates (35, 18—36, 7 TSOLAKES); Bryennios I 7—9 (89, 1—95, 31 GAUTIER); Aristakes of Lastivert, 64; Michael the Syrian, 604; Matthew of Edessa, 74. FELIX, Byzanz und die islamische Welt, 161—163.

¹⁵⁹ Skylitzes (448, 48—454, 9 THURN); Attaleiates (37, 10—38, 4 TSOLAKES); Bryennios I 10 (97, 1—99, 26 GAUTIER); Aristakes of Lastivert, 84—86; Matthew of Edessa, 76—77; Georgian chronicles, 294. FELIX, Byzanz und die islamische Welt, 164—170.

¹⁶⁰ Attaleiates (37, 10—16 TSOLAKES); Matthew of Edessa, 86—88; Aristakes of Lastivert, 99—107; 109; Bar Hebraeus, 206. ANGOLD, Political history, 40—41; CHONDRIDOU, Κωνσταντίνος Θ', 397—399; HALDON, Military history, 56; KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 197—198; FELIX, Byzanz und die islamische Welt, 170—171; DÖLGER – WIRTH, Regesten I 2, n. 890d.

¹⁶¹ Attaleiates (15, 6—16, 8 TSOLAKES); John Scylitzes (427, 51—428, 98 THURN); Psellos VI 78—88 (138, 1—143, 10 REINSCH); Zonaras XVII 22, 1—12 (621, 4—622, 18 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, Political history, 59; CHONDRIDOU, Κωνσταντίνος Θ', 292—293; CHEYNET, Pouvoir, 57 (n. 61); KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 181—185.

had been residing in Constantinople becoming one of the emperor's trusted advisors - was considered the most suitable person to restore Byzantine fortunes in the region. He was given the rank of *magistros* and the office of duke of Italy with the widest possible powers. Upon his arrival there, Argyros decided that the best solution to the Norman question was an alliance with the vigorous pope Leo IX, who also wanted for his own reasons to control the newcomers. But the mismanaged arrangements between the allies combined with the competence of the enemy proved fatal. Argyros was defeated in the spring of 1053, and the same summer the pope was captured by the Normans at Civitate.¹⁶² Thus the situation in southern Italy was at a stalemate, only to be worsened by the events that followed.

The so-called "Schism" between the Churches of Rome and Constantinople during the summer of 1054 has been studied exhaustively and it will not be analysed here. Suffice it to say that it was a combination of domestic political expediencies in Constantinople and the developments in southern Italy, along with the narrow-minded views and personalities of the main protagonists, - the patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Keroularios, and the head of the papal legates, Humbert of Silva Candida - that led to the disturbing events of the summer of 1054.¹⁶³ Their long-term implications were to be realised by both sides only at a later stage.¹⁶⁴ The "Schism" was one of the last events of Constantine's IX reign: he died on 11th January 1055.

Exit the Macedon

Thus Theodora (1055—1056) became sole ruler and was acclaimed *basileus autokrator* with the support of her loyal courtiers. Shortly before his death, Constantine IX had tried to elevate to the throne the *doux* of Bulgaria, Nikephoros Protebon, but the initiative failed and his favourite, along with his supporters, were sent into exile. The patrician Bryennios made a second failed attempt to overthrow the empress.¹⁶⁵ After the suppression of these moves, the throne of Byzantium was occupied by this one woman, governing with the help of her trusted eunuchs and a capable but narrow-minded cleric, Leon Paraspondylos. It seems that many disliked the idea of a female emperor, including Michael Keroularios, but no one raised any further objection.¹⁶⁶ Theodora could carry out her duties just like

¹⁶² KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 204—205.

¹⁶³ RUNCIMAN, *Eastern Schism*, 40—44; CHONDRIDOU, *Κωνσταντίνος Θ΄*, 416—418; GIANTSE-MELETIADÉ, *Ιδεολογία του Cluny*, 292—302; TINNEFELD, *Michael Keroularios*, 105—108.

¹⁶⁴ RUNCIMAN, *Eastern Schism*, 47—50; BAYER, *Spaltung*, 96—106; TINNEFELD, *Michael Keroularios*, 114—118; ANGOLD, *Political history*, 50—52; CHONDRIDOU, *Κωνσταντίνος Θ΄*, 414—416; KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 206—208.

¹⁶⁵ Psellos VI 202 (196, 1—10 REINSCH); John Scylitzes (477, 80—479, 4, 24—480, 27 THURN); Attaleiates (41, 4—7 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVII 28, 11—21 (649, 11—651, 8 BÜTTNER-WOBST). CHEYNET, *Pouvoir*, 65—66 (nos. 75, 76); TODT, *Kaiserin Theodora*, 152—154.

¹⁶⁶ Psellos VI 204—210, 212, 219—220 (197, 1—199, 13, 200, 1—201, 11, 203, 1—204, 10 REINSCH); John Scylitzes (479, 4—24 THURN); Attaleiates (41, 9—22 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVII 29, 1—6 (651, 9—652, 17 BÜTTNER-WOBST). KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 214—215; TODT, *Kaiserin Theodora*, 156—158.

any man, and before her death she crowned as her successor Michael Bringas, a civil servant, who thus became emperor.¹⁶⁷

“Sons of anarchy” again

The years that followed Theodora’s death (1056 – 1071) were characterized by almost endemic instability as members of various elite families vied for the throne, often indeed in collaboration.

Michael VI Stratiotikos (1056 – 1057) was the archetypal example of an eleventh-century bureaucrat. Over his career, he had served as a civil servant in the *logothesion tou stratiotikou*, the bureau responsible for the payment and supply of troops. He kept Theodora’s eunuchs as advisors, including Paraspondylos, and tried to rely on the social class of the capital’s self-made through the granting of honorary titles. At the same time, his relations with Keroularios were strained.¹⁶⁸ The situation deteriorated when, during Easter 1057, the most prominent officers of the Asia Minor military came to Constantinople to pay their respects and be rewarded with offices and titles. They were received with coldness from the emperor who was likely trying to sow discord among them.¹⁶⁹ Their displeasure became immediately apparent with the short-lived rebellion of the Frankish mercenary Robert Hervé.¹⁷⁰ After another failed attempt to approach Paraspondylos, they rebelled in June 1057, declaring as emperor Isaac Komnenos,¹⁷¹ one of the most prominent generals of the time.¹⁷² The decisive battle took place between Nicaea and Nicomedia, and the insurgents won the day.¹⁷³ Michael VI and his advisors decided to offer terms to the victorious Isaac which included his adoption by the emperor, his elevation to the rank of *caesar*, his designation as heir presumptive and the pardoning of all his supporters. Isaac was ready to accept, despite the objections of the prominent general and co-conspirator Katakalon Kekaumenos when news reached the camp that the emperor had been

¹⁶⁷ Psellos VI 222—224 (205, 1—206, 7 REINSCH); John Scylitzes (480, 28—40 THURN); Attaleiates (41, 23—42, 5 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVII 29, 7—10 (652, 17—653, 11 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, Political history, 70—71; KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 215—216; TODT, Kaiserin Theodora, 162—165.

¹⁶⁸ Psellos VII 1—2 (207, 1—8 REINSCH); John Scylitzes (481, 42—483, 94 THURN); Attaleiates (42, 6—12 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 1, 1—4, 9—14 (653, 12—654, 7, 655, 8—656, 10 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, Political history, 71.

¹⁶⁹ Psellos VII 3 (207, 1—208, 21 REINSCH); John Scylitzes (483, 94—22 THURN); Attaleiates (42, 12—20 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 1, 5—8 (654, 10—655, 7 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, Political history, 71.

¹⁷⁰ John Scylitzes (484, 41—486, 95 THURN). CHEYNET, Pouvoir, 67—68 (n. 79).

¹⁷¹ VARZOS, Γενεαλογία I, 41—47 (n. 4).

¹⁷² Psellos VII 4—9 (208, 1—211, 11 REINSCH); John Scylitzes (486, 1—489, 78 THURN); Attaleiates (42, 20—43, 14 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 2, 1—12 (656, 11—658, 16 BÜTTNER-WOBST). CHEYNET, Pouvoir, 68—70 (n. 80); KRSMANOVIĆ, Αλληλαγές, 88—89.

¹⁷³ Psellos VII 10—14 (211, 1—213, 10 REINSCH); John Scylitzes (489, 79—496, 70 THURN); Attaleiates (43, 15—45, 3 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 2 13—25 (658, 17—660, 18 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

overthrown with the “unselfish” assistance of the patriarch who was given to intrigues. On 1057, 1st September 1057 Komnenos jubilantly entered the capital and was crowned emperor.¹⁷⁴

Isaac Komnenos (1057—1059) was determined to strengthen the army by applying drastic cutbacks to various expenditures, such as the payments that went with the various honorary titles. The state also confiscated private property, including that of the monasteries, and recalled tax exemptions.¹⁷⁵ These measures led to an escalation in tension between the emperor and Keroularios, and in the end the cleric was arrested, dying soon afterwards.¹⁷⁶ Isaac next appointed Constantine Leichoudes, friend and patron of Michael Psellos, to the patriarchal see.¹⁷⁷ In return for approving his elevation, the emperor asked Leichoudes to abolish his rights to the imperial foundation of Saint George of Mangana in order to incorporate it into the fisc.¹⁷⁸ In the meantime, Isaac mobilised the armies of the east against the Seljuks whilst campaigning against the Petchenegs in the Balkans.¹⁷⁹ But the tide of public sentiment had already turned against him. After falling ill with fever, he abdicated in favour of his former comrade Constantine Doukas, and became a monk.¹⁸⁰

Constantine X Doukas (1059 – 1067)¹⁸¹ had already served the empire from various posts.¹⁸² His internal policy was reconciliatory and included the abolition of many of Isaac’s fiscal measures. In addition, more titles and money gifts were distributed, especially to the leading social classes of the capital, such as the heads of the various guilds and members of prominent families like the Komnenoi.¹⁸³ They proved to have little effect since a well-organised conspiracy took place in April 1061, to be suppressed only thanks to the intervention of the emperor’s brother John Doukas.¹⁸⁴ The

¹⁷⁴ Psellos VII 15—43(213, 1—224, 14 REINSCH); John Scylitzes (496, 71—500, 93 THURN); Attaleiates (45, 4—48, 3 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 3, 1—4, 1 (660, 1—665, 20 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, Political history, 71—73; KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 216—219.

¹⁷⁵ Psellos VII 60—62 (236, 1—237, 19 REINSCH); Scylitzes continuatus (103, 19—104, 20 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates (48, 22—49, 27 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 4, 7—14 (667, 1—668, 12 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, Political history, 75.

¹⁷⁶ Psellos VII 65 (238, 1—239, 21 REINSCH); Scylitzes continuatus (104, 21—105, 21 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates (49, 30—52, 20 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 5, 1—6 (668, 13—669, 15 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹⁷⁷ Psellos VII 66 (239, 1—240, 23 REINSCH); Scylitzes continuatus (105, 21—106, 5 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates (52, 20—53, 12 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 5, 7—9 (669, 15—670, 6 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, Political history, 73—75.

¹⁷⁸ Scylitzes continuatus (106, 6—15 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 5, 9—13 (670, 6—671, 4 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹⁷⁹ Psellos VII 63, 67—70 (237, 1—238, 13, 240, 1—243, 22 REINSCH); Scylitzes continuatus (106, 23—108, 4 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates (53, 12—55, 1 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 6, 1—8 (671, 5—672, 10 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹⁸⁰ Psellos VII 71—91 (243, 1—251, 7 REINSCH); Scylitzes continuatus (108, 12—110, 19 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates (55, 7—56, 10 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 7 (672, 11—674, 6 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, Political history, 75—77; KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 219—223.

¹⁸¹ POLEMIS, Doukai, 29—34 (n. 12).

¹⁸² Psellos VII 98 (252, 1—253, 25 REINSCH); Zonaras XVIII 8, 12—14 (675, 18—676, 8 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹⁸³ Psellos VII 107—108 (256, 1—257, 15 REINSCH); Scylitzes continuatus (111, 9—17 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates (56, 11—57, 11 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 8, 1—2 (674, 7—12 BÜTTNER-WOBST). KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 231.

¹⁸⁴ Psellos VII 114 (259, 12—260, 15 REINSCH); Scylitzes continuatus (111, 18—27 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates (57, 12—60, 20 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 8, 3—11 (674, 13—675, 17 BÜTTNER-WOBST). CHEYNET, Pouvoir, 71 (n. 83); KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 232—233; POLEMIS, Doukai, 34—42 (n. 13).

conspiracy was related to increasing financial difficulties, which resulted in the total neglect of the armed forces. The pressure on the eastern front from the Seljuks and the various Turkish tribes was escalating, and in 1064 the key city of Ani in Armenia fell into enemy hands.¹⁸⁵ In the Balkans, the Petchenegs and Oghuz continued their raids, despite the attempts of local forces to defend the region.¹⁸⁶ A series of severe earthquakes and the appearance of Halley's Comet in May 1066 spread gloom and pessimism among the population. The subsequent illness of the emperor and his death a year later left the empire in the hands of his widow Eudokia Makrembolitissa, who acted as queen-regent for their elder son Michael VII.¹⁸⁷

Eudokia Makrembolitissa (May 1067 – January 1068) reigned as *basileus autokrator*, along with her two sons, Michael and Constantius.¹⁸⁸ A niece of Michael Keroularios, with relatives that occupied positions in the higher echelons of the administration, she decided that the elevation to the throne of a capable general was of foremost importance.¹⁸⁹ Eudokia chose for the task Romanos Diogenes, who had proved himself against the Petchenegs but was despised by many inside the court, and especially by the caesar John Doukas. The main cause of resentment was his participation in a conspiracy against the regime and also the fear that he would try to shut down the rights of the Doukas family to the throne.¹⁹⁰ Despite these facts Eudokia married Diogenes, who became emperor on 1st January 1068.¹⁹¹

Romanos IV (1068 – 1071) spent the three years of his reign on campaign endeavoring to control the situation in Asia Minor. The disruption caused by the Turkish raids could only be reversed by resolute action, and the emperor decided to secure Armenia against the Turks, to prevent them from direct infiltration onto the Anatolian plateau.¹⁹² But the overall situation of the state was also critical.

¹⁸⁵ Psellos VII 110 (258, 1–15 REINSCH); Scylitzes continuatus (112, 17–24 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates (62, 15–66, 3 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 8, 18–22 (677, 4–16 BÜTTNER-WOBST); Georgian chronicles, 298–299; Matthew of Edessa, 102–104. KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 233–235.

¹⁸⁶ Psellos VII 115 (260, 1–12 REINSCH); Scylitzes continuatus (113, 25–116, 4 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates (66, 3–68, 22 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 9, 1–9 (678, 1–679, 14 BÜTTNER-WOBST). KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 236.

¹⁸⁷ Psellos VII 119–121 (261, 1–262, 13 REINSCH); Scylitzes continuatus (116, 11–117, 12, 117, 24–119, 4 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates (69, 24–73, 13 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 9, 10–15, 19–27 (679, 15–680, 10, 681, 3–682, 12 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, *Political history*, 76–78; KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 238.

¹⁸⁸ Psellos VII 122–124 (263, 1–264, 12 REINSCH); Scylitzes continuatus (119, 5–6 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates (73, 14–15 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 10, 1–2 (682, 13–683, 2 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹⁸⁹ Scylitzes Continuatus (121, 9–12 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates (76, 20–27 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 10, 3–7 (683, 3–18 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹⁹⁰ Psellos VII 126–128 (264, 1–266, 3 REINSCH); Attaleiates (77, 6–78, 11 TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (121, 12–122, 7 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 10, 7–15 (683, 12–685, 4 BÜTTNER-WOBST). CHEYNET, *Pouvoir*, 74 (nos. 90, 91).

¹⁹¹ Psellos VII 129–130 (266, 3–6 REINSCH); Scylitzes continuatus (122, 7–124, 9 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates (78, 11–80, 21 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 10, 16–28 (685, 4–687, 15 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, *Political history*, 77–78; KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 238–241; CHEYNET, *Pouvoir*, 345–346.

¹⁹² Psellos VII 134–140 (268, 1–270, 13 REINSCH); Attaleiates (80, 22ff. TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (124, 10–133, 17, 135, 8–142, 2 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 11–13 (687, 16–695, 16 BÜTTNER-WOBST). KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 241–245.

The finances were collapsing, forcing the emperor to debase the coinage to meet the most pressing needs. At the same time, the supporters of the Doukas family were secretly working against him under the leadership of the exiled *caesar* John.¹⁹³ Against the background of these serious domestic problems, Romanos launched his critical campaign in summer 1071. The decisive battle was fought at Mantzikert on 26th August. The Byzantine army was defeated, and Romanos IV was captured by the Turks. The accusations of treason during the battle fired against Andronikos Doukas,¹⁹⁴ son of *caesar* John, illustrate the political tensions of the time.¹⁹⁵

When the news of the defeat and capture of the emperor reached the capital, Eudokia took the imperial office again, recalling *caesar* John from exile. But complications arose when it was revealed that Romanos was still alive, released from his captivity and on the way to Constantinople.¹⁹⁶ The die was cast: a pro-Doukas coup took place overthrowing Eudokia, along with her sons from Romanos. Michael VII was acclaimed sole emperor on 24th October 1071, and it was promulgated that Diogenes was deposed and was acting as a usurper.¹⁹⁷ After one of the most severe defeats in its history, Byzantium was collapsing into civil war.

Nikephoritzes

Michael VII Doukas (1071 – 1078)¹⁹⁸ launched successive campaigns against Romanos IV, who eventually surrendered under terms that were nevertheless violated. He was blinded and died soon afterwards in exile.¹⁹⁹

The rise to power of a new figure gave a new turn to the direction of political affairs. Nikephoros or Nikephoritzes, a eunuch of Paphlagonian origin, was a skilled bureaucrat who instigated a series of reforms to restore the state's machinery.²⁰⁰ These included cutbacks to various concessions

¹⁹³ Psellos VII 131—133 (266, 1—268, 13 REINSCH).

¹⁹⁴ POLEMIS, Doukai, 55—59 (n. 21).

¹⁹⁵ Psellos VII 141—143 (270, 1—271, 9 REINSCH); Attaleiates (111, 3ff. TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (142, 3—152, 3 TSOLAKES); Bryennios I 13ff. (105, 22ff. GAUTIER); Zonaras XVIII 13—14, 26 (695, 17—703, 7 BÜTTNER-WOBST); Matthew of Edessa, 130—135; Aristakes of Lastivert, 168—173; Michael the Syrian, 609—610; BUDGE, Bar Heabreus, 220—221. KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 246—248.

¹⁹⁶ Psellos VII 144—148 (271, 1—274, 10 REINSCH); Attaleiates (128, 21—130, 6 TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (152, 4—17 TSOLAKES); Bryennios I 18—20 (119, 7—123, 8 GAUTIER); Zonaras XVIII 14, 27—15 (703, 7—704, 2 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

¹⁹⁷ Psellos VII 149—152 (274, 1—276, 5 REINSCH); Attaleiates (130, 6—26 TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (152, 17—28 TSOLAKES); Bryennios I 20 (123, 9—125, 15 GAUTIER); Zonaras XVIII 15, 3—5 (704, 2—13 BÜTTNER-WOBST). CHEYNET, Pouvoir, 75 (n. 94); VRATIMOS, Eudokia Makrembolitissa, 277—284.

¹⁹⁸ POLEMIS, Doukai, 42—46 (n. 14).

¹⁹⁹ Psellos VII 153—164 (276, 5—284, 9 REINSCH); Attaleiates (130, 27—139, 4 TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (152, 29—155, 5 TSOLAKES); Bryennios I 21, 23—25 (125, 16—129, 5, 131, 27—141, 4 GAUTIER); Zonaras XVIII 15, 6—23 (704, 13—706, 19 BÜTTNER-WOBST). KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 248—251.

²⁰⁰ Psellos VII 165—175, 178—181 (285, 1—290, 10, 292, 1—295, 14 REINSCH); Attaleiates (139, 5—141, 14 TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (155, 6—156, 14 TSOLAKES); Bryennios II 1—2 (143, 1—145, 17 GAUTIER); Zonaras XVIII 16, 1—9 (707, 8—708, 18 BÜTTNER-WOBST). KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 252—253.

and strict governmental control on the corn trade centred around the city of Rhaidestos to secure the capital's supply of staples. Furthermore, he reorganized the army by establishing the new corps of the *Athanatoi*, which was manned by Asia Minor refugees.²⁰¹

In the Balkans, instability returned for the first time since the Petcheneg wars. The rebellions of Constantine Bodin in the region of Skopje and Nestor in the region of the lower Danube (1072) were suppressed only after strenuous campaigns by the imperial forces.²⁰²

In the east, the situation was spiraling out of control. Receiving news of the blinding of Diogenes, the Turks considered the treaty they had signed with him after the battle of Mantzikert as null and void and resumed their incursions.²⁰³ The rebellion of a Frankish mercenary, Roussel de Bailleul, was only suppressed after the cooperation of the young general Alexios Komnenos²⁰⁴ with the Turkoman bands that were infesting the central region of Asia Minor. From that point on, except for some Byzantine outposts such as Trebizond or Antioch, the rest of the peninsula was abandoned to its fate.²⁰⁵ Thousands of refugees were now flocking to Constantinople, where the supply of staples became problematic.²⁰⁶ The harsh fiscal measures of Nikephoritzes could only partially remedy the situation, and these were in any case unpopular among the entrepreneurs of the capital. Two of the most prominent officers, Nikephoros Bryennios and Nikephoros Botaneiates, rebelled within a period of two months.²⁰⁷ The latter - with the cooperation of the Turks - managed to reach Nicaea in March 1078, while in the capital a coup was overthrowing Michael VII, who was tonsured and later became bishop of Ephesos. Thus, Botaneiates entered Constantinople and was acclaimed emperor. Nikephoritzes was arrested and died while being tortured, allegedly to reveal the location of his

²⁰¹ Attaleiates (155, 23—158, 3, 191, 11—16 TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (162, 7—17 TSOLAKES); Bryennios IV 24 (265, 15—267, 11 GAUTIER); Zonaras XVIII 16, 35—36 (712, 13—17 BÜTTNER-WOBST). KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 262—263.

²⁰² Attaleiates (158, 6—159, 8 TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (166, 14—26 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 17, 1—6 (713, 1—714, 2 BÜTTNER-WOBST). CHEYNET, *Pouvoir*, 79—80 (n. 98), 81 (n. 102); KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 254—255.

²⁰³ Bryennios II 3 (4145, 19—23 GAUTIER); Attaleiates (141, 21—24 TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (156, 21—157, 4 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 16, 11—12 (709, 1—9 BÜTTNER-WOBST). DÖLGER – WIRTH, *Regesten I* 2, n. 972.

²⁰⁴ VARZOS, *Γενεαλογία I*, 87—113 (n. 15).

²⁰⁵ Attaleiates (141, 25ff. TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (157, 4—161, 27 TSOLAKES); Bryennios II 4, 14—15, 17—24 (147, 23—149, 20, 167, 3—173, 3, 177, 1ff. GAUTIER); Anna Komnene I 1—3 (11, 1—17, 5 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS); Zonaras XVIII 16, 13—34 (709, 10—712, 12 BÜTTNER-WOBST). CHEYNET, *Pouvoir*, 78—79 (n. 97); KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 255—261.

²⁰⁶ Attaleiates (198, 11—18 TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (171, 10—25 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 17, 9—13 (714, 9—715, 4 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

²⁰⁷ Attaleiates (164, 7—14, 185, 27ff. TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (171, 26—178, 15 TSOLAKES); Bryennios III 3, 15—19 (213, 12—215, 19, 237, 15—247, 10 GAUTIER); Zonaras XVIII 17, 14—29 (715, 5—717, 7 BÜTTNER-WOBST). CHEYNET, *Pouvoir*, 83—85 (nos. 104, 105).

treasury.²⁰⁸ With him, the series of eunuchs that had shaped the state's policy with their initiatives for almost a century came to an end.

Rise of the Komnenoi

The reign of Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078 – 1081) marked the nadir of the period after 1025. Facing continual plots and conspiracies, the elderly veteran tried to cement his position by marrying the widow of his predecessor, the young Georgian princess Maria of Alania, and by handing over extensive authority to his two trusted servants, Borilos and Germanos.²⁰⁹ Military affairs had already been entrusted to the family of the Komnenoi, particularly the brothers Alexios and Isaac, who had proved their worth against the various usurpers. As a result, the rebellions of Nikephoros Bryennios and Nikephoros Basilakios were at once suppressed, bringing the two young generals closer to the emperor.²¹⁰ Yet in the meantime the state was collapsing on all fronts. Botaneiates tried to keep all social classes satisfied but the financial pressure and the loss of huge amounts of income led to a substantial debasement of the coinage, and consequently, to the debasement of the value of honorary titles.²¹¹ Under these circumstances, the last link between the highest members of society and the emperor ultimately snapped especially when Alexios and Isaac were accused of conspiracy.²¹² They immediately escaped to eastern Thrace and along with their relatives started a rebellion. Alexios was chosen as the imperial candidate, and after a compromise had been reached between him and his brother-in-law Nikephoros Melissinos - who had also declared himself emperor in Asia Minor - he moved against Constantinople, which was entered by his troops on 1st April 1081. After three days of pillaging, patriarch Kosmas persuaded Nikephoros III to abdicate. And thus, Alexios was crowned emperor on 4th April 1081, ending a lengthy period of instability and opening a new chapter in Byzantine history.²¹³

²⁰⁸ Attaleiates (210, 17—22 TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (186, 4—20 TSOLAKES); Bryennios III 23—26 (251, 11—255, 25 GAUTIER); Zonaras XVIII 18, 4—17 (718, 1—720, 14 BÜTTNER-WOBST). KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 264—266.

²⁰⁹ Scylitzes continuatus (181, 22—182, 14, 185, 30—186, 3 TSOLAKES); Bryennios praef. 6, III 25 (59, 15—17, 253, 8—255, 17 GAUTIER); Zonaras XVIII 19, 9—15, 26—27 (722, 7—723, 6, 725, 1—10 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

²¹⁰ Attaleiates (210, 23—212, 28 TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (179, 12—181, 7, 182, 15—183, 28 TSOLAKES); CHEYNET, *Pouvoir*, 86—87 (n. 108); Bryennios IV 2—17, 18—28, 29 (259, 7ff., 285, 1ff., 299, 1—10 GAUTIER); Anna Komnene I, 4—9, II 1, 1—2 (19, 6ff., 55, 1—19 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS); Zonaras XVIII 20, 1 (726, 12—14 BÜTTNER-WOBST). KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 266—269.

²¹¹ Attaleiates (218, 28—224, 19, 228, 15—231, 4 TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (179, 6—11 TSOLAKES); Bryennios IV 1 (257, 1—259, 8 GAUTIER).

²¹² Anna Komnene II 1, 3 (55, 19—56, 32 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS); Bryennios praef. 8 (63, 10—65, 8 GAUTIER); Zonaras XVIII 20, 2 (726, 15—727, 1 BÜTTNER-WOBST).

²¹³ Anna Komnene II 5—12 (65, 13ff. REINSCH – KAMBYLIS); Zonaras XVIII 20, 3—22 (727, 1—730, 16 BÜTTNER-WOBST). CHEYNET, *Pouvoir*, 89—91 (n. 113); ANGOLD, *Political history*, 124—129; MALAMUT, *Alexis Comnène*, 55—60; KALDELLIS, *Streams of gold*, 269—270.

The end of the “short” eleventh century

Alexios I Komnenos (1081 – 1118) came to the throne at a critical moment for the empire. His ascendancy was the conclusion of a period of instability that had started with the successful rebellion of his uncle, Isaac, almost thirty years ago. He immediately concentrated his attention on foreign affairs, with the aim of dealing first with the most dangerous threats. In the east, he signed a treaty with the Seljuks of Nicaea in 1081, recognising their authority in return for the supply of troops.²¹⁴ This move was dictated by the far greater problems in the west. After the fall of Bari, last Byzantine outpost in Italy, in 1071, the Normans under the leadership of Robert Guiscard stabilised their power over the newly conquered territory. In 1074, Michael VII Doukas had entered an alliance with Guiscard, sealed by the betrothal of the latter’s daughter to the emperor’s infant son, Constantine. Furthermore, the Norman leader had received the title of *nobelissimos*.²¹⁵ This alliance lasted until the overthrow of Michael VII in 1078. Thus, Guiscard claimed to be upholding the rights of the fallen emperor, and even held a pretender in his retinue.²¹⁶ His troops landed on the Balkan shores of the Adriatic in April 1081, with the aim of capturing Dyrrachion, which controlled access to the *Via Egnatia*.²¹⁷ During the first phase of the war (1081 – 1083) the Normans held the initiative, routed the imperial armies, and progressed as far as Thessaly. Despite their defeat in the autumn of 1083, they continued their operations until the death of Robert Guiscard in 1085 on the island of Kephallenia. The remaining Norman troops evacuated the Byzantine territories, thus putting an end to the war.²¹⁸

The Byzantine-Norman conflict brought further developments to the western policy of the empire. To secure naval aid against Guiscard, Alexios I signed a treaty with Venice in 1082. In return for the maritime assistance of the latter, it provided for a series of commercial privileges for its merchants, including amongst others the reduction of the standard customs tax, the *kommerkion* in certain towns and emporia.²¹⁹

²¹⁴ DÖLGER – WIRTH, Regesten I 2, n. 1070a.

²¹⁵ DÖLGER – WIRTH, Regesten I 2, n. 1003; BÜNNEMANN, Robert Guiscard, 87—88; LOUD, Age of Robert Guiscard, 211—213.

²¹⁶ Anna Komnene I 12, 1—7 (39, 61—41, 25 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS); Malaterra III 13 (64, 24—65, 21 PONTIERI); Guillermi Apuliensis IV 160—170 (212 MATHIEU). LOUD, Age of Robert Guiscard, 213—214; BÜNNEMANN, Robert Guiscard 106—108.

²¹⁷ Anna Komnene III 9, 4—5 (111, 25—49 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS); Malaterra III 24—29 (71, 6—75, 4 PONTIERI); Guillermi Apuliensis IV 200—495 (214ff. MATHIEU). For a general overview see KISLINGER, Vertauschte Notizen, 127 ff.; THEOTOKIS, Norman campaigns, 143ff.; STANTON, Naval operations, 47ff.; LOUD, Age of Robert Guiscard, 214—218; BÜNNEMANN, Robert Guiscard, 107ff.; BIRKENMEIER, Komnenian army, 60—66.

²¹⁸ Anna Komnene IV 1—V, 7, VI 5—7 (120, 1ff. REINSCH – KAMBYLIS); Malaterra III 40—41 (81, 29—82, 23 PONTIERI); Guillermi Apuliensis V 1—105, 144—250, 284—391 (237ff. MATHIEU); Zonaras XVIII 22, 1—11 (734, 17—736, 15 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, Political history, 129—131; MALAMUT, Alexis Comnène, 63ff.; THEOTOKIS, Norman campaigns, 165ff.; LOUD, Age of Robert Guiscard, 218—223; BÜNNEMANN, Robert Guiscard, 150ff.; BIRKENMEIER, Komnenian army, 66—68.

²¹⁹ Anna Komnene VI 5, 10 (178, 25—179, 40 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS); POZZA – RAVEGNANI, Trattati, 37, 40—41. DÖLGER – WIRTH, Regesten I 2, n. 1081; RAVEGNANI, Bisanzio e Venezia, 65—67, 73.

The second most important threat at the beginning of Alexios' I reign were the Petchenegs, which continued periodically to ravage the northern Balkans. In 1087, the Byzantines began consistent action against them, allying with the Cumans, another nomadic tribe. The decisive battle took place in April 1091 and resulted in a complete Byzantine victory.²²⁰ In 1094, it was the turn of the Cumans to invade the Balkans, only to be soundly defeated.²²¹ Thus peace was restored in the peninsula, allowing Alexios to focus on the situation in the east.

The Turks had occupied almost the whole of Asia Minor excepting some isolated regions. The emperor managed to find a *modus vivendi* with Suleiman the sultan of Nicaea, but the emergence of the emir of Smyrna, Tzachas, and the activities of his formidable fleet required immediate action. It took the Byzantines almost twelve years (c. 1081 – 1093) to eliminate the threat and secure the Aegean.²²²

In his internal policy, Alexios I applied swift and effective solutions. His relatives and some members of his retinue took over key military commands. His mother, Anna Dalassene was appointed as head of the government, having the assistance of the newly established *logothetes ton sekreton*. His task was to supervise and coordinate the different bureaus of the civil service.²²³ The old and by that point extremely inflated system of honorary titles was overhauled. In its new form, the basic distinction was made between the relatives of the emperor and the rest of the state officials.²²⁴

The next step was financial reform which included the introduction of a new gold coinage and of a revised taxation system. During the first years of his reign, Alexios continued the debasement of the gold *nomisma* to cover his urgent needs. In 1092, a new monetary system was introduced. At its top was the *hyperpyron*, a gold coin with a value of 20,5 carats, and its division, the *trachy aspron* an alloy of gold, silver, and copper.²²⁵ The new system allowed for the establishment of a solid basis for the collection of taxes. The emperor exploited whatever resources were available in order to strengthen the finances of the state and reward the members and retinue of his family. The fiscal measures were harsh, and the tax collectors proved themselves in extracting the various duties from the rural

²²⁰ Anna Komnene VI 14–VIII, 6 (199, 18ff. REINSCH – KAMBYLIS); Zonaras XVIII 23, 1–7 (740, 8–741, 5 BÜTTNER-WOBST). MALAMUT, Alexis Comnène, 84–88; BIRKENMEIER, Komnenian army, 70–77.

²²¹ Anna Komnene X 2, 2–4, 11 (283, 74ff. REINSCH – KAMBYLIS); Zonaras XVIII 23, 26–28 (744, 5–15 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, Political history, 132–134; BIRKENMEIER, Komnenian army, 77–78.

²²² Anna Komnene VII 8, IX 1, 3, XI 5, 1–5 (222, 68–226, 35, 258, 1–261, 31, 263, 92–265, 44, 335, 20–337, 96 BÜTTNER-WOBST); Zonaras XVIII 22, 13–15 (736, 17–737, 6 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, Political history, 134–135; MALAMUT, Alexis Comnène, 88–94.

²²³ Anna Komnene III 6 (100, 10–103, 95 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS). ANGOLD, Political history, 153–154; MALAMUT, Alexis Comnène, 291–294; MAGDALINO, Innovations, 153–155.

²²⁴ Anna Komnene III 4, 1–3 (95, 59–96, 97 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS). ANGOLD, Political history, 146–147; MALAMUT, Alexis Comnène, 275–277; MAGDALINO, Innovations, 147–153.

²²⁵ HARVEY, Rural economy, 172–173; LAIOU – MORRISSON, Byzantine economy, 151–153.

population.²²⁶ Nevertheless, the system worked to the advantage of the state, allowing Alexios to consolidate his power. By the year 1095, the empire was in a much better condition than fourteen years earlier. The way was open for the recovery of Asia Minor from the Turks, as thousands of westerners were making their way eastwards to liberate the Holy Land from the Muslims. A new chapter in Byzantine and Mediterranean history was just beginning.

3. Patterns of trade and communication in the heartlands of Byzantium

3.1 The Euxeinos Pontos

Introduction

The Ἀξενος Πόντος - the unhospitable Sea that was subsequently renamed Εύξεινος (hospitable) by the Greeks, and later the Πόντος Μέλας because of the dark shade of its water known as the *Shavi Zghva* to the Georgians, the *Marea Neagră* to the Romanians, the *Chernoe More* to the south-eastern Slavs and as the *Karadeniz* to the Turks, is the first region under examination in our study (map 3). Surrounded on almost all sides by Greek colonies from the eighth century BCE, it became a valuable and protected region, access to which was carefully maintained from the time of the ancient Hellenic states, through the Roman and into the Byzantine periods without interruption. The reasons behind this consistent policy were purely strategic, since the hinterland of the Euxeinos supplied cereals to the great cities of the Mediterranean world, along with a number of raw materials. The cereals alone were an obvious reason for the protection of the Black Sea from external intruders who would harass the convoys that, starting from the northern shores of the Black Sea, passed through the Straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles and ended up in cities such as Athens.²²⁷

The Black Sea links the east of the Balkans with the Russian plains, the Caucasus, and the coasts of northern Anatolia. The Crimean Peninsula thrusts into the Black Sea from the north, and the narrow Kerch Strait (*Κιμμέριος Βόσπορος*) links the latter with the Sea of Azov (*Μαιῶτις λίμνη*). Having only a few small islands, the shoreline is mildly indented except for the north and north-west where the mouths of the numerous great rivers create a low and sandy coastline. The climate is in general terms continental with pronounced seasonal temperature variations, although climatic conditions are controlled by the shoreline relief. Consequently, a steppe climate with cold winters and

²²⁶ Zonaras XVIII 22, 18—19, 22—31 (737, 11—738, 3, 738, 12—740, 2 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, *Political history*, 148—149; 151—155; MALAMUT, *Alexis Comnène*, 277—281; HARVEY, *Rural economy*, 172—173, 182—184; PAPAGIANNE, *Φορολογικές πληροφορίες*, 396—397, 401—403.

²²⁷ For the transport of grain organised by ancient Athens, see POLANYI, *Livelihood of man*, 199ff.

hot, dry summers is found in the north-western part, while in the southeast a climate of the humid subtropical type with abundant precipitation, warm winters and humid summers is more typical. As a result, a wide range of agricultural products are cultivated including cereals, olive oil and wine.²²⁸

From ancient times, the Black Sea created a notional border. To the south and southwest is encountered a continuous civilization zone, including the European continent and the region of south Asia. The most influential states at the time in question were the Byzantine empire, the Arab caliphate, India and China.²²⁹ On the opposite northern shores, the Eurasian steppe dominated, stretching from Mongolia to the lower Danube and the Hungarian plain. This was populated by nomadic tribes with rudimentary political and economic structures but outstanding fighting skills.²³⁰ As far as trade is concerned, the people of the steppes exported raw products such as leather, wax, timber, furs and slaves while they imported industrial products.²³¹ When they lacked the financial means to acquire the basic commodities they would fall back on the only option that was left for them by raiding and pillaging their economically developed neighbouring states.²³²

For the Byzantine Empire, the most important northern sub-region in geopolitical terms was the steppe, called *Patzinacia* (*Πατζινακία*) in the DAI, which stretched in a semicircle along the northern shore of the Black Sea to the bank of the Danube in the west, and to the slopes of the Caucasus Mountains in the east. These two natural barriers supported the Byzantine defences against intruders except under extreme weather conditions such as frost and ice. In such conditions, the Danube was made passable for potential enemies such as the Petchenegs in the middle of the eleventh century.²³³ The importance of this region can easily be appreciated in view of the presence of the great navigable rivers which provided access to territories further north, including the Dniester, the Dnieper, and the Don. By means of these waterways, products from north-eastern Europe and Asia were transported to the Byzantine ports in the Crimea, and then along the western Pontic coast to Constantinople and other markets.

²²⁸ OLSHAUSEN – BOROFFKA, Pontos Euxeinos, <http://dx-doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e1105430> (23.01.2019); DANOFF, Pontos Euxeinos, 868—871, 884—888.

²²⁹ PREISER-KAPPELLER, *Jenseits von Rom*, 13.

²³⁰ PAPASOTIRIOU, *Βυζαντινή στρατηγική*, 63.

²³¹ NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, *Βυζαντινή Κριμαία*, 299.

²³² PAPASOTIRIOU, *Βυζαντινή στρατηγική*, 65.

²³³ PAPASOTIRIOU, *Βυζαντινή στρατηγική*, 65—66; ELLENBLUM, *Collapse*, 126—127.

3.1.1 Cherson, Crimea and the northern shores

The geopolitical context 641 – 741

The peninsula of the Crimea lies in the northern part of the Euxeinos Pontos. In the east, it adjoins the Sea of Azov, while in the southeast the Kerch Peninsula projects into the Sea creating the Straits of Kerch with the Taman Peninsula opposite. In the west, the smaller peninsula of Tarchankut pushes out into the Black Sea creating the Karkinit Bay on its northern shores and the Kalamita Bay on its southern (map 4).

The main geographical characteristic of the Crimea are the three parallel mountain ranges with their flat summits, traversing its south from the promontory of Cherson to the east up to Theodosia / Feodosiya in the west. The rest is a flatland of dry steppe, with extensive lagoons dominating for the most part in the east and north. To the north the extensive lagoon system furnishes one natural passage over a narrow strip of land: the isthmus of Perekop which was for millennia the only solid ground providing direct connection between the Crimea and the steppes to the north. Several rivers have a regular flow, and others are more seasonal. The Crimean mountain ranges have a significant impact on the climate of the southern coast in that they work as barriers against the extremely cold northern winds coming off the northern steppe. At the same time, they trap warm southern winds along the coastline, thus creating a mild and rainy winter succeeded by a hot and dry summer. Under these conditions, it is even possible to cultivate wine and oil. In complete contrast, the flat Kerch peninsula is exposed in all directions, with only the Sea of Azov to provide shielding as a barrier against the freezing northern winds.²³⁴

The most important city of the Crimea was Cherson, positioned on the southwestern shore of the peninsula and already carrying special status since the fourth century CE.²³⁵ This status included a series of privileges that gave the city a certain degree of autonomy within the empire. A “master of the city” (*πρωτεύων*) and a council comprising the most distinguished citizens (*πατέρες τῆς πόλεως*) were responsible for the day-to-day running of the city, but it seems that during periods of emergency they could instigate further initiatives if needed. A mint to produce small-value coinage was also periodically active.²³⁶ Cherson served as an administrative, military and trading post through the centuries, although perhaps its most important function was as a centre for Byzantine intelligence-

²³⁴ AJBABIN, *Archäologie und Geschichte*, 1—4; „<https://academic-eb-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/levels/collegiate/article/Crimea/27901> (17.10.2020)“. For the settlements on the plateau, see ALBRECHT – DAIM – HERDICK (eds.), *Höhensiedlungen der Krim*, various contributions cited below.

²³⁵ NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, *Βυζαντινή Κριμαία*, 301.

²³⁶ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *DAI*, 42 (184, 44—47 MORAVCSIK – JENKINS). For the administration of the city during the Byzantine period, see NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, *Administration locale*, 567—579.

gathering concerning the peoples of the steppe.²³⁷ In the wider region of south-western Crimea, a series of fortified settlements created a protection zone around Cherson. They were inhabited by the Crimean Goths and Alans settled there during the third century as allies of the Roman empire. Their most important settlements were Dorys / Doros / (possibly Mangup-Kale) and Ėski-Kermen, on the plateau east of Cherson.²³⁸

After the middle of the seventh century, Cherson suffered from the effects of the Khazar conquest of the northern and south-eastern part of the Crimea.²³⁹ The Khazar khaganate, a multi-ethnic state ruled by a clan of West Turkic origin, expanded westwards from its core territories into the north-eastern Caucasus and the neighbouring steppes between the Sea of Azov and the Volga. Through the appointment of governors in the cities of Phanagoreia and Kimmerios Bosporos, it had effectively brought the Straits of Kerch under control, thus encircling the Byzantine possessions in the southwest of the peninsula.²⁴⁰ The Byzantines responded with military and diplomatic measures. The first included the construction of a series of fortresses across the plateaux of the Crimean mountain range which were organised as *archontiai* or *klimata*, entities governed by their respective *archontes*, subordinates of Byzantium.²⁴¹ Diplomatic initiatives extended to intermarriage between the successors of the Byzantine throne and daughters of the ruling leader of the khaganate. At the beginning of the eighth century, the Khazars expanded their control over the *archontiai* / *klimata* and also over Cherson itself for a brief period. The punitive campaign against the city organised by Justinian II might well be viewed as an attempt to restore direct imperial control over the region, an objective that was in all probability completed in the first decades of the eighth century.²⁴²

Pathways of communication

As already indicated, the most important routes of traffic in the northern hinterland of the Black Sea were the Dniester, Dnieper, and Don rivers, the two first flowing into the Black Sea, and the third into the Sea of Azov. The steppe (*Patzinacia*) was traversed by one of the many branches of the Silk

²³⁷ NOONAN, *Byzantium and the Khazars*, 118; ROMANCUK, *Geschichte und Archäologie des byzantinischen Cherson*, 63—64; ALBRECHT, *Krim der Byzantiner*, 116; SCHREG, *Forschungen zum Umland*, 432—433.

²³⁸ AIBABIN, *Rural population*, 415—419; ALBRECHT – HERDICK, *Spielball der Mächte*, 25—29.

²³⁹ For the sources that cite Crimea during the period in question see ALBRECHT, *Quellen*, 28—44, 138—140, 149—160, 199—200, 210—215, 304—306, 331.

²⁴⁰ AIBABIN, *Archäologie und Geschichte*, 157, 171—173, 176—177; NOONAN, *Byzantium and the Khazars*, 123, 129.

²⁴¹ AIBABIN, *Rural population*, 421—422.

²⁴² Theophanes (377, 22—379, 14 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 45 (106, 1—110, 52 MANGO). NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, *Βυζαντινή Κριμαία*, 304—305; NOONAN, *Byzantium and the Khazars*, 112—113, 130—131; ROMANCUK, *Geschichte und Archäologie des byzantinischen Cherson*, 61—62; AIBABIN, *Archäologie und Geschichte*, 180—183; ALBRECHT – HERDICK, *Spielball der Mächte*, 50—51; AIBABIN, *Ėski Kermen*, 191—192.

Road.²⁴³ Crimea was accessible from the north through an axis coming from Kiev. It entered the peninsula through the isthmus of Perekop that crossed the great lagoons in the northeast and came to an end at Cherson.²⁴⁴

It is not clear whether the Romans and / or the Byzantines built roads in their Crimean possessions, although according to standard practice they would have done so. The road beginning at Sebastopol connects all the coastal settlements. From a west-to-east direction, the most important are Yalta, Sougdaia / Sudak, Theodosia / Feodosia and Kimmerios Bosporos / Kerch. Cherson was also connected with its immediate hinterland.²⁴⁵

In terms of movement and communication by sea, the ideal weather conditions prevailed between the spring and early autumn, allowing the crossing of the Black Sea from Cherson in the north to Karambis cape in the south, a journey of 491 km in total and taking anything between twenty-four hours and three days to complete.²⁴⁶ The escape of the exiled Justinian II and his wandering across the region provide a glimpse of an interesting itinerary that combined land and sea travel. From Cherson, the fugitive went to Doros in the east (38 km).²⁴⁷ From there, using overland routes he went to Phanagoreia, near the modern town of Sennoy (317 km). His next stop was at Tomis / Taman in the south-west of Sennoy (25 km), and from there he boarded a ship and headed for Symbolon / Balaklava (259 km), near Cherson. Following the coast, he reached the region of Nekropela between the estuaries of the Dnieper and the Dniester, where he and his companions encountered a rough sea. Finally he reached the estuaries of the Danube where his adventurous journey ended (750 km).²⁴⁸ A fleet sent subsequently by the emperor - who had by now regained his throne - to receive his wife and son from the Khazar dominions in the Crimea sank on account of bad weather.²⁴⁹ It is likely that these adverse weather conditions were caused by the *graioglevante* (γραιγολεβάντε), a strong eastern-north-eastern wind that was responsible for the majority of ship losses already in ancient times.²⁵⁰ According to the logbooks of a salvage company based in Istanbul, a total of 439 ships were lost during the years 1870

²⁴³ SHEPARD, "Mists and portals", 422.

²⁴⁴ AVRAMEA, *Επικοινωνίες*, 138 and the attached map; KÜLZER, *Ostthrakien*, 196—197.

²⁴⁵ AJBABIN, *Archäologie und Geschichte*, 5; AVRAMEA, *Επικοινωνίες*, with the attached map.

²⁴⁶ Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *Parekbolai* (244, 15—25 MÜLLER); *Life of John of Gothia*, C 6 (191). SHEPARD, "Mists and portals", 423; DIMITROUKAS, *Reisen und Verkehr*, 441, 443—444; ORBIS calculation: between 1, 2, and 5 days of fast travel.

²⁴⁷ For Doros/Dorys and its possible identification with Mangup-Kale, see AJBABIN, *Archäologie und Geschichte*, 108, 180; ALBRECHT – HERDICK, *Spielball der Mächte*, 29—30.

²⁴⁸ Theophanes (372, 26—374, 1 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 42 (100, 1—102, 37 MANGO). ORBIS calculation: 4,3 days of fast travel in November; DIMITROUKAS, *Reisen und Verkehr*, 434—437. Of course, the final destination of Justinian was Constantinople, which he later reached accompanied by a Bulgarian army.

²⁴⁹ Or at least this is what Theophanes (375, 21—22 DE BOOR) records. Nikephoros 42 (104, 75 MANGO) does not mention the loss of the fleet.

²⁵⁰ The last incident due to severe weather conditions was recorded for 19.04.2017

<<https://worldmaritimeneews.com/archives/217968/seven-missing-after-ship-sinks-in-black-sea/>> (04.02.2019). For another possible incident because of the *graioglevante* see, Eugenios of Trebizond, 262, 305—312.

– 1890 because of bad weather, thirty-five being steamers. Most of these accidents occurred in June, September, November and December, in a region that extended 130 km on both sides of the Bosphorus entrance. Combined with the sea currents that brought the streams of the great rivers down the Straits of the Bosphorus, the unstable weather conditions demanded the careful attention of crews throughout the Black Sea.²⁵¹

Settlement patterns

Located on one of the vast promontories on the north-eastern tip of the Crimea, Cherson had already a long and rich history, and in the middle of the seventh century manifested a number of some distinctive features. The most notable was the grid plan of antiquity, which was retained with only minor changes until the decline of the city in the thirteenth century.²⁵² Some calculations have established a population between 4.725 and 5.580 inhabitants for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The language of the church and administration - either local or central - was Greek and the Greek-speaking population must have formed a substantial percentage of the total one, although no exact figures are available.²⁵³ As already mentioned, its strategic position was of high value since it monitored movements across the territories of the north. At the same time, its geographical location made it an exceptionally convenient point of trade with the people of the steppes.²⁵⁴

Trade

During the Byzantine period, Cherson was principally oriented to the sea, while though also linked to contacts with its hinterland. After the Khazar conquest of the Crimea (c. 650), however, only a limited area was left to the imperial administration outside the city walls. Although diplomatic relations were soon established with the khaganate, the city had to be supplied with grain from the western and southern regions of the Black Sea, where imperial authority was more stable.²⁵⁵

The main products of Cherson were salt and fish, and their combination the salted-fish sauce that succeeded the highly popular *garum* of antiquity.²⁵⁶ The marine fauna of the Black Sea is rather

²⁵¹ KOROMELA, Έλληνες στη Μαύρη Θάλασσα, 40—43.

²⁵² BORTOLI – KAZANSKI, Χερσόνα, 415. The older views concerning the historical evolution of Cherson, along with the earlier pre-Revolutionary and Soviet period literature, are conveniently presented in SMEDLEY, Archaeology of Cherson, 171—192.

²⁵³ ROMANCUK, Geschichte und Archäologie, 216—218; NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Βυζαντινή Κριμαία, 302—304, 313.

²⁵⁴ SHEPARD, “Mists and portals”, 429; DIMITROUKAS, Reisen und Verkehr, 165—167.

²⁵⁵ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, DAI 53 (286, 512—535 MORAVCSIK – JENKINS) 286, 523—525, 530—535. KARAGIANNI, City-Ports on the Black Sea, 86; SHEPARD, “Mists and portals”, 428. For a literature review until 2011 see YASHAEVA, Byzantine archaeology, 72—86.

²⁵⁶ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, DAI 42 (186, 69—71 MORAVCSIK – JENKINS). ROMANCUK, Geschichte und Archäologie, 100—101.

rich, including flounder, pikeperch, mussels, oysters and crabs, with the fish par excellence being to this day the sturgeon.²⁵⁷ But anchovy was the primary object of systematic fishing, their processing taking place in numerous large salting cisterns, which were replaced subsequently over the centuries, each having a lifespan of approximately fifty years. They were carefully constructed and could be filled with a considerable number of fish when working at full capacity. For the period in question, four seem to have been operational in Cherson until the middle of the seventh century, and six until the eighth century.²⁵⁸ The production and export of salt is also testified by the exiled pope Martin I, who speaks of “small boats which come here occasionally to take back a load of salt” in exchange for grain, wine and olive oil, which were imported “from the Pontic region”.²⁵⁹ According to Martin, he had to pay one *nomisma* for one *modios* of grain when the normal price was four *modioi* per *nomisma*. To highlight the shortage of grain, he notes that he could not even buy a quantity for one *tremissis* (a third of a *solidus*).²⁶⁰ His Greek *Vita* confirms this evidence, and although these sources include *topoi* used in “exile literature” from Roman times onwards, their account is still useful.²⁶¹

The production of fish sauce covered not only local demand but was destined also for export, as the existence of LR 5 amphorae found in Cherson and its vicinity shows. These along with other types of LRA – namely, LRA 1 / 2 / 4 and 6 - were locally manufactured according to the evidence of surviving kilns. These were part of ceramic complexes, a fact that shows production on a large scale from the eighth century onwards. Other pottery finds include LRC 3 F and G, and also stamped African ware dated to the second half of the seventh century.²⁶² Good relations with the semi-nomadic inhabitants of the peninsula are further attested by the existence of kilns found even deep in the hinterland, producing a variety of ceramics including LRA imitations.²⁶³

The manufacture of metalwork also formed an important part of the secondary sector. Matrices for the construction of belt accessories have been discovered, the latter also being exported to neighbouring nomads to form a key element of their apparel.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁷ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, DAI 42 (186, 87—89 MORAVCSIK – JENKINS). ROMANCUK, *Geschichte und Archäologie*, 102; KOROMELA, *Ἑλληνες στη Μαύρη Θάλασσα*, 228; DANOFF, *Pontos Euxeinus*, 955—957.

²⁵⁸ ROMANCUK, *Geschichte und Archäologie*, 102—110; BORTOLI – KAZANSKI, *Χερσόνα*, 417, 421.

²⁵⁹ Anastasius Bibliothecarius, 222, 14—18; *Life of Pope Martin* 11.

²⁶⁰ Anastasius Bibliothecarius, 224, 24—226, 7.

²⁶¹ *Life of Pope Martin* 11. ALBRECHT, *Quellen zur byzantinischen Krim*, 156; IDEM, *Krim der Byzantiner*, 106—107. See also page 7.

²⁶² ROMANCUK, *Geschichte und Archäologie*, 206—210; BORTOLI – KAZANSKI, *Χερσόνα*, 419.

²⁶³ ROMANCUK, *Geschichte und Archäologie*, 116—117; BORTOLI – KAZANSKI, *Χερσόνα*, 419, 421; AJBABIN, *Archäologie und Geschichte*, 170—173; 177—180.

²⁶⁴ ROMANCUK, *Geschichte und Archäologie*, 124; BORTOLI – KAZANSKI, *Χερσόνα*, 419—421; SHEPARD, “Mists and portals”, 426.

From the lands of the north, Cherson imported raw products such as leather, wax, lumber, and furs, while the trade in slaves was also active. From the south came staples, products of artisanship, and ceramics of various types, such as glazed white wares from Constantinople.²⁶⁵

“Black Gold”

Finally came the crude oil or naphtha found in various springs in the coastal hinterland of the Sea of Azov and the Caucasus. It was a raw material of critical importance for the Byzantines since it was the main ingredient for “Liquid Fire”, an efficient weapon in naval warfare. Unfortunately, our only source concerning itself with naphtha, the *DAI*, does not offer any details, such as how the Byzantines acquired it, whether as a trade commodity paid for in cash or as a form of tribute from the local rulers.²⁶⁶

The role of the state

Control and taxation

The seals of the *kommerkiarioi* are another indicator of the importance of the Crimea during the period 641 – 741. They were found in Cherson and in the port of Sougdaia, the latter being under nominal imperial control.²⁶⁷ Among these are to be found some intriguing examples such as those of Anastasios and Ioannes, *kommerkiarioi of the apotheke of Honorias, Paphlagonia, and of the coastal area of Pontos (up to Trebizond)*, dated 720 – 741.²⁶⁸ This geographical area covering the entirety of the southern Black Sea coast implies close trading relations with the Crimea. In fact, it might be assumed that these *kommerkiarioi* also exercised authority over Sougdaia. In addition, one of the lead seals belonged to a *Sisinnios (?) kommerkiarios and archon tou blattiou*, i.e., an official in charge of the imperial silk workshop.²⁶⁹ Given the fact that one of the endpoints of the Silk Road was located at the Sea of Azov, the presence of such an official is only to be expected. It may also be assumed that the *kommerkiarioi* managed the purchase and transportation of naphtha from the Sea of Azov and the Caucasus littoral to Constantinople.

²⁶⁵ AJBABIN, *Archäologie und Geschichte*, 183; KARAGIANNI, *City-Ports on the Black Sea*, 91; SHEPARD, “Mists and portals”, 426; SEDIKOVA, *Tauric Chersonesos*, 133.

²⁶⁶ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *DAI* 53 (284, 493—286, 511 MORAVCSIK – JENKINS). KOUTAVA-DELEVORIA, *Γεωγραφικός κόσμος I*, 206—207; SHEPARD, “Mists and portals”, 427—428; HALDON, “Greek fire” revisited, 305—309; KOROMELA, *Έλληνες στην Μαύρη Θάλασσα*, 229.

²⁶⁷ AJBABIN, *Written sources*, 61—62; PAPAGEORGIOU, *Sougdaia*, <<http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=11829>> (01.02.2019); AJBABIN, *Archäologie und Geschichte*, 180, 191—192; SANDROVSKAJA, *Bleisiegel in Sudak*, 85—98; SOKOLOVA, *Vizantijskie pecati*, 205—206, n. 10, 208, n. 26. For the *kommerkiarioi* and their responsibilities, see Chapter Four.

²⁶⁸ This geographical detail “up to Trapesounta” features only on one of the two seals of Anastasios. SANDROVSKAJA, *Bleisiegel in Sudak*, 86—88.

²⁶⁹ AJBABIN, *Archäologie und Geschichte*, 183; SOKOLOVA, *Vizantijskie pecati*, 202, 206; ZV I, 344—345, n. 267.

Monetary production and circulation

It is well attested that during the early Byzantine period Cherson housed a mint issuing copper coinage - namely, the *folles* and its denominations - and this ended its operations around 615 – 619. It is possible that a provisional mint at Bosphoros was active for some time during the middle of the seventh century, countermarking older coins and striking new ones.²⁷⁰ Copper coinage was the medium of exchange *par excellence* for everyday market transactions and could also be used for small scale trade with the neighbouring nomads. Again, the testimony of Martin I provides a sharp contrast: he did not lack the money to buy staples, it was the staples that were in short supply. Of course, as an honourable captive he probably had at his disposal a considerable amount of money, for he refers only to “nomismata” i.e., golden coins (*sic potuimus emere tres vel quattuor modios nomismata usque / μόλις ἡδυνήθη ἀγοράσαι ἐξ αὐτοῦ μόδιον ἓνα σίτου κατὰ τεσσάρων μοδίων τοῦ νομισμάτος*).²⁷¹

The Khazar rulers of Gotthia, in the northeast of Cherson, issued copper imitations of the *nomisma*, both gilded and not. The finds range from c. 717 to 751, thus imitating the golden coins of Leo III, and those of Leo III with Constantine V.²⁷² Very likely produced without imperial approval, one may suspect that these were used both as means of exchange and as a symbol of status among the local ruling class.

The geopolitical context 1025 – 1095

During the years 1025 – 1095, the geopolitical situation in the Black Sea region was characterised by the continuous expansion of the Russian principality of Kiev southwards, which brought about the dissolution of the Khazar khaganate and the concomitant emergence of new nomadic polities.²⁷³ Sviatoslav of Kiev dealt a final blow to the Khazars in the mid-960s and opened up the routes along the Don and its tributary, the Donets. But this action had as its affect the launch of another wave of nomads, which poured westwards into the vast region between the Volga and the Dnieper – namely, the Petchenegs, the Oghuz Turks, and the Cumans.²⁷⁴ Of all these tribes, the first posed the most serious threat as early as the beginning of the tenth century, since various groups were then harassing the region around the rapids of the lower Dnieper and thus the trade route between Kiev and Constantinople. The final solution to the problem was provided by Sviatoslav’s successor, Vladimir

²⁷⁰ ROMANCUK, *Geschichte und Archäologie*, 162, 198; MORRISSON, *Το βυζαντινό νόμισμα*, 46, chart A; NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, *Administration locale*, 576—577; MORRISSON, *Catalogue I*, 316; GRIERSON, *Catalogue II 1*, 38, 54—55 with table 8; IDEM, *Catalogue II 2*, 510; IDEM, *Catalogue III 1*, 92; ANOKHIN, *Coinage of Chersonesus*, 96—99; 159 (n. 322).

²⁷¹ Anastasius Bibliothecarius, 226, 2—7; *Life of Pope Martin 11*. GEROLYMATOU, *Αγορές*, 179—180.

²⁷² AJBABIN, *Archäologie und Geschichte*, 190.

²⁷³ For the Byzantine perspective on developments north of the Black Sea during the 10th century as given by the Constantine Porphyrogenetos, DAI, see SORLIN, *Voies commerciales*, 341ff.

²⁷⁴ FRANKLIN – SHEPARD, *Emergence of Rus*, 143—144.

(c. 978 – 1015), who built a sophisticated defence system that expanded from Kiev into the region of the rapids and included a network of fortified harbours along the Dnieper.²⁷⁵ The Cumans made their appearance in the Black Sea steppes around 1054 – 1055 / 1062, exploiting the opportunity given to them by the Rus when they routed the Oghuz from the region in 1060. They would stay for almost fifty years, when - after a series of intensive campaigns - the joint forces of the Rus princes defeated them in their core territories.²⁷⁶ This triad of nomads (Petchenegs, Oghuz, and Cumans) would end up in the region of the Danube, where they successively invaded Byzantium from the 1020s onwards until their final defeat almost a century later.

Kiev developed rapidly throughout the reign of Iaroslav the Wise (1036 – 1054), who extended its fortifications and built a Golden Gate, a cathedral church dedicated to the Holy Wisdom and a palace.²⁷⁷ The most serious episode of his reign was the siege of Constantinople by Rus forces in the summer of 1043.²⁷⁸ Hostilities broke out when - amidst a dispute between merchants - some Rus were killed, either compelling Iaroslav or giving him a good pretext to organise an expedition against the Byzantine capital.²⁷⁹ The Russian *monoxyla* were defeated outside the walls of the city, and the detachments they carried were eliminated by the Byzantine army.²⁸⁰ A treaty was signed (c. 1047), the terms of which provided for a marriage between a relative of the emperor Constantine IX and Vsevolod, younger son of Iaroslav, as well as the release of the Rus prisoners of war, financial compensation to be paid by the Byzantines, and the renewal of trade privileges to the Rus merchants. It is difficult to trace the motives of Iaroslav. With an impressive move, he seems to have wanted to extort the largest concessions possible from the empire. This period of tension between the two states ended in 1054 with his death.²⁸¹

As far as Byzantine possessions in the Crimea are concerned, the temporary occupation of Cherson by the Rus in 989 did not affect its status as a surveillance and trading post. In addition to the Dnieper-Cherson route, the appearance of new axes such as that connecting the Don-Sea of Azov point towards a growing volume of trade. In this respect, the cities of Sougdaia and Theodosia were

²⁷⁵ FRANKLIN – SHEPARD, *Emergence of Rus*, 142, 178.

²⁷⁶ FRANKLIN – SHEPARD, *Emergence of Rus*, 252, 271–274.

²⁷⁷ ANGOLD, *Political history*, 36; FRANKLIN – SHEPARD, *Emergence of Rus*, 208–216. For the development of the settlement until the end of the tenth century see, IVAKIN, *Kiev*, 225ff.

²⁷⁸ For a detailed survey see SHEPARD, *Russians*, 150–153, 154ff.; FRANKLIN – SHEPARD, *Emergence of Rus*, 216–217.

²⁷⁹ Psellos VI 90–92 (144, 1–12 REINSCH); John Scylitzes (430, 35–48 THURN); Zonaras XVII 24, 1–5 (631, 6–632, 4 BÜTTNER-WOBST). VERNADSKY, *Russo-Byzantine war*, 129–134.

²⁸⁰ Psellos VI 93–95 (144, 12–147, 18 REINSCH); John Scylitzes (430, 48–433, 37 THURN); Attaleiates (16, 17–17, 21 TSOLAKIS); Zonaras XVVII 24, 6–14 (632, 4–633, 18 BÜTTNER-WOBST). VERNADSKY, *Russo-Byzantine war*, 134–135; KISLINGER, *Ruhm der Romania*, 46–50.

²⁸¹ Russian primary chronicle, 138–139. ANGOLD, *Political history*, 36–37; VERNADSKY, *Russo-Byzantine war*, 141, 142–143; FRANKLIN – SHEPARD, *Emergence of Rus*, 225–228; DÖLGER – WIRTH, *Regesten I* 2, n. 879a.

developing as alternative ports, being closer to the latter route as well as to the Rus trading posts in the region. The most important of them, Tamatarcha / Tmutorokan (in the vicinity of modern Taman), located on the Asiatic side of the Kerch Straits, seems to have fallen into Byzantine hands at the end of the 1090s thus giving full control over the region.²⁸² The expansion of Byzantine authority is confirmed, among other indications, by the mention of Leo Alyates, *strategos of Cherson and Sougdaia*, in 1059, of Nikephoros Alanos, *bestarches and katepano of Cherson and Khazaria* (c.1060 / 1080), and of Michael (probably the Christian name of prince Oleg Svjatoslavic, a vassal of the emperor), *archon of Matracha, Zichia and all Khazaria* after 1083.²⁸³

Pathways of communication

The Russian pathway

From the middle of the ninth century, the most frequented route in the region was that beginning at the Gulf of Finland and the Rus trading centres of Staraia Ladoga²⁸⁴ and Gorodishche/Novgorod²⁸⁵ and then proceeding southwards through the lakes and forests of north-eastern Europe, and - taking in using as intermediate stops the settlements of Izborsk, Gnezdovo, and Kiev - passed through the rapids of the Lower Dnieper. From there, it continued on to the river's estuaries and then followed the north-western and western coasts of the Black Sea, passing by the ports of Varna and Mesembria, until it finally reached Constantinople.²⁸⁶ Another route - opening up after the dissolution of the Khazar dominion - pursued an eastern course after Gorodishche, through Timerevo²⁸⁷ and Sarskii Fort,²⁸⁸ down the Don, and - skirting the fortress of Sarkel - came to an end in the region of Tamatarcha. A further route took the road east-southeast of Timerevo and chasing the banks of the Volga headed thence for the region of the Kerch Straits. Additional branches in the south-east led to the Caspian Sea and from there to Baghdad.²⁸⁹

With regard to travel and transportation by sea, there are clear signs of change and development by comparison with the earlier period. The Rus-Byzantine treaties of the tenth and eleventh centuries

²⁸² NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Βυζαντινή Κριμαία, 310—311; For trade see NOONAN – KOVALEV, Prayer and good times 165, 167, and passim; IIDEM, Wine and oil, 192, 193, and passim; FRANKLIN – SHEPARD, Emergence of Rus, 273; ALBRECHT – HERDICK, Spielball der Mächte, 32—34; ALBRECHT, Krim der Byzantiner, 108—109.

²⁸³ ROMANCUK, Geschichte und Archäologie, 59; SEIBT, Verwaltung von Cherson, 191—192; STEPANOVA, Finds from Sudak, 129, n.12.

²⁸⁴ For the development of this settlement up to the end of the tenth century, see KUZMIN, Ladoga, 129ff.

²⁸⁵ For the development of this settlement, see NOSOV, Novgorod, 146ff.

²⁸⁶ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, DAI 9 (56, 1—62, 114 MORAVCSIK – JENKINS). FRANKLIN – SHEPARD, Emergence of Rus, 92, 400—401; KODER, Χώρος, 105; PETRUKHIN, Les villes, 357—363; ANDROSHCHUK, Vikings in the east, 117—125.

²⁸⁷ For the development of this settlement, see SEDYH, Timerevo, 173ff.

²⁸⁸ For the development of this settlement, see LEONTEV, Sarskoe, 199—204, 207—212.

²⁸⁹ FRANKLIN – SHEPARD, Emergence of Rus, 400—401, Map 1.

included, among other stipulations, a series of provisions concerning issues of safe voyage and salvage in Rus territory. They suggest more activity in the northern Black Sea region on the part of Byzantine merchants in comparison with their Rus counterparts. On the other hand, the imperial authorities in Constantinople were obliged to provide the Rus with “anchors, cordage and sales” for their return voyage.²⁹⁰ This suggests that the Rus were also using vessels suitable for both rivers and the open sea.²⁹¹ This evidence can be connected with the settlement of the Rus in several emporia centred on the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Straits, Tmutorokan being the most important. As a result, the ports of Sougdaia and Theodosia developed along the southern coasts of the Crimea on account of their proximity to these Rus foci. In addition, thanks to the increased traffic in the interior of Asia Minor and in the region of Armenia, the routes between the Pontic coast of Asia Minor and the northern shores of the Black Sea were revitalised.²⁹² This development was a consequence of the political stability in the wider region of the Black Sea that was maintained until the middle of the eleventh century.

Other routes

There were also further connections arising through the culture of religion: archaeological evidence suggests that the inhabitants of Cherson travelled as pilgrims to the Holy Land, Constantinople, Syria-Palestine, and Egypt. Specifically, the discovery in Cherson of ampullae dated between the eleventh and twelfth centuries and inscribed with Arabic prayers for Christian pilgrims points to links with the region of Syria and Palestine. A scallop shell - the symbol of Saint James of Compostela - was found in a grave along with other religious accessories, indicating a distant connection with north-western Spain. Furthermore, a glazed plate from Constantinople dated to the tenth-eleventh century carries the depiction of three saints, although the context of its discovery is not given.²⁹³

Settlement patterns

Cherson remained the primary trading centre on the northern shores of the Black Sea. The brief Rus occupation of 988 / 989 left a layer of destruction that is confirmed by the presence of coins of Basil II with Constantine VIII. Likewise, an earthquake around the year 1059 damaged the city walls and other buildings that were soon reconstructed.²⁹⁴ But except for these incidents the city prospered. In

²⁹⁰ Russian primary chronicle, 65, 67. FRANKLIN – SHEPARD, *Emergence of Rus*, 103—104.

²⁹¹ For Viking vessels in general see HEIDE, *Viking ship*, 93ff.

²⁹² IVANOV, *Medieval ports*, 83—84; SHEPARD, “Mists and portals”, 435—436.

²⁹³ JASAEVA, *Pilgerandenken*, 483—489; KÜLZER, *Wirtschaftliche Aspekte*, 194; KISLINGER, *Pilger und Panegyreis*, 362—363.

²⁹⁴ ROMANCUK, *Geschichte und Archäologie*, 148—152, 200 with fn. 7; RABINOVITZ – SEDIKOVA – HENNEBERG, *South region*, 434 with fn. 38.

the vicinity of the harbour, dwellings of Rus, Armenian, Italian, Arab, Tatar, and Alan merchants point to intensive trade.²⁹⁵ Almost the full range of professionals was active including artisans, carpenters, tilers and bakers.²⁹⁶ The demands of the inhabitants increased as a result of population and/or economic growth, and this led to the intensive exploitation of the agrarian hinterland, now relatively secure from enemy activity.²⁹⁷ Other ports that started to gain in importance during the second half of the eleventh century were Sougdaia on the southern coast of the Crimea, and Theodosia which -together with Tmutorokan on the tip of the Taman peninsula- guarded the straits of Kerch.²⁹⁸

Trade

The Rus-Byzantine treaties of the tenth and eleventh centuries except for a clause that stipulated for the security of the Chersonese fishermen from Rus intruders, had their field of application mostly in Constantinople.²⁹⁹ In fact, there are signs of continuity in Cherson for the years 1025 – 1095. The short-lived Rus occupation in 988 / 989 did not affect trade in any serious way. There is a high probability that the scale of fish-sauce production dropped off substantially from its previous level since only two salting cisterns were built after the tenth century, although the accurate dating of these constructions is impossible. A possible cause was a change in climate and sea level, causing a reduction in overall fish. The production of salt, however, continued as in the earlier period.³⁰⁰

Manufacture revived after the ninth century, and during the eleventh seems to have reached its heyday. Glass products, amphorae, ceramic wares of several types, and metal objects were produced at a local level both in small home workshops as well as large industrial ones. Kilns to produce bricks also testify to the demand for building materials of quality.³⁰¹

Ceramics of Turkish-Bulgar, Alan and Transcaucasian provenance offer an indicator for Cherson's commercial links with these neighbouring regions,³⁰² but the most important trading route was that of the north. Two commodities predominated: olive oil and wine. From the early eleventh century, the Rus princes and the elite that had converted to Christianity en masse after 988 / 989 began the construction of major ecclesiastical complexes that required considerable amounts of oil and wine for everyday and liturgical use. In addition, the Rus quickly developed an appreciation for wine, and

²⁹⁵ ROMANCUK, *Geschichte und Archäologie*, 163—164; 193—196; BORTOLI – KAZANSKI, *Χερσόνα*, 425.

²⁹⁶ ROMANCUK, *Geschichte und Archäologie*, 118—120; 120—124.

²⁹⁷ BORTOLI – KAZANSKI, *Χερσόνα*, 423—425.

²⁹⁸ NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, *Σουγδαία*, 14—15; EADEM. *Βυζαντινή Κριμαία*, 311; SHEPARD, “Mists and portals”, 431—432.

²⁹⁹ Russian primary chronicle, 76; DÖLGER, *Regesten I* 1,2, nos. 556, 647.

³⁰⁰ ROMANCUK, *Geschichte und Archäologie*, 109; BORTOLI – KAZANSKI, *Χερσόνα*, 423; SHEPARD, “Mists and portals”, 430; GEROLYMATOU, *Αγορές*, 180—183.

³⁰¹ BORTOLI – KAZANSKI, *Χερσόνα*, 423; ROMANCUK, *Geschichte und Archäologie*, 118—119.

³⁰² BORTOLI – KAZANSKI, *Χερσόνα*, 421.

provided for copious quantities in their cellars. In the citadel of Novgorod-Seversk, a wooden wine cellar on a princely scale has been excavated, its amphora capacity estimated at between 2.214 and 2.583 litres of wine. Olive oil, equally, was essential for the lightning of religious and secular buildings and for certain types of artisanship, and especially in the manufacturing of portable icons. When heated and mixed with melted amber, it produced a coating that was applied to the icon to protect it from surface wear.³⁰³

Amphorae for the transportation of olive oil and wine have been found in abundance across the lands of the Rus from Novgorod and Beloozero, in the north, to Kiev and Tmutorokan in the south. It seems that a whole network of wholesale and retail trade was active, but unfortunately the details are unknown.³⁰⁴

Of course, oil and wine needed smaller containers and vessels to be redistributed and consumed, and this need boosted the import of Byzantine-made utensils both for religious and secular use. In a later period, it was the artisans of Kiev and Novgorod whose ability to manufacture fine metal and glass cornered the needs of this market. Jugs and cups made of glass, metal, and wood were found in abundant quantities across the lands of the Rus, even as part of treasure hoards. Amphorae and other ceramics imitating Byzantine forms were produced in major centres from the beginning of the eleventh century.³⁰⁵

The oil and wine exported to the lands of the Rus were produced in the Crimea and other regions of the Byzantine Empire.³⁰⁶ According to the findings of the Yeni-Kapi excavations, it seems that Crimea supplied Constantinople itself with wine: amphorae from Crimea were found in YK 1 and YK 12 wrecks.³⁰⁷ Although these are ninth century in date, they are proof of the industrial and agricultural productivity of Cherson. Regarding imports, the merchants from the north continued to carry the usual commodities to Cherson and Constantinople: furs, wax, honey, and linen along with slaves.³⁰⁸

“Black Gold”

By the middle of the tenth century, the Byzantines had identified the locations of the wells yielding naphtha in the region of the Sea of Azov and Caucasia. The closest wells were near Tmutorokan. As with the earlier period, we lack any details concerning the ways in which naphtha was acquired,

³⁰³ NOONAN – KOVALEV, *Wine and oil*, 196—201.

³⁰⁴ NOONAN – KOVALEV, *Wine and oil*, 187—196; IIDEM, *Prayer and good times*, 90, 162—169.

³⁰⁵ NOONAN – KOVALEV, *Wine and oil*, 201—204; FRANKLIN – SHEPARD, *Emergence of Rus*, 280—281.

³⁰⁶ NOONAN – KOVALEV, *Prayer and good times*, 176.

³⁰⁷ On YK 12 see KOCABAŞ, *Yenikapi 12*, 49—55; DENKER et al. *YK 12*, 203—209.

³⁰⁸ KARAGIANNI, *City-Ports on the Black Sea*, 86—89; SEDIKOVA, *Tauric Chersonesos*, 133; JANKOWIAK, *Byzantine coins*, 130—132.

especially since after the Khazar decline Tmutorokan was occupied by the Rus. The most plausible hypothesis is that it was obtained either through diplomatic negotiations by the empire and exacted in the form of military aid or as a commodity purchased directly with cash.³⁰⁹ In any case, Tmutorokan came under imperial control in the late 1090s, thus securing a critical resource for the military machine of the empire.

From the rest of the empire, Cherson imported ceramics, glass products, and products of artisanship including bronze, stone, ivory and steatite icons, jewellery, and other items.³¹⁰

The role of the state

Monetary production and circulation

The discussion here focuses not only on monetary production and circulation within Cherson but also on that of the region, including the northern territories of the Kievan principality. The geographical whole will be looked at as four areas of activity: the first includes the city of Cherson itself, the second covers the Crimean Peninsula, the third the Taman peninsula and the shores of the Sea of Azov, and the fourth the territories under control of the Kievan Rus principality up to Novgorod.

Cherson

In the first area, the mint of Cherson resumed activity at some point between 842 and 867. The last coin to be minted there was an anonymous *folles* of Basil II, dated between 977 and 989, the year the city was occupied by the Rus.³¹¹

The copper coins produced in Cherson in the ninth and tenth centuries were of poor-quality alloy, diverse sizes and weights, and were cast instead of being struck. One might suppose that they were not real coins at all, but a kind of token or receipt, used for the corn trade. Of course, the presence of the imperial mark and their wide issue contradicts such a hypothesis. P. Grierson has suggested that it is possible that corn prices were lower at Cherson than in other parts of the empire, and that the local authorities, still retaining a degree of autonomy, found it convenient to issue copper coins of lesser value than the standard ones. Another possible assumption might be that the city's recovery from the Rus by the Byzantines in 989 led to an administrative reorganisation that included the closure of the mint. Even a small mint like that of Cherson which struck copper coinage of low quality was probably

³⁰⁹ See page 47 with fn. 266.

³¹⁰ KARAGIANNI, *City-Ports on the Black Sea*, 89—94; SEDIKOVA, *Tauric Chersonesos*, 133; ZALESSKAYA, *Artefacts*, 123—128.

³¹¹ MORRISSON, *Catalogue II*, 611; GRIERSON, *Catalogue III 2*, 632—633; NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, *Administration locale*, 577—578; SOKOLOVA, *Monety*, 143; ANOKHIN, *Coinage of Chersonesus*, 105—112; 160—170 is in favour of a later date between 1016 and 1025.

thought to be overly exposed to potential enemies who could seize the metal reserves and equipment stored there. This could result in the illegal minting of imperial coins, not only of copper but also of silver or even gold an activity that took place in any case, as we shall see below. With the improvement of sea communications, Constantinople could now cover the monetary needs of its Crimean possessions. The discovery of two anonymous *folleis* of Romanos III (1028 – 1034) confirms that this assumption is indeed correct.³¹²

Crimean peninsula, Taman and Sea of Azov

As one moves into the second region of interest, that is the Crimean peninsula, a relative absence of gold and silver Byzantine coinage is observed.³¹³ But this picture changes as we move on into the third, the region of the Taman peninsula and the shores of the Sea of Azov: numerous inferior quality imitations of silver *miliaresia* in billon and copper have been discovered, just as for the period 641 – 741. They circulated within a limited area, and it is highly unlikely that the imperial authorities approved of them. Their issue corresponded to a rising need for a transaction medium of some value,³¹⁴ and their additional use as status symbols by the local elites cannot be rejected. But their presence forebodes the circulation of Byzantine coins within the Kievan Rus principality, which is our fourth region of interest.

The Russian lands

Dating from the period between c. 1000 and 1100, numerous hoards have been found that include a mixture of Byzantine coins together with Arab, Volga Bulgar, western, and Rus silver coins. The most important locations of these finds from north to south are Novgorod, Chernigov, and Kiev.³¹⁵ They include all three denominations of coin: the golden *solidus*, the silver *miliaresion* and the copper *folles*. From all of these foreign currencies, it seems that only the Byzantine *miliaresia* could circulate within the principality, while the *solidi* and *folleis* did not.³¹⁶

Two periods of import and circulation are distinct: the first from c. 975 up to c. 1050, and the second from c. 1060 onwards. In the first period Byzantine coinage was imported on a regular basis, while in the second there was a sharp decline, followed subsequently by a complete cessation.³¹⁷ The medium of transaction par excellence was the *miliaresion*. This may be taken as indicating the fact that

³¹² GRIERSON, Catalogue III 1, 91—92; ANOKHIN, Coinage of Chersonesus, 115—116; 170—173 supports the idea of an almost continuous operation of the mint up to the early twelfth century.

³¹³ ROMANCUK, Geschichte und Archäologie, 209.

³¹⁴ SHEPARD, “Mists and portals”, 433—435; ANDROSHCHUK, Images of power, 74—88.

³¹⁵ NOONAN, Circulation, 144—145, 150—151.

³¹⁶ NOONAN, Circulation, 151; JANKOWIAK, Byzantine coins, 122.

³¹⁷ NOONAN, Circulation, 152—154; JANKOWIAK, Byzantine coins, 123, 126—130 with table 5. 2.

solidi were too rare in the land of the Rus and the value of copper coins too low and/or too variable to assume the function of a medium of exchange. Consequently, while *solidi* and *folleis* certainly reached the Rus, they never became part of the coin stock being hoarded. Only the silver *miliaresion* circulated, since, as a rule, silver coins were the only ones to be universally accepted not only by Rus but also by Arab merchants with whom the first were in direct contact through the Caucasian and Caspian trade routes.³¹⁸ The area of circulation centred along the famous route “from the Varangians to the Greeks” that is, the route that began at Novgorod and passed through Kiev following the course of the great navigable rivers. The greatest concentration of Byzantine coins occurs in the region of Novgorod, suggesting very strongly that their circulation gravitated towards the north-west territories of the Rus.³¹⁹ In any case, their greatest volume dates to the reign of Basil II (976 – 1025), with a considerable fall-off already in the years of his immediate successors.³²⁰

Conclusions

To take stock, then, of the evidence reviewed so far for the region: in Cherson itself, the production of the local mint, limited to low quality copper *folleis* ends in around 989. From this time on, only a couple of Constantinopolitan *folleis*, dated from 1028 to 1034, are present in the record. In the wider region of the Crimea, there is a relative absence of gold and silver coinage, while within the Kievan principality the *miliaresion* was the main medium of exchange, with gold and copper coins being used only on a limited scale, and indeed mostly hoarded, with imports already dropping off after 1025.

The link between all of these regions is the wide circulation of the silver *miliaresion*, both in the form of originals and as imitations, at the expense of the golden *solidus* and the copper *follis*. This can easily be explained by the fact that the Rus were much more familiar with silver as a precious metal and unit of value than with gold or bronze.³²¹ The relative absence of *folleis* across their territories perhaps meant that there was no need for the latter to be produced in Cherson, since the *solidi* and *miliaresia* required were minted exclusively in Constantinople.

As for the severe drop in imports of Byzantine coins after 1025, a plausible hypothesis might be that Basil II allowed in the form of *miliaresion* the export of copious quantities of silver -a metal much appreciated by the Rus- as a reward for the conversion of prince Vladimir and his subjects to Christianity, at the same time fuelling trade between Byzantium and the Kievan principality. In all probability, his successors significantly reduced the rate of supply to control the outflow of precious

³¹⁸ NOONAN, Circulation 151.

³¹⁹ NOONAN, Circulation, 156, 162.

³²⁰ NOONAN, Circulation, 164; updated catalogue with short comment in ANDROSHCHUK, Vikings in the east, 113—117.

³²¹ HENDY, Monetary economy, 270.

metal, which was a standard Byzantine practice, and the silver famine that hit the Muslim world during the eleventh century might have additionally compelled the imperial administration to follow a restrictive policy.³²²

The Rus were displeased by this development, which might have led, along with other factors, to Iaroslav's expedition against Constantinople in 1043. But it seems that this course of action did not bring about any significant result, since the import of Byzantine coins continued to be low. The existence of the *miliaresia* imitations in the region of Taman and the Sea of Azov, dotted with Rus emporia, seem explicable within this context. After c. 1060, the growing financial problems of the empire left no room even for a minimal outflow of silver or gold to the Rus, who from now on had to rely on their own silver currency to conduct their domestic and international transactions.

3.1.2 The Caucasus region (with emphasis on Armenia)

Geography and geopolitics

From a geophysical and geopolitical point of view, the region of the Caucasus or Caucasia includes not only the mountain ranges of the Caucasus proper but also the areas to the north and south (map 5). These are respectively, Ciscaucasia and Transcaucasia.³²³ For reasons of historical evolution and closer vicinity, Transcaucasia was the region with the greater significance for Byzantium (map 6). In terms of climate, the Greater Caucasus works as a barrier between the temperate and subtropical climatic zones of Ciscaucasia and Transcaucasia, respectively. The latter has a subtropical climate with two basic variations: in the west, humid with mild winters thanks to the Black Sea, and, in the interior, dry with variations in annual rainfall.³²⁴ It is this mild climate that allows for the cultivation of fruits such as the apricot and the peach in an otherwise mountainous terrain.

The strategic importance of the region was exceptional, a fact determined by its geography. The mountains of the Caucasus dominate the neighbouring regions of Asia Minor and the central Iranian plateau, and the northern top of the Fertile Crescent also. Due to the nature of its extremely fragmented terrain, where the almost inaccessible mountains are divided by small valleys, the region was politically splintered off among several minor states,³²⁵ and culturally speaking into three essential zones. In the north, the Georgians predominated. The Lazoi, the Abkhazians, and the Iberians were

³²² HENDY, Monetary economy, 257—260, 279. After 1025, the few Byzantine coins to reach the Rus were either gold or copper, NOONAN, Circulation, 164, 168.

³²³ “<<http://academic.eb.com/EBchecked/topic/100270/Caucasus>> (15.10.2015) “

³²⁴ “<<https://academic-eb-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/levels/collegiate/article/Caucasus/110520#47855.toc>> (29.05.2019) “

³²⁵ KODER, Χώρος, 45—46; LUTTWAK, Grand strategy, 146—147.

established in the territories near the Black Sea, and the Alanians on the plains near the Caspian Sea. The most important of the three was the Armenian zone covering the central and western part of the region. This third zone was composed mainly of populations of Persian descent who inhabited the south-eastern part of Transcaucasia, the region south of the modern state of Azerbaijan.³²⁶ In what follows, the main focus will be on the Armenian zone because of its function as “central place” in the region of the Caucasus. Whatever developments occurred in that zone, their effects were felt equally on neighbouring and more distant regions alike.

The geopolitical context 641 – 741

The history of the Caucasus during the period between 641 and 741 is a complex one.³²⁷ Its main characteristic is the continuous attempt of both Byzantium and the caliphate to impose their influence on the Armenian princely families.³²⁸ Their support was gained through the bestowal of offices and honorary titles on their leading members, with the latter being obliged either to remain neutral in the Arab-Byzantine conflict or to assist one of the two sides. When these methods failed, direct intervention with expeditionary forces under the command of military officials (such as Leontios in c. 685 / 686)³²⁹ or even the Byzantine emperors themselves (Constans II in 650 / 651 – 653³³⁰ and 659 – 661,³³¹ and Justinian II in 686 / 687)³³² was a means of enforcing compliance. The same policy was followed by the Arabs from 644 onwards.³³³ The Armenian princes tried to exploit the situation in their own interests by switching sides with great ease.³³⁴ Religion also played an important role since the Armenian church was intent on avoiding the attempts of Constantinople to absorb it and at the same time to resist the potential threat of Islam.³³⁵ The Arab-Byzantine treaty of 686 / 687 included the sharing of the income from the taxation of Armenia and Iberia, but as with other events of the period recorded by Byzantine and eastern sources, this information must be treated with caution.³³⁶ This

³²⁶ PAPASOTIRIOU, Βυζαντινή υψηλή στρατηγική, 62; PLONTKE-LÜNING, Kaukasien, 97–98; SEIBT, Westgeorgien, 138.

³²⁷ GREENWOOD, Armenian neighbors, 333–336; for a chronology see PREISER-KAPELLER, Vom Bosphorus zum Ararat, 204; PLONTKE-LÜNING, Kaukasien, 103, 111–112, 121, 127.

³²⁸ PREISER-KAPELLER, Vom Bosphorus zum Ararat, 181, 192.

³²⁹ Theophanes (363, 26–31 DE BOOR).

³³⁰ Theophanes (344, 26–29 DE BOOR); MAKSOUDIAN, Yovhannes, 103–104. PREISER-KAPELLER, Magister militum, 357–358.

³³¹ GREENWOOD, Armenian neighbors, 342–343; PREISER-KAPELLER, Magister militum, 359.

³³² GREENWOOD, Armenian neighbors, 344–345; PREISER-KAPELLER, Magister militum, 364.

³³³ Sebeos, 100 and passim. GARSOIAN, Arab invasions, 120; KAEGLI, Early Islamic conquests, 184–185, 191–197.

³³⁴ PREISER-KAPELLER, Vom Bosphorus zum Ararat, 188–189.

³³⁵ GREENWOOD, Armenian neighbors, 333–335; GARSOIAN, Arab invasions, 124–125; PREISER-KAPELLER, Vom Bosphorus zum Ararat, 181–182, 184–185, IDEM, “New Jerusalem”, 75–79; PLONTKE-LÜNING, Kaukasien, 148–149.

³³⁶ Theophanes (363, 10–11 DE BOOR). DÖLGER – MÜLLER, Regesten, n. 253a; BEIHAMMER, Urkundenwesen, n. 295; KAPLONY, Konstantinopel und Damaskus, 129–130.

agreement can be regarded as a turning-point in the historical evolution of the region, since around 701 the Arabs created the province of Armeniya with the city of Dvin as its capital.³³⁷ Facing for the first time direct Muslim control over their territories, the Armenian princes rebelled (c. 703) probably at Byzantine instigation and with their military assistance. The result was the utter defeat of the insurgents and the extermination of their leaders.³³⁸ After the pacification of the region, the Arabs continued to seek support from the local nobility and proceeded to restore of the damage caused by the recent events.³³⁹ In the meantime, and up to 741, the Byzantines limited their influence to the distribution of honorary titles among their Armenian supporters and adhered to a silent acceptance of the established status quo in Caucasia.³⁴⁰

Pathways of communication

Throughout its history, the Caucasus had a developed and sophisticated road network that was essential for domestic and international communication. In general, this network was constructed and maintained by various sponsors such as the Armenian kings, the high aristocracy, the Armenian Church, and foreign rulers. Already in ancient times, the Achaemenid Royal Road, sponsored by Darius I traversed the region.³⁴¹ Responsible for the coordination of policies relating to infrastructure was the *hazarapetutiun* (seneschal), in broad terms the equivalent of the Byzantine *logothetes tou dromou*, one of the highest and most powerful offices in the kingdom of Armenia. He supplied laborers for the construction and maintenance of roads, as well as of cities, fortresses and irrigation works.³⁴²

Constantinople was linked with the Caucasus region through a west-to-east route that ended at the communications hub of Theodosiupolis / Erzurum. This important centre was the end of the caravan road that began at Tabriz. Along this axis lay the most significant Caucasian centres: Artaxata, Dvin, Ani, and Kars. Kars was the last major stop before the borders of the Byzantine empire.³⁴³

The relief of the Pontic coastline made travel arduous especially in winter, so the sea route was preferred from Antiquity right into the mid-twentieth century. One could take a ship from Constantinople and head to Amisos / Samsun and / or Trebizond in significantly less time than a land journey. From Amisos one could take the road to Sebasteia, and from Trebizond the road to Theodosiupolis. Otherwise, one could continue via the sea up to Sebastopolis / Sukhumi, a Byzantine

³³⁷ GARSOIAN, Arab invasions, 125—126; PREISER-KAPPELLER, *Magister militum*, 364.

³³⁸ Theophanes (372, 13—18 DE BOOR); MAKSOUDIAN, *Yovhannes*, 107—109. GREENWOOD, *Armenian neighbors*, 345—346; GARSOIAN, *Arab invasions*, 127.

³³⁹ GARSOIAN, *Arab invasions*, 127—128.

³⁴⁰ GREENWOOD, *Armenian neighbors*, 347; GARSOIAN, *Arab invasions*, 128—129.

³⁴¹ PAYASLIAN, *History of Armenia*, 10.

³⁴² PAYASLIAN, *History of Armenia*, 31.

³⁴³ AVRAMEA, *Επικοινωνίες*, 149 and map; KODER, *Χώρος*, 100—101; BELKE – RESTLE, *Galatien und Lykaonien*, 95—96; BELKE, *Paphlagonien und Honorias*, 127—129.

outpost until 736.³⁴⁴ Finally, from cape Karambis one could traverse the Black Sea and reach Cherson within between 24 and 72 hours depending on the weather conditions.

With the creation of the province of Armeniya in around 701, and the establishment of Dvin as its capital by the Arabs, the road network of the Caucasus was reoriented towards the east and especially towards the cities of north-eastern Iran and the Caspian Sea (map 6). The major settlements of Dvin and Barda served as nodal points: from Dvin, two main roads led to Maragheh to the south and Barda to the west, while from Barda there were roads connecting with Tbilisi to the north, Ardabil to the south, and Bab al-Abwab to the north-east.³⁴⁵ This shift is confirmed by the seventh-century Armenian erudite and compiler of a geography handbook, Ananias of Shirak, who gives the itinerary of a noble kinsman. From the region of Shirak in Armenia, he went to Balkh in the north of modern Afghanistan, and then returned to Armenia passing through the cities of Ganjak (today in north-western Iran), Nakhijevan, and Dvin.³⁴⁶ It can be assumed that he passed through the same cities on his way to Afghanistan.

Settlement patterns

Most of the settlements in the Caucasus had existed since ancient times. Cities such as Dvin, Ardabil, and Nakhijevan were renowned administrative, economic, and religious centres.³⁴⁷ Their social fabric included aristocrats, merchants, craftsmen, and clergy, but any specific information is lacking for this earlier period. Most of the urban population were laborers (*ramiks*) and were employed by the wealthier artisans and merchants. Slaves (*ankarg*) were employed in households and workshops. Interestingly, both labourers and slaves were considered non-free people (*anazats*).³⁴⁸ It must be kept in mind that Armenian society was structured and hierarchical, centred on a nobility (*nakharar*) that virtually monopolised the most important state and court offices and titles. There was further division into major and minor nobles, ranked according to their wealth, which stemmed primarily from the possession of land. They followed a military way of life centred around their fighting skills as horsemen, and as a result they preferred to live in heavily fortified strongholds, the construction of which was favoured by the mountainous terrain.³⁴⁹ Major fortresses, most of them belonging to the aristocracy, functioned as a refuge for the peasants and were constantly targeted by the Arabs.³⁵⁰ Economic activity was fuelled primarily by the landowning nobility, the urban upper classes, and the

³⁴⁴ AVRAMEA, *Επικοινωνίες*, 152 and map; BELKE, *Paphlagonien und Honorias*, 136—137.

³⁴⁵ MANANDYAN, *Trade and cities*, 158ff.

³⁴⁶ PREISER-KAPPELLER, *Peaches to Samarkand*, 8; GREENWOOD, *Reassessment*, 161.

³⁴⁷ Sebeos, 100—101, 150; MAKSOUDIAN, *Yovhannes*, 101, 120.

³⁴⁸ PAYASLIAN, *History of Armenia*, 31.

³⁴⁹ PAYASLIAN, *History of Armenia*, 29—31.

³⁵⁰ Sebeos, 110—111.

Church. The testimonies referring to the construction of religious and secular buildings alike, including gardens and other embellishments, confirm this.³⁵¹

The integration of the Caucasus into the Caliphate in 701 renewed warfare in the region, and this time major and minor settlements did not avoid the consequences. Dvin changed hands multiple times before finally being taken by the Arabs while Nakhijevan was conquered, looted, and its cathedral burned to the ground along with several prominent *nakharars*, who were driven inside through an act of treachery. Palynological evidence from Lake Van indicates a period of decline in terms of human activity and especially of large building projects for the same period.³⁵² When warfare ended ten years later, the Arabs restored much of the infrastructure and rebuilt Dvin.³⁵³

Trade patterns

Located at the end of one of the southern branches of the Silk Road and across the caravan road that came from Iran, the Caucasus has always been a place where international trade routes converged. The Armenian merchants formed active communities across the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.³⁵⁴ As far as trade relations with Byzantium were concerned, they used primarily Trebizond as an entrepôt. From there commodities could easily be transferred by sea to Constantinople and further west.

As an international node and with its mild subtropical climate, the Caucasus was the place where a number of exotic products made their first appearance on the European continent. The peach (*prunus persica*) and the apricot (*prunus armeniaca*) are the best known. The first found its way to the west primarily through Persia around 300 BCE, while the second became known primarily on account of its cultivation in the Armenian highlands. The diffusion of other eastern crops such as sugarcane, rice and cotton also came about through the Caucasus.³⁵⁵

The role of the state

Monetary production and circulation

As far as the numismatic evidence is concerned, it is unfortunately fragmentary and limited. The absence of an Armenian coinage meant that the economy of the Caucasus depended on foreign

³⁵¹ Sebeos, 112, 139; MAKSOUDIAN, Yovhannes, 104 105, 114, 115; TER-LEWONDYAN, Situation économique, 201; GARSOIAN, Arab invasions, 124; PREISER-KAPPELLER, Peaches to Samarkand, 3, 8; for a detailed register list of the religious foundations from the fourth to the seventh / eighth centuries, see PLONTKE-LÜNING, Kaukasien, 349 ff.

³⁵² PREISER-KAPPELLER, Climate ecology, 3, 8—9 with figures.

³⁵³ PAYASLIAN, History of Armenia, 47; GARSOIAN, Arab invasions, 126, 128.

³⁵⁴ LOMBARD, Golden age, 213; PREISER-KAPPELLER, Peaches to Samarkand, 11.

³⁵⁵ PREISER-KAPPELLER, Peaches to Samarkand, 1—2.

currencies, which will be discussed in detail below. Sixty-five *hexagrams* of Constans II and a single *solidus* of Tiberius III have been excavated in various locations. Of the former, forty-four were found in the castle of Kosh, near the homonymous modern village. Another eleven were excavated in Gyumri, one of the important Armenian settlements during this period.³⁵⁶ The silver *hexagrams* may either be connected with the network of clients that Heraclius had set up in the region during the Persian war, or with the presence of Constans II in 650/651 – 653. In any case, Armenians had been familiar with silver coinage for many centuries, and this could be a plausible reason for the hoarding of the *hexagrams*.³⁵⁷ Likewise, the single *solidus* found in Dvin may be associated with the Byzantine support for the Armenian rebellion of 703 against the Arabs.³⁵⁸ Minor coin finds exist also for Ani with eight coins of Heraclius and one of Constans II while in Garni only two coins, one silver and one bronze have been excavated.³⁵⁹

It is noteworthy that Byzantine coin finds cease after c. 700, only gradually to reappear after the second decade of the ninth century.³⁶⁰ It is possible that there was a scarcity mainly of gold but secondarily of silver coinage across the Caucasus during the years 641 – 741, stemming from both external and internal factors. First, the unstable geopolitical situation after 641 limited trade to a minimum, centred on luxurious merchandise of high value but small in quantity, which worked to the benefit of the Byzantines. It meant that they were retrieving, at least partially, the currency outflow in the form of diplomatic gifts. Another mechanism for recovery might have been the already alluded-to Arab-Byzantine treaty of 686 / 687, which provided for the sharing of local taxes. This idea is supported by the fact that Arab coins for the years 641 – 741 found in the region of the Caucasus are rare and consist of a relatively small number of silver *dirhams* and mainly bronze coins of low value.³⁶¹ Additionally, the wealthy echelons of Armenian society were investing in works of display, these being mainly secular and religious buildings such as fortifications and monastic complexes. As a result of this trend, a further percentage of “imported” Byzantine coins were circulating within the local economy.

A final sign of the administrative presence of the Byzantine state lies in the seal of a certain Theodoros, *apo hypaton and general kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Sebastopolis*, dated between

³⁵⁶ MOUSHEGHIAN et al., Coins from Dvin, 55.

³⁵⁷ GREENWOOD, Armenian neighbours, 341—342.

³⁵⁸ GREENWOOD, Armenian neighbours, 345—346; GARSOIAN, Arab invasions, 127; PAYASLIAN, History of Armenia, 48.

³⁵⁹ MOUSHEGHIAN et al., Coins from Ani, 34; IIDEM, Coins from Garni, 15.

³⁶⁰ MOUSHEGHIAN et al., Coins from Dvin, 55; IIDEM, Coins from Garni, 15; IIDEM, Coins from Ani, 33—34.

³⁶¹ MOUSHEGHIAN et al., Coins from Dvin, 55; IIDEM, Coins from Garni, 15.

668 and c. 672.³⁶² An imperial outpost until 736, this coastal settlement must have been used both as a surveillance and trading centre, like Cherson further north.

The geopolitical context 1025 – 1095

Compared to the period 641 – 741, the history of the Caucasus during the years 1025 – 1095 is a more straightforward tale of Byzantine expansion and collapse. The definitive reconquest of Melitene in 934 and Theodosiupolis in 949 opened the road for further acquisitions. The principalities of Taron and Tayk were incorporated into the empire in 966 and 1000 respectively, only to be followed by the kingdom of Vaspourakan in 1021, the Bagratid kingdom of Great Armenia with its capital Ani in 1045, and the kingdom of Vanand with its capital Kars in 1065.³⁶³

Byzantine rule over Armenia accommodated itself to local conditions. Firstly, the princely families that had ceded their territories were given offices and honorary titles in the imperial establishment. Secondly, they were given lands for themselves and their subordinates in the interior of Asia Minor.³⁶⁴ Thirdly, their domains were incorporated into the Byzantine administration as *themata* and *doukate* / *katepanata*, large military districts whose forces were responsible for conducting both defensive and offensive operations.

The first appearance of Turkish bands on the borders of Byzantium took place around 1016 / 1017 and targeted the Armenian kingdom of Vaspourakan. As already mentioned, the ruler of the latter decided to cede his territories to the empire for better protection.³⁶⁵ The first serious incident took place in 1034, followed by the defeat of the Byzantine army in 1045 / 1046.³⁶⁶ In 1048, the Seljuk sultan Tughril Beg ordered his nephew Hasan to conquer the territories of Vaspourakan. After the defeat of this army, Tughril sent another force under his half-brother Ibrahim Inal. The Turks plundered the region up to Theodosiupolis and Trebizond, whilst the bulk of the invaders infiltrated neighbouring Iberia. The military commanders of the region, Katakalon Kekaumenos and Radomiros Aaron, decided to withdraw to their fortresses, bolster the defences of the nearby settlements, and inform the emperor. Constantine IX asked for the aid of the Georgian lord Liparit, while ordering his generals to avoid open battle until his arrival. This delay proved fatal. After a brief siege, the Seljuks captured and sacked Artze, the rich economic and trading centre of the homonymous *kouratoria*, which lacked proper fortification. With the element of surprise now lost and upon the arrival of Liparit, the Byzantines had

³⁶² D. O. seals I, n. 86.1; ZV I, n. 150; OIKONOMIDES, Dated seals, n. 17.

³⁶³ BARTIKIAN, Οικονομική πολιτική, 156–157.

³⁶⁴ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, DAI 43 (192, 95–98; 196, 158–162 MORAVCSIK – JENKINS).

³⁶⁵ FELIX, Byzanz und die islamische Welt, 137–138.

³⁶⁶ FELIX, Byzanz und die islamische Welt, 161–163; BEIHAMMER, Emergence, 64–65.

to fight on open ground near the fortress of Kapetron. The clash was fierce but indecisive. Kekaumenos and Aaron retreated to their bases and the emperor tried to resolve the situation through diplomacy.³⁶⁷

After these events, the central administration decided to reorganise the army of Iberia to strengthen defences in the region.³⁶⁸ At the same time the civil strife between Tughril Beg and Ibrahim Inal reached its peak, ending only with the death of the latter. The nephew and supporter of Inal, Qutlumush, took refuge within imperial territory, and looted the region of Kars in 1053 / 1054. The sultan invaded once again, probably in 1054 / 1055, but was forced to retreat.³⁶⁹ During the following years, despite ongoing negotiations, the Turks continued their forays into the northern sector of the borders. The imperial forces managed to hold their ground using the guerrilla tactic of ambushing the invaders returning en route to their bases, laden with booty and captives. But the countryside was constantly harassed and laid waste, and the civil war of 1057 added more pressure on the defences to the empire.³⁷⁰

Alp Arslan, an experienced politician, military leader, and the successor to Tughril Beg, realised that the key to a permanent expansion in Asia Minor was the conquest of Armenian territories in the Caucasus. In the summer of 1064, the Seljuks began the siege of Anion; the important city was under the control of a local Georgian magnate, Bagrat, who had taken over from the Byzantines with the promise to defend the region at reduced cost. But his fiscal measures were harsh, and during the siege he clashed with the imperial representative, Gregorios Pakourianos, himself also of Georgian descent. On 16th August, the defenders abandoned their positions, and the Turks breached the walls. The complete destruction of the city ensured, and the newly conquered region came under Seljuk control.³⁷¹

In the following years, the regions of Taron and Vaspourakan were targeted, since the invaders used the roads that crossed these regions for their incursions. Some Byzantine units along with Armenian forces were still active but dispersed, and so not able to hold the Turkmen and Seljuk

³⁶⁷ Skylitzes (448, 48—454, 9 THURN); Attaleiates (37, 10—38, 4 TSOLAKES); Bryennios I 10 (97, 1—99, 26 GAUTIER); Aristakes of Lastivert, 84—86; Matthew of Edessa, 76—77; Georgian chronicles, 294. VRYONIS, Decline, 80—81, 86—87; LEVENIOTES, Πολιτική κατάρρευση, 42—43, 90—96; BEIHAMMER, Emergence, 75—79; FELIX, Byzanz und die islamische Welt, 164—170; DÖLGER-WIRTH, Regesten I 2, nos. 890d, 900, 906a.

³⁶⁸ CHONDRIDOU, Κωνσταντίνος Θ', 275—279; KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 211—212; KÜHN, Byzantinische Armee, 188; VRYONIS, Decline, 74—75. For a detailed study see GREGORIOU-IOANNIDOU, Οργανωτικά μέτρα, and especially 93ff.

³⁶⁹ LEVENIOTES, Πολιτική κατάρρευση, 46—47, 100—103, 152—157; VRYONIS, Decline, 87; KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 210; FELIX, Byzanz und die islamische Welt, 173—178; BEIHAMMER, Emergence, 80—84.

³⁷⁰ LEVENIOTES, Πολιτική κατάρρευση, 47—48; 102—104, 152—157; KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 215, 216—218; VRYONIS, Decline, 87—88; BEIHAMMER, Emergence, 94—102.

³⁷¹ Psellos VII 110 (258, 1—15 REINSCH); Scylitzes continuatus (112, 17—24 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates (62, 15—66, 3 TSOLAKES); Zonaras XVIII 8, 18—22 (677, 4—16 BÜTTNER-WOBST); Georgian chronicles, 298—299; Matthew of Edessa, 102—104. LEVENIOTES, Πολιτική κατάρρευση, 106—112; VRYONIS, Decline, 89—90; KALDELLIS, Streams of gold, 234—235; BEIHAMMER, Emergence, 111—115.

nomads. Under these circumstances, emperor Romanos IV resolved to launch a major push. In the spring of 1071, the imperial army marched through the devastated districts of Sebasteia and Theodosiupolis towards Lake Van. There, outside the walls of Mantzikert, it was resoundingly defeated, and the emperor captured by Alp Arslan. A treaty was signed which probably included the concession of the region of Vaspourakan and the payment of a ransom and annual tribute by the empire.³⁷² The decade 1071 – 1081 sealed the fate of the Caucasus. The Byzantines retreated from their last outposts, and the political vacuum was filled by the emerging Georgian kingdom and the various Seljuk emirs conquering important urban centres such as Theodosiupolis. But the most considerable geopolitical effect was the massive migration of Armenians living further south onto the slopes of the Taurus mountains, where the kingdom of Cilician Armenia was soon established.³⁷³ Within four decades a new order had been shaped in the Caucasus where Byzantium no longer enjoyed a presence.

Pathways of communication

The period from 1025 to c. 1055 was one of economic growth and rich trading activity. One sign of this was that the rulers of the Bagratid dynasty (885 – 1045) maintained and expanded the road network. An anonymous Armenian itinerary dated between 971 and 981 and forming an original appendix to the “Geography” of Ananias of Shirak provides information that allows for a comparison with the period 641 – 741. First, the established connections with the east, and especially the Arab world, were maintained: Dvin was connected with the Caspian Sea through Barda, and with the Persian Gulf through Nakhichevan, Kufa, and Basra. There was also an active route to Georgia, ending at Barda after passing through Tiflis / Tbilisi. From Nakhichevan, one could reach the Black Sea through Ardabil and Vardanakert. And from Ganjak, a road provided passage to Nineveh and Nisibis before ending up at Urfa.³⁷⁴

For the period 1025 – 1095 there are no concrete testimonies concerning sea communications on the eastern shores of the Black Sea. Even in terms of military naval presence, the empire was much more active along the western and northern coasts of the Euxeinus Pontos because of the military

³⁷² Psellos VII 141—143 (270, 1—271, 9 REINSCH); Attaleiates (111, 3ff. TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (142, 3—152, 3 TSOLAKES); Bryennios I 13ff. (105, 22ff. GAUTIER); Zonaras XVIII 13—14, 26 (695, 17—703, 7 BÜTTNER-WOBST); Matthew of Edessa, 130—135; Aristakes of Lastivert, 168—173; Michael the Syrian, 610; Bar Hebraeus, 220—221. For the most recent analysis concerning the battle, the sources and related secondary literature see LEVENIOTES, Πολιτική κατάρρευση, 159—180 and especially footnotes nos. 863, 882; see also BEIHAMMER, Emergence, 155—158; CHEYNET, Désastre militaire, 418ff.; DÖLGER – WIRTH, Regesten I 2, n. 972.

³⁷³ LEVENIOTES, Πολιτική κατάρρευση, 118—125; BEIHAMMER, Emergence, 202; 206—207; GARSOIAN, Armenian kingdoms, 194—198.

³⁷⁴ Ananias of Shirak, 320—321.

operations taking place there. In contrast, no mention is made of Byzantine military naval activity along the eastern shores.

Settlement patterns

The Byzantine and Armenian sources give short but descriptive accounts of the cities of the Caucasus. These are supplemented by material evidence that permits an overview for the tenth and eleventh centuries. This broad chronology is unavoidable since excavations have been incomplete and focused on the great medieval centres such as Ani or Dvin.³⁷⁵

It is estimated that during this period around fifty cities existed. The figures given by the written sources must be approached with caution, but probably in Ani, Artze, and Dvin the population reached 100,000 people.³⁷⁶ Ani, the former capital of the Bagratid kingdom, is described as a large and populous city (*πόλις ἐστὶ μεγάλη καὶ πολυάνθρωπος*) on an inaccessible and heavily fortified location.³⁷⁷ Artze was a “town of many people” (*κωμόπολις δὲ τὸ Ἀρτζε μυρίανδρος*) and “was crowned with a plenitude of good things, and everything was as one could wish”. When the Seljuks conquered the city, it was said “that about one hundred and fifty thousand men vanquished”.³⁷⁸ Kars developed from a fortress into a city by the middle of the eleventh century and had “grown rich with much merchandise acquired by sea and by land.”³⁷⁹

Palynological data from the region of Lake Van shows growing human activity from the beginning of the tenth century onwards which ended clearly in the eleventh century with the transplantation of reportedly 14,000 families to Cappadocia. At the same time, a change in the climate towards more arid and colder conditions seems to have contributed to a degree of depopulation that facilitated the settlement of the nomadic Turks.³⁸⁰

The social structure of the cities is better attested than in the earlier period but details of their internal organisation and of the urban population’s participation in their administration are still lacking. The picture is of a civic aristocracy dwelling within the walls (*sharistan*), while the lower classes lived on the outskirts (*rabad*). An interesting case is formed by the underground dwellings of Ani, which included houses, churches, architectural complexes with chapels, food stores, wine and oil cellars, and a caravanserai.³⁸¹ The lower working classes and the slave workers lived in this underground city that

³⁷⁵ GARSOIAN, *Medieval Armenia*, 180—181.

³⁷⁶ PAYASLIAN, *History of Armenia*, 62.

³⁷⁷ Attaleiates (63, 13—19 TSOLAKES). GRIGORYAN, Ani, 7 and passim, with rich photographic material from the excavations of the early twentieth century.

³⁷⁸ SKYLITZES (451, 28, 452, 51—52 THURN); Aristakes of Lastivert, 78; John Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, 423—424. GARSOIAN, *Medieval Armenia*, 180.

³⁷⁹ Aristakes of Lastivert, 91. GARSOIAN, *Medieval Armenia*, 180.

³⁸⁰ PREISER-KAPELLER, *Climate ecology*, 3—4, 8—9, with figures.

³⁸¹ GRIGORYAN, Ani, 111—115.

developed in parallel with that overground. In general, the ruling elite continued to live in isolated and fortified fortresses but also held property in the cities.³⁸² Armenian sources referring to events of the tenth century speak for the “elders” of Dvin, or the “senior nobles...of the noble families” of the same city. We hear their voice again in 1045, “when the principal citizens of Ani” had to choose the next ruler of the Bagratid kingdom.³⁸³

Another socio-economic actor in the Caucasian city, especially in Armenia, was the church. Beginning in the late ninth century, the prolonged period of peace had allowed the clergy to accumulate great wealth and power by the early eleventh century. The large-scale religious foundations built by church officials or members of the aristocracy testify to this development.³⁸⁴

By the tenth and eleventh century, agriculture no longer constituted the sole base for commerce since urbanisation brought to the surface a new class of artisans, laborers, and merchants. The wealth that they accumulated is believed to have stimulated early phases of a pre-modern, pre-capitalist type of economy as found in Byzantium, the Islamic East, and the medieval West.³⁸⁵

Trade patterns

Already from the ninth century, internal political stability and good relations with Byzantium and the Arabs helped Armenia to be integrated with the regional and international trade networks in the east and west.³⁸⁶ During the tenth and eleventh centuries, exports of agricultural products, raw materials, and manufactured products covered a wide range. Agricultural products included cereals and fruits such as peaches, apricots and pomegranates from the valley of the Araxes and the plains of Vaspourakan, the *tarek* fish of Lake Van (pearl mullet / *Alburnus tarichi*), *surmahi* fish (Kura bleak / *Alburnus filippi*) from the Kura and the Araxes rivers, wine from the region of Dvin, and walnuts, filberts, almonds, walnut wood, timber, and the red dye known in Persia as the *kirmiz* (Armenian cochineal / *Porphyrophora hamelii*) from mount Ararat and highly esteemed by the Arabs. Raw materials included a wide range of minerals, some of strategic importance such as silver from Sper, copper from Ganjak, and iron from Vaspourakan. Additionally, there was lead, borax, arsenic, mercury, copper sulphate, and salt from the mines of Kulp, and finally saltpetre. Unfortunately, details concerning mining activities are lacking. Finished products included jewellery, metalwork, glassware, glazed and non-glazed ceramics, and textiles such as flowered silks and gold embroidered garments

³⁸² PAYASLIAN, History of Armenia, 63; GARSOIAN, Medieval Armenia, 181, 182.

³⁸³ Aristakes of Lastivert, 60. GARSOIAN, Medieval Armenia, 182, 193.

³⁸⁴ PAYSLIAN, History of Armenia, 63.

³⁸⁵ PAYASLIAN, History of Armenia, 63; GARSOIAN, Medieval Armenia, 182.

³⁸⁶ PAYASLIAN, History of Armenia, 62.

from Dvin.³⁸⁷ Artze functioned as a commercial hub between Byzantium and the east, as it “abounded in all sorts of products from Persia, India, and the rest of Asia” (*καὶ παντοίων ὀνίων, ὅσα Περσική τε καὶ Ἰνδική καὶ ἡ λοιπὴ Ἀσία φέρει*) that were traded by “many native merchants living there as well as Syrians, Armenians and other nationalities” (*ῥέκουν γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ ἰθαγενεῖς τε ἔμποροι καὶ Σύρων καὶ Ἀρμενίων καὶ ἄλλων ἐθνῶν πληθὺς οὐκ ὀλίγη*).³⁸⁸ Equally, the citizens of Ani were “merchants inexperienced in military engineering and planning” (*οἷα δ’ ἔμποροι καὶ πολεμικῶν μηχανημάτων καὶ προβλημάτων ἀπείρατοι*).³⁸⁹

“Black Gold”

As with the region of the Crimea, the Armenian highlands were rich in naphtha, the main component of “Liquid Fire”. The *DAI* mentions oil wells in the area of Zichia.³⁹⁰ The details given show an exact knowledge of existing deposits. Zichia can be identified with the coastal region of modern day Krasnodarsky Kray, between the Oukrouch river (most probably the Kuban) to the north and the Nikopsis to the south.³⁹¹ In the estuary of Nikopsis was located the homonymous city (most probably modern day Tuapse), a Byzantine outpost until the end of the eighth century according to a Georgian hagiographic source.³⁹² At a location called Page there were nine oil wells with three distinct types of naphtha. In two other locations, Papagi and Chamouch, oil wells were also present. Both of these were somewhat in the hinterland: “a journey of one day without changing horses”.³⁹³ It is possible that they were situated in the vicinity of Maykop, where oil has been extensively drilled over the last hundred years and whose facilities were claimed by both the Axis and Soviet forces during the Second World War. The 143 km between Maykop and modern-day Tuapse can be covered in c. 30 hours on foot using the modern road network.³⁹⁴ This does not drastically exceed the information given by the *DAI*.

³⁸⁷ PAYASLIAN, *History of Armenia*, 64; GARSOIAN, *Medieval Armenia*, 183; GRIGORYAN – MKRTCHYAN, *Armenian ceramics*, 17, 25 and *passim*. For Georgian ceramics see BAKHTADZE, *Ceramics in medieval Georgia*, 12—14, 46 and *passim*.

³⁸⁸ Attaleiates (114, 32—115, 1 TSOLAKES); John Scylitzes (451, 29—30 THURN); Attaleiates, *History*, 271; John Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, 423—424 see also Aristakes of Lastivert, 78—81, although his description is heavily influenced by Biblical perspectives on economic transactions.

³⁸⁹ Attaleiates (64, 28—29 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates, *History*, 149.

³⁹⁰ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *DAI* 53 (284, 495—506). KOUTAVA-DELEVORIA, *Γεωγραφικός κόσμος II*, 345—346, 486, 489—490.

³⁹¹ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *DAI*, *Commentary*, 156, 208—209. KOUTAVA-DELEVORIA, *Γεωγραφικός κόσμος II*, 473.

³⁹² <<https://academic-eb-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/levels/collegiate/article/Tuapse/73656>> (05.07.2019); the identification of Nikopsis / Anakopia with present Tuapse has been confirmed by Prof. Werner Seibt, whom I would like to thank. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *DAI* 42 (186, 95—99); Arrianos (393, 15—16 MÜLLER). BRYER, *Notes on the Laz*, 175; HUXLEY, *Historical geography*, 99.

³⁹³ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *DAI* 42, 53 (186, 99—100, 284, 505—506). KOUTAVA-DELEVORIA, *Γεωγραφικός κόσμος I*, 206—207; EADEM, *Γεωγραφικός κόσμος II*, 606. Some of the information concerning the oil wells might have been added in the eleventh century, see HOWARD-JOHNSTON, *Re-examination*, 305.

³⁹⁴ Calculated with Google maps (05.07.2019).

The role of the state

Monetary production and circulation

By comparison with the earlier period, finds of Byzantine coins are more frequent, yet again the surviving evidence is fragmentary. In Ani, capital of the Bagratuni dynasty and one of the major trading centres in the region, the anonymous copper *folleis* of the tenth and eleventh centuries form the dominant proportion of the finds, with 827 anonymous *folleis* for the period 969 – 1078.³⁹⁵ They continued to be used after the capture of the city by the Turks, and were systematically countermarked by various rulers even two centuries after their minting.³⁹⁶ In Dvin and Garni - both outside yet close to the empire - small numbers of copper *folleis* have also been found.³⁹⁷ The countermarking of the *folleis* can be explained by the fragmented political landscape in the region after 1081, working against the development of any long-term numismatic policy by the small Turkish states. As far as gold coins are concerned, a small number of *nomismata* have been excavated in the abovementioned cities. The sixteen pieces of Constantine X (1059 – 1067) stand out, although they must relate to the defensive measures against the Turks rather than trade. A peculiarity inherited from the earlier period was the continuing absence of a centrally issued and universally accepted Armenian coinage.³⁹⁸ The voluminous deposits of silver in the region could support this purpose, and even the future empire of Trebizond built its wealth on a highly esteemed silver coinage. A possible explanation could be that the almost permanent political fragmentation within Armenia made it difficult even for resolute kings to establish and impose a standardised medium of exchange. Furthermore, founded on an intermediate geopolitical environment between states such as Byzantium on the one side and the Sassanids and later Arabs on the other, which could support the issue and circulation of well-established currencies of their own, Armenia never had a chance to mint its own coins. Moreover, the local aristocracy were receiving gifts in Byzantine and Arab coins, while the Caucasian merchants would rely on these for their own transactions instead of risking supporting an emerging currency, even if it was issued centrally and guaranteed by the crown.

³⁹⁵ MOUSHEGIAN et al., Coins from Ani, 33ff.

³⁹⁶ MOUSHEGIAN et al., Coins from Ani, 53—58.

³⁹⁷ For both the *nomismata* and *folleis* see MOUSHEGIAN et al., Coins from Dvin, 55; IIDEM, Coins from Garni, 16—17; IIDEM, Coins from Ani, 33—34. The 3539 *nomismata* of Constantine VIII (1025 – 1028) found in Dvin hoard nr. 9 seems to be a misprint since even the most voluminous hoard of golden *nomismata* does not exceed some hundreds of pieces. The written sources do not report any major event in the region for these years that could justify this amount, and editors of the catalogue do not themselves comment on this unusual quantity. The only event that could somehow provide an explanation is the war for the annexation of Ani that took place at the beginning of the 1040s. The Byzantines allied with the ruler of Dvin Abu'l-Aswar, inducing him to attack Great Armenia with “gifts and promises” (John Skylitzes (436, 10—16 THURN); John Skylitzes, Synopsis, 410—411). Could the alleged 3539 *nomismata* be part of the “gifts” made to Abu'l-Aswar? On the other hand, it would be unusual for a reigning emperor, in this case Constantine IX (1042 – 1055) to send the coins of one of his predecessors as a diplomatic gift.

³⁹⁸ PAYASLIAN, History of Armenia, 64.

Control and taxation

As far as the fiscal presence of Byzantium is concerned, the most important feature was the establishment of *kouratoriai*, that is lands with direct dependency on the crown. On the north-eastern borders of the empire two *kouratoriai* were established. The first was that of Artze, about 55 km to the east of Theodosiupolis³⁹⁹ and the second that of Mantzikert and Inner Iberia, on the northern shores of Lake Van, both established between c. 1000 – c. 1020.⁴⁰⁰ Thus, the crown gained direct access to two of the most fertile regions of the Armenian highlands, and consequently the economic activity in the wider region was significantly boosted.

Hand in hand with economic growth went taxation, and three duties paid by merchants and craftsmen are mentioned in epigraphic evidence from Ani: one on the “*oikoi* of the city” (πάκτον ἐκ τῶν οἰκῶν / *tanoutroutioun*), a second called *thastak*, and a third called *giut*. Around 1056, the taxpayers were exempted from all three by means of a *chrysoboullon* issued by the empress Theodora. The first tax was reintroduced around 1060 by the new *katepano* Bagrat, probably collected by him in compensation for his army taking over the defence of Ani.⁴⁰¹ The *kommerkion* is not mentioned among these taxes and seals of *kommerkiarioi* are absent, though this does not mean that they were not active in the region.

3.1.3 The southern shores of the Black Sea (northern coast of Asia Minor)

Geography and geopolitics

The geography and the historical development of the southern shores of the Black Sea reflect their peculiar nature, situated between the Euxenos Pontos and the Anatolian plateau (maps 7 and 8): a strip of coastal land, virtually cut off from the hinterland due to the presence of a mountain range that begins to the east with the foothills of the Pontic Mountains and the estuary of the Akampsis / Çoruh Nehri, and continues to the West with the Köroglu Daglari and its offshoots up to the valley and estuary of Sangarios / Sakarya Nehri. Both the Pontic Mountains and the Köroglu Daglari divide the coast from the Anatolian plateau to the south with valleys. The coastal relief along the shore is steep, with the Pontic Mountains, the Zonguldak Daglari, and the Akçakoca Daglari reaching the seashore, and almost no natural harbours available. The only exceptions to this pattern are the eleven-kilometre long sandy

³⁹⁹ D. O. seals IV, n. 57.1 (148).

⁴⁰⁰ D. O. seals IV, n. 75.3 (166—167); BARTIKIAN, Κουράτωρ Μανζικέρτ, 58ff.; HOWARD-JOHNSTON, Crown lands, 90; for the *kouratoriai* in general see IIDEM, 88—97.

⁴⁰¹ BARTIKIAN, Οικονομική πολιτική, 157—158.

beach between Kytoros / Gideriz and Aigialos / Cide, and south-west of the small peninsula of Sinope / Sinop where a mild littoral with hills and river valleys ends in a long stretch of coast. After Herakleia / Ereğli the littoral relief becomes gradually gentler until it reaches Dia / Akçakoca. From there, a series of sandy bights and an extensive sandy beach across the estuary of Sangarios offer a much friendlier anchorage.⁴⁰²

The rivers are of two types: those that in general follow a west to east direction, traversing the valleys between the mountain ranges, and those that run south to north straight through the gorges. The larger ones are the Sangarios at the west end of the Pontic region; the Billaïos and its tributary the Ladon / Bolu Çayı in its lower route; and the Devrekâni Çayı, the Alys / Kizilirmak, the Iris and the Lykos / Kelkit Çayı, a tributary of the latter. In the Pontic heartland, the Akampsis / Çoruh Nehri - with its steep, narrow valley- clearly separates the Pontic Mountains from the rest of eastern Anatolia.⁴⁰³

The geography has a significant impact on the climate. Along the shore, this ranges from the mild temperate, with significant variations in temperature and precipitation. The latter is generally high thanks to the prevalent north-western wind that hits the mountains and traps moisture along the coast and its immediate hinterland. As the mountains descend to the Anatolian plateau, the climate becomes cooler, more temperate and continental. Precipitation is low, and the summers long and dry, while frost and snow dominate during the winter. There is also maximum deviation between night and day temperatures.⁴⁰⁴ Moving to the west, these extreme conditions become milder as the north-western winds enter the hinterland, thus countering the cold continental climate.⁴⁰⁵

From a geopolitical point of view, the southern coast of the Euxeinos Pontos had been an important part of the Graeco-Roman world since Antiquity. On the eve of the Byzantine-Arab conflict cities such as Trebizond, Amisos and Herakleia functioned as foci for local, regional, and even international trade, especially Trebizond where the southern branch of the Silk Road ended. All in all, control over the northern shore of Asia Minor secured communications with the region of the Caucasus and thus with the conduct of trade, cultural exchanges, and military operations on the north-eastern border of the early Byzantine empire.⁴⁰⁶ The appearance of the Arabs after 640 would create a new state of affairs.

⁴⁰² BRYER – WINFIELD, *Pontos I*, 2; BELKE, *Paphlagonien und Honorias*, 50—54.

⁴⁰³ KOROMELA, *Έλληνες στη Μαύρη Θάλασσα*, 243; BELKE, *Paphlagonien und Honorias*, 53—54; BRYER – WINFIELD, *Pontos I*, 2.

⁴⁰⁴ BRYER – WINFIELD, *Pontos I*, 3-4.

⁴⁰⁵ BELKE, *Paphlagonien und Honorias*, 54—56.

⁴⁰⁶ BELKE, *Paphlagonien und Honorias*, 58ff.; BRYER – WINFIELD, *Pontos I*, 180—182.

The geopolitical context 641 – 741 / 1025 – 1095

The available evidence suggests that the southern shore of the Black Sea escaped the systematic Arab incursions of the critical century 641 – 741. Before 700, indeed, only two incidents are recorded: Trebizond was taken and looted in 654 -though the testimony of our Armenian source is confusing- and the environs of Koloneia were sacked in 664. But the picture altered after the annexation of most of the Armenian territories by the Arabs c. 701, allowing them to control the eastern fringes of the Constantinople – Theodosiupolis road and making infiltration deep into Byzantine territory easier. Amaseia was looted in 712, Gangra in 712 and 727. Paphlagonia was traversed twice, in 727 and 732, marking the westernmost of the Arab incursions in the region of the Pontos.⁴⁰⁷ Again, compared to central and southern Asia Minor which were targeted on an almost annual basis, the impact on the north of the peninsula was comparably tolerable, and probably allowed for the continuation of economic activity to some degree, especially on the littoral and in its immediate hinterland.

The second period up to the middle of the 1050s was a period of peace that ended with the appearance of the Seljuks in the region of Armenia. They penetrated deep into Asia Minor, taking advantage of their excellent mobility and capacity to split into smaller but still formidable bands thus breaking up the Byzantine defences. During the next twenty years the cities of the Pontos were looted, in some cases more than once. Payperte was besieged and / or sacked in 1054, while the invaders reached Koloneia in 1057, and took Sebasteia in 1059. Neokaisareia fell in 1068.⁴⁰⁸ During the 1070s the urban centres of the region were still in Byzantine hands but isolated from their hinterlands, as the countryside was constantly being plundered. On top of this, Neokaisareia and Amaseia came under the control of Russell de Bailleul and his Norman forces in 1074 / 1075.⁴⁰⁹ Representative of the situation was the escape from Turkish bandits of the future emperor Alexios Komnenos and de Bailleul, now his captive, in the region of Kastamon, the place of the Komnenos family estates. Alexios was aided in this act by the forces of a great shipowner and *doux* of the *thema Boukellarion*, Michael Maurex, whose base was at Herakleia. From there, Alexios had to proceed to the capital by ship, since the land routes to Constantinople had been compromised.⁴¹⁰ The coastal cities did not escape the fate of those in their hinterlands. Trebizond was temporarily under Seljuk control between 1071 and 1075 until it was liberated by a local noble Theodoros Gabras.⁴¹¹ Around 1081 the Byzantines had control of Herakleia, where an army official (*topoteretes*) is attested, and also parts of Paphlagonia - most likely

⁴⁰⁷ Sebeos I, 142—143, II, 272—273. LILIE, Reaktion, 67, 69, 120, 147, 149.

⁴⁰⁸ VRYONIS, Decline, 88, 93, 162, BEIHAMMER, Emergence, 81, 108, 138.

⁴⁰⁹ VRYONIS, Decline, 107—108; BEIHAMMER, Emergence, 211; LEVENIOTES, Στασιαστικό κίνημα, 156—159.

⁴¹⁰ Bryennios II 26 (197, 9—201, 3 GAUTIER). VRYONIS, Decline, 108; 111—112, BEIHAMMER, Emergence, 212—214.

⁴¹¹ Anna Komnene VIII, 9,1 (255, 20—29 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS).

along the coast -, Trebizond and some scattered territories in the interior, but Sinope was taken by the Seljuks at around the same time.⁴¹² The situation reversed gradually for the empire with the recovery of Sinope in the second half of the 1080s, of Herakleia Pontike around 1097, and of Ankyra in 1101.⁴¹³ But the interior with its urban centres such as Amaseia, Komana, Tokat, and Neokaisareia was lost to the Turkish Danishmandids, and became the new border between the empire and the Muslim world.⁴¹⁴

Pathways of communication

The road network of northern Asia Minor is clearly influenced by the terrain, and thus oriented in two directions: west to east, and north to south, with a few secondary roads traversing the mountains (maps 7 and 8).⁴¹⁵ Three west-to-east roads ran in parallel: the coastal route of *Dia – Sinope – Gonion*; the route connecting the settlements of the Pontic hinterland, *Herakleia – Payperte – Theodosiupolis*; and that linking the settlements along the fringes of the plateau, *Proucias – Amaseia – Neokaisareia – Theodosiupolis*. The first road began in Dia and passed through Herakleia, Amastris / Amasra, and Sinope. Then hugging the coastline, it continued to Amisos / Samsun, Kerasous / Giresun, and Trapezous / Trebizond / Trabzon. Continuing further on into the coastal region of the southern Caucasus the route took in Sourmena / Sürmene and Rizaion / Rize and finally reached the geographical border in Gonion / Gonio. Bathys/Batumi lies on the opposite shore of the Akampsis.⁴¹⁶ The second road began in Herakleia, and then continued through Theodoroupolis / Saframpolis / Safranbolu, Kastamon / Kastamonu and Pompeiupolis / Tasköprü. From there one could proceed to Neoklaudiupolis / Vezirköprü, and from here a northern road led to Payrae / Bafra, while from Therma / Havza a northern branch continued to Sinope. From Therma, the road advanced further east through Neokaisareia / Niksar and Koloneia / Şebinkarahisar, to Payperte / Bayburt. A north-eastern branch led thence to Artvin and Ardanuc, and a south-eastern to Theodosiupolis / Karin / Erzurum.⁴¹⁷ The third road started in Proucias / Konuralp, and passed through Klaudiupolis / Bolu, Krateia / Gerede, Anadynata / Kurşunlu(?), and Pimolisa. From Krateia, a south-eastern branch led to Ankyra, while from Anadynata a south-east branch stretched towards to Gangra / Çankırı, and then again southwest to Ankyra / Ankara. From Gangra, one continued north-east to Pimolisa, and then further on again to Amaseia / Amasya or Neoklaudiupolis. From Amaseia the road continued to the east.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹² Anna Komnene VI, 9,3 (187, 84—86 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS). BEIHAMMER, *Emergence*, 268—269.

⁴¹³ Anna Komnene VI, 9,5—6 (188, 28—38 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS). VRYONIS, *Decline*, 116—117.

⁴¹⁴ VRYONIS, *Decline*, 115; BEIHAMMER, *Emergence*, 319—322.

⁴¹⁵ The roads of Paphlagonia and Honorias are described in detail in, BELKE, *Paphlagonien und Honorias*, 11, 117—135.

⁴¹⁶ BELKE, *Paphlagonien und Honorias*, 127—129; BRYER – WINFIELD, *Pontos I*, 19—20.

⁴¹⁷ BELKE, *Paphlagonien und Honorias*, 124—126; BRYER – WINFIELD, *Pontos I*, 38—39.

⁴¹⁸ BELKE, *Paphlagonien und Honorias*, 117—123; 134—135.

The roads extending from north to south connected the littoral with its hinterland. Dia was connected to Düzce through Prousius. Another vertical axis connected Tios / Hisarönü with Klaudioupolis, and Amastris was connected to Theodoroupolis and Adrianoupolis / Eskipazar. An important road stretched from Sinope and Ionopolis / Inebolu to Ankyra, passing through Kastamon, Kandara / Cendere(?), and Gangra. Sinope was also connected with Pompeiopolis in the south-west, and Euchaita / Avhat in the south. Amisos was joined by another route to Amaseia in the south-east. The seaport of Neokaisareia was Oinaion / Ünie, while Kerasous served as a seaport for Koloneia. Payperte used both Trapezous to the north-west and Rizaion to the north-east as harbours.⁴¹⁹

The southern shores of the Black Sea were known from antiquity for their abrupt and steep shores. The precipitous coastline where mountains met the sea defined the way sea voyages were conducted. Coastal travel was rather hazardous, since the strong and sudden northern winds could easily throw ships onto the rocks. It is not difficult to imagine the sailors trying to calculate the distance required from one haven to another in order to avoid such incidents. That said, a vessel travelling from Constantinople to Trebizond in July would need around fifteen days to cover approximately 1.110 km, with stops at Herakleia Pontike, Sinope, and Kotyora. For the return journey, the ship would need approximately eight days for 1.097 km.⁴²⁰ By comparison, the same route on land would absorb forty-one days or thereabouts for 1.231 km.⁴²¹

This comparison confirms the advantages of sea over land routes. With the coastal road of *Dia* – *Sinope* – *Gonion* having many disadvantages -especially with its regard to its difficult terrain and also limited accessibility during winter because of heavy rainfalls frequently causing floods- sea travel when conducted with caution was the only viable choice. It was exactly this precondition that affected the development of the major and minor settlements, as will be seen below.

Settlement patterns

The settlements of the Pontos can be divided in terms of scale and function into ports such as Herakleia Pontike, Amastris, Sinope, and Trebizond followed by harbours such as Kotyora, Oinoe, and Payrae. The third notable category - anchorages - comprises places like Kytoros, Sandarake, and Dia.

⁴¹⁹ BELKE, *Paphlagonien und Honorias*, 118; 130—135; BRYER – WINFIELD, *Pontos I*, 39—40; 41—42, 45—46; 48—53.

⁴²⁰ Calculated with ORBIS.

⁴²¹ Following the Roman *Constantinople* – *Trapezous* road that fell partially out of use after the seventh century (Constantinople – Nikomedeia – Nikaia – Ankyra – Tabia – Phiara – Sebasteia – Nicopolis Pontica – Satala – Trapezous). Calculated with ORBIS. One can safely assume that the travelling times would be the same during the Byzantine period, especially after the end of the eleventh century, when the Turkish presence in the hinterland made all other available connections problematic, BELKE, *Paphlagonien und Honorias*, 129.

Of the four port cities of Herakleia Pontike, Amastris, Sinope, and Trebizond, the latter three retained some of their (late) antique features such as the grid plan and fortifications that were renovated during the middle Byzantine period.⁴²² They also featured large harbours that could accommodate many vessels, while among other state officials, *kommerkiarioi* and *horreiaroi* are mentioned, indicating their importance for commerce. Amastris, strategically located on a peninsula, became probably at the end of the seventh or beginning of the eighth century - the base for the Black-Sea flotilla, since around this time its fortifications were renovated, and harbour facilities extended.⁴²³ There were two ports, east and westward facing. The eastern was the more open and provided shelter from western and north-eastern gales, while the western was more enclosed and furnished with fittings for a protective chain as well as a lighthouse. It is one of the best examples of a Byzantine harbour to have survived in the Black-Sea region, and it can be safely assumed that it accommodated the Black-Sea flotilla. As far as the eastern “commercial” port is concerned, it probably included shipbuilding facilities.⁴²⁴ The most interesting building is the so-called “Bedesten” (“covered market”) in the vicinity the city, a fine example of early Roman imperial brick-faced concrete construction with *opus reticulatum* facings. The latest analysis views it as a large storage facility, though it finds no mention in the meagre written record.⁴²⁵ Sinope was cited one of the few secure and sheltered natural anchorages along the Pontic coast and also had two harbours: the main one to the south of the small peninsula, and a minor one to the north. The seaside locality today known as “Tersane” indicates the existence of a shipyard.⁴²⁶

Of the three, Trebizond stands out as perhaps the most important port city. Unfortunately, the urban development of recent decades has eliminated much of the material evidence from the Byzantine period except for the fortifications and a number of churches. There were two harbours: a northern, just in front of the citadel, and an eastern, which probably comprised all the necessary infrastructure for the conduct of large-scale trade such as warehouses and living quarters for foreign merchants.⁴²⁷ Today, only the layout of the Genoese fortress of Leontokastron / Leo Castro / Güzel Hisar survives in the form of the “Kalepark” (i.e., “Park of the castle”).

Settlements comprising harbours included Tios, Kromna / Tekkeönü, Kytoros, Karambis, Ionopolis, Aiginetes / Haciveli(?), Kinolis / Konakli, Payrae, Amisos, and Kerasous.⁴²⁸ They shared

⁴²² BELKE, Paphlagonien und Honorias, 166, 167; CROW, Amastris, 389—391.

⁴²³ CROW, Amastris, 394; BELKE, Paphlagonien und Honorias, 167; ZAVAGNO, Cities in transition, 138—149.

⁴²⁴ CROW, Amastris, 389, 391—392; BELKE, Paphlagonien und Honorias, 166; ZAVAGNO, Byzantine city, 97—98.

⁴²⁵ CROW, Amastris, 389; BELKE, Paphlagonien und Honorias, 166; MAREK, Pontus-Bithynia, 94.

⁴²⁶ CROW, Sinope, 395; BRYER – WINFIELD, Pontos I, 69; DOONAN, Sinop landscapes, 39, 126, 148—149, 151.

⁴²⁷ For a passing reference on the panegyris of Saint Eugenios that took place on a yearly basis in the city see, Eugenios of Trebizond, 206, 50—62.

⁴²⁸ BRYER – WINFIELD, Pontos I, 126—128. For all these localities see the respective lemmata in BELKE, Paphlagonien und Honorias, and BRYER – WINFIELD, Pontos I.

features such as permanent harbour installations - of a smaller scale than the ports - an adjacent settlement that is sometimes fortified, and / or an acropolis.

The anchorages included the estuaries of the Sangarios, Dia, Aigialos, Karousa / Gerze and Boon / Perşembe. These had basic mooring facilities, or perhaps nothing at all, and were probably useful for tramping and/or illegal trade.

Trade patterns

As with other regions of the empire, for the period 641 – 741 our sources provide very scarce evidence on trade, and only from the end of the eighth and beginning of the ninth century do we have more concrete, albeit fragmentary, information that may be used with some caution to trace patterns for the earlier period. For the eleventh century, the evidence is circumstantial but at least allows us to sketch some general tendencies.⁴²⁹

The region of the Pontos is rich in natural resources ranging from minerals to crops. It was this mixture that allowed the coastal and inland settlements to support their economy in times of crisis and to survive in the long run.

Minerals

Proceeding west to east, minerals and various types of ores may have been extracted as follows. Iron deposits in the region between the rivers of Sangarios and Hypios / Büyükmelen were known and mined from antiquity, although it is not certain if this activity continued during the Byzantine period. A modern facility for steel production dominates the landscape south of Ereğli. Copper could be found in Paphlagonia, in the region of Kastamon. Moving east, a census for 1890 presents some impressive figures relating to mining facilities in the late nineteenth century. The sancak of Samsun had one mine of argentiferous lead, while that of Gümüşhane had thirty-seven mines for argentiferous lead and six for copper, and that of Trebizond, which included the regions of Trebizond, Giresun and Ordu had twenty-one mines of argentiferous lead, thirty-four for copper, three copper and lead, two manganese, ten iron, and two coal. Yet despite these impressive numbers and the evident potential for large-scale mining, there is no direct evidence that any of these mines were exploited in the middle Byzantine period.

There were also possible silver deposits in the region called “Argyria” (i.e., “place of silver”) during classical times, near the mouth of the Philabonites river where traces of mines were observable in the first half of the nineteenth century. Silver was probably mined in the mountains south of the

⁴²⁹ For an overview see GEROLYMATOU, *Αγορές*, 117—122.

upper Philabonites valley in the medieval period.⁴³⁰ Other relevant minerals include red earth of Sinope and alum mined near Koloneia, while mineral salt was mined in Gangra already in Byzantine times. Equally, arsenic sulphide was mined in the region of Sandarake, modern Zonguldak.⁴³¹

Flora

Flora for exploitation included broad leaf forests with beech, box (*Buxus colchica*), oak, elm, hornbeam, lime, chestnut, hazelnut, almond trees, and various citrus trees as well as apple trees. Beech, oak, and elm could have supported the shipbuilding activities which must have been centred on Amastris and Herakleia Pontike.⁴³² Similarly, the box tree would have been used extensively for the production of furniture and small objects.⁴³³ Another specialized raw material of the region was the kermes dye (Arabic: *kermiz*, Greek: *κρεμέζι*) produced from the dried body of the female kermes (*Coccus ilicis*) louse and used for the dying of linen. The Book of the Eparch mentions imports of linen “from the Pontos and Kerasous”.⁴³⁴ Viniculture was also present from ancient times, not only along the littoral but also in the interior.⁴³⁵ The real estate of Saint Philaretos the Merciful (born c. 725), located in the (unidentified) locality called Amnia comprised forty-eight estates (*proasteia*) that were well-irrigated and thus of high value.⁴³⁶

Grain production and trade

Various cereals were cultivated in the region including spelt in Honorias. In the middle of the seventh century, the exiled Pope Martin I speaks of “boats which arrive from the lands of Romania -as those who live here call the lands of the Greeks, calling them the Pontic regions” (*naviculis quae veniunt ex partibus Romaniae ut hi qui hic sunt nuncupant partes videlicet Graecorum Ponticas partes vocantes*).⁴³⁷ Four centuries later, writing in the 950s, Constantine VII in his *DAI* describes the procedure to be followed by the central government in the event of an uprising by Cherson against imperial authority. His directives include the imposition of economic sanctions, the scale of which is not much different from an embargo:

⁴³⁰ BELKE, Paphlagonien und Honorias, 145; BRYER – WINFIELD, Pontos I, 3.

⁴³¹ BELKE, Paphlagonien und Honorias, 145—146; BRYER – WINFIELD, Pontos I, 3, 128.

⁴³² BELKE, Paphlagonien und Honorias, 139, 147; BRYER – WINFIELD, Pontos I, 4, 5.

⁴³³ BELKE, Paphlagonien und Honorias, 140; BRYER – WINFIELD, Pontos I, 4.

⁴³⁴ Book of the Eparch 9.1 (106, 420—422 KODER). BRYER – WINFIELD, Pontos I, 126—127; KATSONE, Κόκκος βαφική, 57—58.

⁴³⁵ BELKE, Paphlagonien und Honorias, 142.

⁴³⁶ Vita Philareti (60, 10—14 RYDEN). PmbZ, lemma Philaretos, n. 6136; BELKE, Paphlagonien und Honorias, 140—141; KAPLAN, Hommes, 256; RYDEN, Life of Philaretos, 152—158; KARPOZELOS, Realia, 25—26.

⁴³⁷ Anastasius Bibliothecarius, 224, 24—26.

“If ever the men of the city of Cherson revolt or decide to act contrary to the imperial mandates [...] three imperial agents must be sent [...] another to the coast of the province of Paphlagonia [...] in order to take possession of all Chersonite ships, [...]. Moreover, they must forbid the Paphlagonian merchant ships and coastal vessels of Pontus to cross to Cherson with grain or wine or any other needful commodity or merchandise. [...] If grain does not pass across from Aminsos and from Paphlagonia [...], the Chersonites cannot live.”⁴³⁸

The geographical designation used by Pope Martin I (*ex partibus Romaniae [...] Graecorum Ponticas partes vocantes*) is somewhat vague, as it could include the entirety of the southern Black Sea coast. In contrast, the testimony of Constantine VII lists the exact names of the localities in which the staples were loaded and sent to Cherson, namely the coast of the *thema Paphlagonias* and the coasts of the Pontos, and most probably the western ones. In the east, the steep shoreline did not offer the space to produce sizeable quantities of cereals, and furthermore the geography itself hindered ready communication between the littoral and the inner regions.⁴³⁹ The western part of the “Pontic region”, that is Paphlagonia and Honorias, with its gentler shores at least in places, seems to have been Cherson’s “granary” during this period. The seal of *Stephanos apo hypaton, patrikios, stratiotikos logothetes and genikos kommerkiarios* of the *apotheke of Paphlagonia* dated between 659 and 668 lends support to this thesis.⁴⁴⁰ Further dated seals 721/722 – 741 of the *kommerkiarioi* responsible for the *apothekai* along the southern coast of the Euxeinos Pontos have come to light in Cherson and Sougdaia.⁴⁴¹ Thus, the interconnection between the northern and southern shores of the Black Sea can be firmly established.

The close trade ties between north and south of the Black Sea continued without interruption along the centuries.⁴⁴² A series of seals of the *horeiarioi* of Amisos, dating from the late tenth/early eleventh century to the middle of the eleventh century,⁴⁴³ corroborates the evidence given by Constantine VII in his *DAI*. The *horeiarioi* were officials responsible for the collection, storage, and shipment of the grain intended mainly, but probably not exclusively, for Constantinople. Those who

⁴³⁸ “Ἰστέον, ὅτι εἰ ἀντάρωσι ποτε οἱ τοῦ κάστρου Χερσῶνος, ἢ ἐναντία τῶν βασιλικῶν κελεύσεων βουλευθῶσι διαπράξασθαι [...] εἴθ’ οὕτως ὀφείλουσιν ἀποσταλῆναι τρεῖς βασιλικοὶ [...] ἕτερος δὲ ἐν τῇ παραλίᾳ τοῦ θέματος Παφλαγονίας [...] ἵνα πάντα τὰ Χερσωνίτικα καράβια κρατῶσιν, [...]. Πρὸς τούτοις κωλύωσι καὶ τὰ Παφλαγονικὰ πλοῖα καὶ πλαγίτικα τοῦ Πόντου τοῦ μὴ διαπερᾶν ἐν Χερσῶνι μετὰ σίτου ἢ οἴνου ἢ οἰασδὴποτε χρείας ἢ πραγματείας. [...] Ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ ἀπὸ Ἀμινσοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ Παφλαγονίας [...] περάσωσι γεννήματα, οὐ δύνανται ζῆσαι οἱ Χερσωνῖται”. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *DAI* 53 (286, 512—535 MORAVCSIK – JENKINS).

⁴³⁹ BRYER – WINFIELD, *Pontos I*, 5.

⁴⁴⁰ D. O. Seals IV, 33, n. 11.20; ZV I, 1, 227, n. 144. Lead seal found in Istanbul.

⁴⁴¹ See above, p. 75.

⁴⁴² BELKE, *Paphlagonien und Honorias*, 141.

⁴⁴³ D. O. Seals IV, 75, n. 24. 4 (10th / 11th c.) and CHEYNET – MORRISSON – SEIBT, *Collection Seyrig*, 111, n. 153 (11th c., first third); D. O. Seals IV, 75, n. 24. 3 and ZACOS II, 303, n. 611 (11th c.); CHEYNET, *Société byzantine I*, 221—223.

were stationed in the region of Paphlagonia were likely responsible for supplying the border regions of the Crimea as well. A further detail in the *DAI* that deserves further analysis is the use of the term “πλαγίτικα⁴⁴⁴ (τοῦ Πόντου)”. This refers to (small) coastal vessels that would have been used for local trade, both legal and probably illegal, and it is the latter that the emperor wanted to deter. Another speculation may be ventured: that the smaller “πλαγίτικα” were used for transporting commodities from anchorages to harbours and ports. There, the merchandise could be loaded onto larger ships from Paphlagonia and Cherson (*Παφλαγονικὰ πλοῖα, Χερσωνίτικα καράβια*) which could very easily, and most importantly safely, traverse the open sea and reach the Crimea. The ships’ itinerary would include the loading of the staples from where they were stored at an *apotheke* near a port or harbour such as Herakleia Pontike or Amastris (maybe the “Bedesten” building?). Thence the ships could take advantage of the currents to navigate along the coast up to cape Karambis and from there cross the open sea directly to Cherson, thus shortening the travel time required. An indirect testimony to the existence of local and regional trade for the period 641 – 741 is also given in the Life of Saint George of Amastris, which describes events of the late eighth / early ninth century. Some merchants from the Saint’s hometown were arrested in Trebizond and sentenced to death by the strategos of the city. They were released after the intervention of the holy man who persuaded the official to let them out of prison.⁴⁴⁵

Fauna: products and trade

The fauna of the region included wild boar, ibex (*Capra aegagrus aegagrus*), and three closely related fowls, partridge, pigeon with the pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) being the most notable and a highly regarded dish since antiquity.⁴⁴⁶ In terms of animal products, the (sheep) cheese from Paphlagonia was held in such high esteem that it was sent as a gift to Constantinople. In the eleventh century, Symeon Seth considered it as of supreme quality compared to other cheese products, and Michael Psellos even dedicated a letter to the production of this delicacy.⁴⁴⁷ Famous also was the salted pork of Paphlagonia, which was sold in the capital and because of its supreme quality was even eaten raw.⁴⁴⁸ The livestock in the possession of Saint Philaretos the Merciful in the region of Amnia produced such large quantities of wool, milk, dairy products, and meat that the surplus had to be sold in the market.⁴⁴⁹ Fish

⁴⁴⁴ LBG, lemma πλαγίτικος.

⁴⁴⁵ Life of George of Amastris 27—31 (42, 4—47, 10 VASILEVSKIJ). BELKE, Paphlagonien und Honorias, 148.

⁴⁴⁶ Symeon Seth, De alimentorum (117, 20—24 LANGKAVEL). BRYER – WINFIELD, Pontos I, 4.

⁴⁴⁷ Nicholas Mystikos, Letters 127 (5—10 JENKINS – WESTERINK); Michael Psellos, Letters II 492 (913, 5—17, 915, 38—916, 58 PAPAIOANNOU); Symeon Seth, De alimentorum (105, 19—22 LANGKAVEL). BELKE, Paphlagonien und Honorias, 143; CHRONE, Πανίδα 219.

⁴⁴⁸ Michael Psellos, Letters I 68 (154, 38—155, 41 PAPAIOANNOU). CHRONE, Πανίδα, 146—147.

⁴⁴⁹ Vita Philareti (60, 7—10 RYDEN). BELKE, Paphlagonien und Honorias, 143—144.

including trout were also available in the rivers and mountain streams, while the sea provided, among others, horse mackerel, mullet, gurnard, tuna and anchovy. Though fishing is not directly attested, it was surely present. Tuna was fished in Herakleia, Tios, Amastris, and Kerasous.⁴⁵⁰ Along the shores of Paphlagonia, the fish known as *κωβίος* / *κωβιός* (*Gobius cobitis*) is mentioned in the eleventh century handbook written by Symeon Seth.⁴⁵¹ The writer says that the goby found in sandy or rocky shores are full of flavour and healthy to eat. In contrast, those found in lakes, lagoons, and river mouths are considered unhealthy. Furthermore, their broth is used for the treatment of stomach disorders. Testimonies from the fourth century BC mention as localities for the fishing of goby the estuaries of the Lykos and the Billaios. Thus, it may be assumed that the goby of Paphlagonia was possibly not considered the best of quality, though undoubtedly it had a certain nutritional value for the people of the time.⁴⁵²

The role of the state

Control and taxation

The impact of state policy and control was felt in both periods through the regulation of trade via the presence of *horeia* and / or *apothekai*, i.e., *basilika kommerkia* and the *kommerkiarioi* associated with them. In the eleventh century, the *kommerkiarioi* were still active on the northern shores of the Euxenos Pontos, demonstrating the pivotal importance of the region since one of the branches of the Silk Road came to an end in Trebizond.

Some detailed observations are possible for the years 641 – 741. Certain localities, including Kerasous, Helenopontos, and Lazike operated independently, though the latter was sometimes combined with Trapezous and Kerasous. Another frequent combination evidently treated as a unit was that of *Honorias, Paphlagonia and the littoral of the Pontos up to Trebizond*. The *basilika kommerkia* of *Krateia, Proucias and Herakleia* (Pontike) are attested on a single seal,⁴⁵³ and the seal of Georgios *patrikos* and Theophylaktos, general *kommerkiarioi of the apotheke of Paphlagonia and Ionopolis* is similarly designated, dated 692 / 693.⁴⁵⁴ It should be stressed that the geographical allocation of the *apothekai* across certain provinces reflected their main function during this period, that is the collection and storage of provisions, weapons, and other equipment for the army. Whatever the extend of the

⁴⁵⁰ BELKE, Paphlagonien und Honorias, 145; BRYER – WINFIELD, Pontos I, 4—5, 126.

⁴⁵¹ ODB, 1882, lemma Seth Symeon.

⁴⁵² Symeon Seth, *De alimentorum* (59, 21—60, 5 LANGKAVEL). DALBY, *Flavours*, 145; DANOFF, *Pontos Euxenos*, 967; CHRONE, *Παρίδα*, 315.

⁴⁵³ The most recent catalogues of lead seals of *apothekai* and *basilika kommerkia* can be found in RAGIA, *Apothekai of Asia Minor*, 227—236; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 511 and *passim*; MONTINARO, *Commerciaires byzantins*, 443 and *passim*.

⁴⁵⁴ ZV I, 1, 260, n. 180.

domestic and international trade during the period, this was also controlled and taxed through the *apothekai*, though clearly a minor aspect of their role.

Between 1025 and 1095, *kommerkiarioi* were present in the Doukate of Chaldia,⁴⁵⁵ probably an echo of the past when their seventh- and eighth-century predecessors were responsible for the “littoral of the Pontos up to Trebizond”. However, the sole task of the eleventh century *kommerkiarioi* was overall control of trade, including taxation, although they were occasionally entrusted with further fiscal responsibilities.

Monetary production and circulation

For the period 641 – 741, coin finds are virtually non-existent along the Pontic coast. Possible explanations range from the overall demonetisation of the economy during these years to the prosaic fact that nothing has yet been excavated. For 1025 – 1095, the finds are more interesting. Coming under the control of a local noble family, the Gabrades, after c. 1075, the region of the *Doukaton Chaldias* was provided with a mint, whether under imperial or separatist control. Altogether it produced fourteen types of copper *folleis* with a peculiar polygonal shape. We can assume that these were produced for local purposes, since it is clear that they were produced on a small scale. Interestingly though, some pieces have been discovered in Athens and Corinth, indicating their wide circulation. In fact, since the whole series is dated approximately speaking to the reign of Alexios I - with one type even reflecting the monetary reform of the same emperor- their discovery in these locations might not seem so unexpected.⁴⁵⁶

3.1.4 The west coast (east coast of the Balkans)

Geography and geopolitics

Compared to the shoreline of the north, the east, and the south, the west coast of the Euxeinos Pontos is the most accessible thanks to its hinterland. The east of the Balkan peninsula is made up of three vast plains demarcated and separated by long mountain ranges. From north to south the first range of the southern Carpathians has a north-east to south-west direction. On the plain to the south, the Danube with its estuary dominates. Next come the Haemus or Balkan Mountains, an extension of the southern Carpathians and stretching north-west to south-east. From here, a plain opens out in two directions:

⁴⁵⁵ D. O. seals IV, 89, nos. 32.15; 93, 32.26, 32.27.

⁴⁵⁶ HENDY, Catalogue IV 1, 131—132.

one to the north-east ending in the Gulf of Burgas in the Black Sea, and the other, south-south-east, dominated by the Maritsa / Meriç / Evros and Ergines / Ergene Nehri rivers, ending on the coasts of the Aegean Sea. Above the southern bank of the Maritsa, the last mountain range, that of Rhodope, lies north-west to south-east. Finally, between the gulf of Burgas and the Phanarion cape on the northern tip of the Bosphorus straits, the densely wooded Strandzha / Istranca Dağları separates the hinterland of eastern Thrace from the sea, creating a peculiar coastline of long sandy beaches and steep bights (map 9).⁴⁵⁷ The course of the rivers is generally east to west, the most important being - except for the Danube – Acheloos / Aheloy, Ropotamos / Ropotamo, Dyavolska Reka, Veleka, and Rezovska Reka / Mutlu Deresi all on the border between the modern states of Bulgaria and Turkey. At the end of the Pleistocene, the east coasts of the Black Sea subsided, and the sea level rose to create a series of lagoons. Tens of inlets, many of them at the mouths of small rivers and streams, could be used as havens.⁴⁵⁸

The Black-Sea climate zone is restricted to within a twenty to forty km strip along the coast. North of cape Emona, the amount of rain in summer is more abundant compared to the south, where a Mediterranean climate with dry summers and rainy, sometimes snowy winters predominates. Extreme frost can also occur, affecting even the sea surface.⁴⁵⁹

The geopolitical context 641 – 741 / 1025 – 1095

Enter the Bulgarians

The situation in the northern and western Balkans in the middle of the seventh century remains obscure. The final retreat of the Avars north of the Danube after the unsuccessful siege of Constantinople in 626, as well as the settlement of the Serbs and Croats in the region, ended a long period of warfare, though the degree of Byzantine authority over these peoples remains uncertain.⁴⁶⁰ The main written sources of the period mention the march of the army that in 680 was deployed in order to cope with the incoming Bulgarians, who until that time were looting lands that were “in Christian hands”.⁴⁶¹ In any case, this vague status quo would soon change with the arrival of the Bulgarians from the steppes north of the Sea of Azov. Led by Asparuch, son of their deceased leader Kubrat, one of their groups

⁴⁵⁷ KODER, Χώρος, 25—30, SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 53—57; KÜLZER, Ostthrakien, 64—66.

⁴⁵⁸ SOUSTAL, Bulgarische Schwarzmeerküste, 60, 63 and passim; IDEM, Thrakien, 56; HRISTOV, Mare Ponticum, 33.

⁴⁵⁹ KODER, Χώρος, 54—55; KÜLZER, Ostthrakien, 66—67; DANOFF, Pontos Euxeinos, 944—945; OLSHAUSEN – BOROFKA, Pontos Euxeinos, <http://dx-doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e1105430> (29.07.2020).

⁴⁶⁰ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, DAI 31—32 (146, 1—160, 151 MORAVCSIK - JENKINS); Theophanes (359, 12—14 DE BOOR). The debate concerning the reliability of Porphyrogenitus’ account about the settlement of the Croats and Serbs is still active, but a middle-ground interpretation is given in HALDON, Seventh century, 46—47 with literature; BORRI, Francia e Croatia, 89—91; POHL, Die Awaren, 261—268; LILIE, Thrakesion, 35—41; IDEM, Ansiedlung der Serben, 17—26, 42—43.

⁴⁶¹ Theophanes (358, 14—20 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 36 (90, 3—13 MANGO). LEONTSINE, Κωνσταντίνος Δ΄, 246—248.

headed eastwards and finally settled in the neighbouring region of the Danube delta, from where they began their raids.⁴⁶² Emperor Constantine IV mobilized land and naval forces with the intention of blockading the invaders in the marshland, but the whole operation ended in total failure when his orders were misunderstood, the troops scattered, and were then caught by surprise and heavily defeated by the Bulgars. Constantine made no further attempt to repulse them, and in 681 a treaty was concluded which recognized the Bulgarian occupation of the already held territories and instituted an annual tribute.⁴⁶³ In the longer term, the Byzantines lost control over a number of Slav groups who were now occupying the region between the Danube and the mountains of Macedonia and Rhodope and thus came under Bulgarian suzerainty, and from this time onwards the development of a Bulgaro-Slav state in the north-eastern Balkan zone can be traced. Regarding trade and communication, the capital of the new state was established at Pliska, strategically located for controlling the approaches to the Danube delta and the route from the river to Constantinople.⁴⁶⁴

In 705, the deposed Justinian II asked for the aid of the Bulgarian Khan Tervel in recovering his throne. On the successful outcome, Tervel was honoured with the title of *caesar* and received numerous gifts in appreciation of his assistance. Yet in 708, in a manifestly ungrateful move, Justinian invaded Bulgaria with a campaign that ended in swift defeat.⁴⁶⁵ A treaty signed in 716 set for the first time a formal frontier between the two states.⁴⁶⁶ The Bulgarians showed their gratitude for this arrangement two years later by outflanking the Arab army that was besieging Constantinople. After this major milestone, peace was restored until the Bulgarian wars of Constantine V's time four decades later.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶² RUNCIMAN, *First Bulgarian empire*, 3 ff.; ZIEMANN, *Vom Wandervolk zur Großmacht*, 143 ff., 163—167.

⁴⁶³ Theophanes (356, 18—359, 25 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 36 (88, 1-90, 29 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, *Chronicle* 113, 6 (168, 32-16, 52 WAHLGREN); Ioannes Zonaras XIV (226, 16—228, 9 BÜTTNER—WOBST). HALDON, *Seventh century*, 66—67; FERLUGA, *Byzanz auf dem Balkan*, 4—5; RUNCIMAN, *First Bulgarian empire*, 26—27; ZIEMANN, *Vom Wandervolk zur Großmacht*, 160—163; DÖLGER – MÜLLER, *Regesten*, n. 244a; SIMEONOV, *Lykostomion*, 234—239.

⁴⁶⁴ HALDON, *Seventh century*, 67; RUNCIMAN, *First Bulgarian empire*, 27—29; ZIEMANN, *Vom Wandervolk zur Großmacht*, 165—167; RASEV, *Der Beginn von Pliska*, 449—450, 454, 460.

⁴⁶⁵ Theophanes (374, 1—8, 24—375, 1, 376, 13—29 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 42, 43 (102, 37—44, 58—104, 64 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, *Chronicle* 116, 4, 117, 1 (175, 20—23, 2—4 WAHLGREN), who writes that the Bulgarians received Byzantine territory as well; Ioannes Zonaras XIV (237, 13—15, 238, 6—8 BÜTTNER—WOBST). RUNCIMAN, *First Bulgarian empire*, 29—32; ZIEMANN, *Vom Wandervolk zur Großmacht*, 180—186, 198—199.

⁴⁶⁶ DÖLGER – MÜLLER, *Regesten*, n. 276.

⁴⁶⁷ Theophanes (397, 28—30 DE BOOR); Symeon Magistros, *Chronicle* 121, 12 (184, 98—185, 99 WAHLGREN); Ioannes Zonaras XV (253, 12—14 BÜTTNER—WOBST). HALDON, *Seventh century*, 83; FERLUGA, *Byzanz auf dem Balkan*, 5—6; RUNCIMAN, *First Bulgarian empire*, 32—33; ZIEMANN, *Vom Wandervolk zur Großmacht*, 202—207; KÜLZER, *Ostthrakien*, 104—105.

“Pax Byzantina” and crisis

In the 1025, the Danube was once again the border of Byzantium for the first time since the seventh century. The empire was now a neighbour of various Slavic principalities in the region of Dalmatia to the north-west, of Hungarians to the north, and of various nomadic tribes, primarily the Petchenegs, to the north-east.⁴⁶⁸ The leaders of some of these political entities were incorporated into the Byzantine “hierarchy of states”, receiving honorary titles and other gifts.⁴⁶⁹ Furthermore, the imperial administration had facilitated the establishment of trade routes that permitted the flow of precious objects and artisanal products to the north in return for the import of raw materials. The rich coin finds and the lead seals of the *kommerkiarioi* stationed in the various *emporía* along the Lower Danube confirm this policy.⁴⁷⁰

The fundamentals of Byzantine rule in the northern Balkans for the period 1025 – 1095 were ensuring the support of local elites and the exercise of a just taxation policy.⁴⁷¹ Where these ceased to exist, the result was the resentment of the population that could lead to open rebellion. This was the case with the two Bulgarian uprisings in 1041 – 1042 and 1072. They were sparked primarily by fiscal measures imposed by the central government and won the support of a part of the local elites.⁴⁷²

Regarding external threats, the most serious challenge came from the nomads living north of the Danube. Becoming immediate neighbours of the empire after 1018, the Petchenegs had begun their raids already in the 1020s. Their high mobility allowed them simply to bypass the key fortresses and cities of the region and fall upon the rich lands of Thrace and Macedonia.⁴⁷³ In the middle of the 1040s -under pressure from another Turkic tribe, the Oghuz- they moved southwards. Civil war soon broke out among the Petchenegs, and the Byzantines decided to take advantage of this. Initially, their Christianisation, the bestowal of titles on their leaders, and their establishment in the sparsely populated areas along the Basilike Odos seemed effective.⁴⁷⁴ But they rapidly launched a rebellion

⁴⁶⁸ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, DAI, 29, 30, 37—40 (124, 54—68, 142, 75—146, 142, 166, 1—170, 71 MORAVCSIK – JENKINS). STEPHENSON, *Balkan frontier*, 26—31, 38—45, 125—130; CURTA, *Southeastern Europe*, 249ff.

⁴⁶⁹ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *De cerimoniis* 48 (691, 2—13 ZUCKERMANN); Kekaumenos (314, 15—322, 12 LITAVRIN). STEPHENSON, *Balkan frontier*, 33—38; CURTA, *Southeastern Europe*, 210—213.

⁴⁷⁰ Attaleiates (158, 3—10 TSOLAKES). STEPHENSON, *Balkan frontier*, 84—88; MADGEARU, *Military organization*, 122.

⁴⁷¹ STEPHENSON, *Balkan frontier*, 123.

⁴⁷² For the fiscal measures, see John Scylitzes (412, 65—76 THURN) for 1040; Scylitzes continuatus (162, 20—163, 3 TSOLAKES) for 1072. For the Bulgarian aristocrats, John Scylitzes (411, 42, 53—54, 414, 40—45 THURN) for 1040; Scylitzes continuatus (163, 13—15, 165, 6—13, 166, 2—4 TSOLAKES) for 1072; Kekaumenos (184, 10—17, 188, 26 – 190, 17, 196, 20—31 LITAVRIN); STEPHENSON, *Balkan frontier*, 132, 136, 141—143; PIRIVATRIĆ, *Μετά τον Σαμουήλ*, 55; CHONDRIDOU, *Ενσωμάτωση*, 114; 120—121; KOLIA-DERMITZAKI, *Εικόνα των Βουλγάρων*, 65—72.

⁴⁷³ John Scylitzes (373, 92—97, 385, 56—57, 397, 43—44, 399, 3—5 THURN). STEPHENSON, *Balkan frontier*, 81; MADGEARU, *Military organization*, 116—121; KÜLZER, *Ostthrakien*, 123; 125.

⁴⁷⁴ John Scylitzes (455, 32—459, 85 THURN); Attaleiates (24, 25—26, 3 TSOLAKES). STEPHENSON, *Balkan frontier*, 89—91; MADGEARU, *Military organization*, 123—127.

against the empire, leading to a conflict that lasted from 1048 to 1053. This war proved beyond doubt that the imperial armies needed to resort to guerrilla tactics to defeat the mounted archers. In a decisive battle, the joint armies of the *themata* of *Boulgaria* and *Paristrion* failed to cooperate, leading thus to a critical defeat that persuaded Constantine IX to recognise the Petchenegs as an independent ethnic group with the right to live within the imperial territory.⁴⁷⁵ A few years later, they collaborated with the Magyars, forcing emperor Isaac I to muster a campaign against them.⁴⁷⁶ In 1064, it was the turn of the Oghuz to invade the Balkans. They defeated the armies sent against them and raided as far as southern Greece. Fortunately for the Byzantines, they fell victim to disease and the survivors were recruited into the imperial army as mercenaries.⁴⁷⁷

In parallel with other developments within the empire, the decade 1071 – 1081 brought debacle to the Byzantine Balkans. The Bulgarian revolt of 1072 triggered the invasion of Constantine Bodin, son of the lord of Duklja, Michael. Another local, Nestor, who was sent to the Lower Danube by the central government, rebelled and formed a fleeting alliance with the Petchenegs.⁴⁷⁸ Although the Bulgarian revolt was suppressed, successive rebellions by various military commanders disabled the local armies. As a result, the Magyars captured the strategic fortress of Belgrade while the Petchenegs were devastating the territories between the Danube and the Haemus and were also raiding Thrace.⁴⁷⁹ Alexios I tried at first to bribe the leaders of the nomads in order to divide the various clans. When this method failed, he went into open war. The critical battle took place at Mount Lebounion in Thrace in the spring of 1091. The result was a complete victory for the Byzantines, and this -combined with the repulsion of a Cuman invasion in 1095- reasserted their authority over the peninsula.⁴⁸⁰

Pathways of communication

The roads were of vital importance for communications in the western *Euxeinos Pontos*, although the travel by sea would have been preferred. The oldest road axis, that of the Danube *limes*, was the

⁴⁷⁵ John Scylitzes (465, 29—471, 7, 14—473, 64 THURN); Attaleiates (26, 3—35, 17 TSOLAKES); Kekaumenos (178, 12—28, 180, 20—182, 2 LITAVRIN). KÜLZER, Ostthrakien, 126; STEPHENSON, Balkan frontier, 91—93; CURTA, Southeastern Europe, 293—297.

⁴⁷⁶ Attaleiates (52, 13—54, 3 TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (106, 23—107, 9 TSOLAKES); Psellos VII 67—70 (240, 1—243, 22 REINSCH). MADGEARU, Military organization, 128—129; STEPHENSON, Balkan frontier, 94—95.

⁴⁷⁷ Attaleiates (66, 10—68, 13, 69, 11—23 TSOLAKES); Scylitzes continuatus (113, 25—116, 8 TSOLAKES). SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 96—97; KÜLZER, Ostthrakien, 127; MADGEARU, Military organization, 129—131; STEPHENSON, Balkan frontier, 95.

⁴⁷⁸ Scylitzes continuatus (166, 14—26 TSOLAKES); Attaleiates (158, 10—159, 8, 160, 14—161, 29 TSOLAKES). STEPHENSON, Balkan frontier, 98—99; MADGEARU, Military organization, 79—82; MAKSIMOVIC, Βυζάντιο και Σέρβοι, 80—83.

⁴⁷⁹ Bryennios III 14 (237, 1—14 GAUTIER). STEPHENSON, Balkan frontier, 98—100; MADGEARU, Military organization, 95—98.

⁴⁸⁰ Anna Komnene VII 1—7, VIII 1—5, X 3 (203ff., 236ff., 287, 84—295, 54 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS). STEPHENSON, Balkan frontier, 100—105; MADGEARU, Military organization, 139—143; SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 98, 333—334; CURTA, Southeastern Europe, 300—307.

highway that ran alongside the southern bank of the lower Danube / Istros, starting from Sirmium / Sirmion / Sremska Mitrovica and passing through Singidunum / Beogradon / Belgrade. Having traversed Iron Gates gorge (*Σιδηραί Πόλαι*) it reached Dorostolon / Dristra / Silistra. From there, the road continued to Nioviodunum in the region of the Danube Delta near modern Isaccea. There the road ran along the Black Sea coast, and thence from the mouth of the Istros through Odysos / Varna, Mesembria / Nesebar, Anchialos / Pomorie, Debeltos / Debelt, Agathopolis / Ahtopol, and Medeia / Kiyiköy to Constantinople. Medeia was connected to the west via Bizye / Vize and Arkadioupolis / Lüleburgaz, thus having access to the Thracian heartland. Further connections were available to the major coastal settlements, especially the strategically located Anchialos. It was connected to Serdike/Sofia by means of an east-to-west road. A branch of this axis led further south at Debeltos and Sozopolis, thus bypassing the gulf of Burgas.⁴⁸¹

General remarks

As far as the sea and riverine communications are concerned, our written evidence is meagre but can be supplemented by archaeology. The Istros, except for its lowest reaches, was not navigable beyond Nioviodunum - even with regard to the small medieval vessels - as it becomes significantly shallower, with a decrease from seven to only two meters in depth. In the middle of the eleventh century, Saint Cyril the Phileote was employed as navigator on a ship trading along the Black Sea coast and with forts in the lower Danube region, but specific details are not given.⁴⁸² Constantine VII in his *DAI* describes the itinerary of Rus merchants from their northern homelands down to Constantinople. The last part of this journey coincides with that of the exiled emperor Justinian II of almost 250 years earlier: after leaving the mouth of the Dnieper, the *monoxyla* continued to the mouth of the Dniester. Then following the north-western coast and assisted by the south-south-western sea current, they reached Selinas / Soulinas / Sulina on one of the estuaries of the Istros. From there the itinerary followed the western shores, with stops at Tomis / Constantia / Constanța, Anchialos and Mesembria, up to the Byzantine capital. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a voyage from Burgas to Sozopol in non-windy weather took four and a half hours, and the return half that time, probably helped by the breeze and the local current that dominates the gulf of Burgas.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸¹ AVRAMEA, *Επικοινωνίες*, 135—136, 138, 140—143, 145—146; KODER, *Χώρος* 96—99; KISLINGER, *Reisen und Verkehrswege*, 232—233; SOUSTAL, *Thrakien*, 135—136, 145—146; KÜLZER, *Ostthrakien*, 195, 203—204; OLSHAUSEN – BOROFKA, *Pontos Euxeinos*, <http://dx-doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e1105430> (29.07.2020).

⁴⁸² *Life of Cyril Phileotes*, 5, 1, 7, 9, 11 (57—58, 61, 63, 65 SARGOLOGOS). STEPHENSON, *Balkan frontier*, 84, 88

⁴⁸³ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *DAI* 9 (60, 78—62, 104 MORAVCSIK – JENKINS). HRISTOV, *Mare Ponticum*, 72—74.

Settlement patterns

Because of the peculiarity of the hinterland of the western coast owing to the presence of the lower Danube, we will follow the course of the Istros and then turn south, following the coast up to the littoral of eastern Thrace. This approach will allow us to understand the interrelationship between the two regions, their settlements, and their hinterland. As with all the regions considered in this study, the settlements fall into three categories: ports, harbours, and anchorages.⁴⁸⁴

The region of the Istros

Most of the riparian settlements of the Istros were established as Roman *castra* along the *limes*. Until that time (first century BCE), only a scattering of ancient Greek colonies had been found in the broader region of the Delta. The most important were the city-port of Aigissos / Tulcea at the mouth of the Danube (probably near the sea at the time of its foundation, but later losing its direct access because of alluvium), the emporia of Orgame (east of the village of Jurilovca), and Istria (south-east of the homonymous modern village) beside the lagoons of Almyris / Limanul Razelm and Arsinoe / Lacul Sinoe respectively. To these settlements, the imperial legions gradually added a chain of fortifications to protect the provinces south of the Istros. In the middle of the sixth century CE, the most important settlements – proceeding south-west to north-east were the following: Durostorum / Dorostolon / Silistra, Capidava (north of modern Cernavodă), Dinogetia / Garvăn (on the site of an ancient Geto-Dacian settlement), and Nioviodunum / Isaccea.⁴⁸⁵ After 576, the region became the theatre of war between the Byzantines, the Avar khaganate, and various Slavic groups, which at least in theory, were vassals of the latter. The conflict culminated during the years 592 – 602, by which time most of the settlements had already been abandoned by the majority of their inhabitants and were being used for the encampment of imperial forces.⁴⁸⁶ During the first decade of the seventh century, the Byzantines evacuated the region on account of internal strife and the Persian war in the east. The riparian settlements of the lower Danube would not reappear in the written sources until the middle of the tenth century.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁴ KOSTOVA, Settlement patterns, 17, divides the region into two broad geographical areas with the national boundary being set in the region of Mangalia. Although this makes total sense, I have chosen to draw a clear distinction between the region of the lower Danube/Istros on the one hand, and the coastal zone on the other. For the coastal settlements in general see HRISTOV, Mare Ponticum, 33ff.

⁴⁸⁵ Hierokles, Synekdemos (13—14 HONIGMANN); Procopius, De aedificiis, IV 7 (131, 8—19 HAYRY – WIRTH). KOROMELA, Έλληνες στη Μαύρη Θάλασσα, 163; CURTA, Making of the Slavs, 122; KOSTOVA, Settlement patterns, 19.

⁴⁸⁶ KARDARAS, Βυζάντιο και Άβαροι, 78ff., 92—93; CURTA, Making of the Slavs, 90ff, 107—109, 116—117, 155—156; POHL, The Avars, 163ff.

⁴⁸⁷ KARDARAS, Βυζάντιο και Άβαροι, 108—110; CURTA, Making of the Slavs, 106—107, POHL, The Avars, 281—282.

Thus, the victory of the Byzantines against the Rus of Sviatoslav in 971 signalled the return of the Byzantine frontier to the *limes* of the lower Danube for the first time in four centuries. The process of reincorporation was interrupted between the years 986 – 1001 due to the revolt of the Kometopouloi but it restarted soon afterwards. This reincorporation was based on a geopolitical prerequisite: the presence of the Petcheneg nomads, allies of the empire, north of the Istros, serving as a buffer between Byzantium and the Rus (or whatever alternative threat was likely to appear from the steppes). To keep this condition alive, another had to be maintained: the support of the local population and its elites south of the river. This would be achieved by boosting the economy of the frontier in order to provide the Petchenegs with their fair share in return for their vigil north of the Istros.⁴⁸⁸ This policy - fully conceived and implemented during the 1030s by the *orphanotrophos* Ioannes, the chief minister and brother of emperor Michael IV - was based on the existing Roman and early Byzantine infrastructure that was abandoned after the seventh century. A series of fortresses along the *limes* was rebuilt in many cases on the basis of earlier plans. From a south-west to a north-east direction, these were as follows: Dorostolon, Dervent and Păcuiul lui Soare, Oltina, Axiopolis / Cernavodă, Capidava, Hârşova, Dinogetia, Isaccea, Tulcea and Nufăru (Presthlavitza). As in previous centuries, they were connected by land and river both with each other and the outside world, and served as administrative, military, and economic foci especially for the purpose of trade with the nomads of the north, and in second capacity with central Europe. The rich material evidence includes remains of infrastructure, various ceramic and metal finds, coins, and lead seals that will be discussed in detail below.⁴⁸⁹

Peace and stability would not last long. Already in 1027, the Petchenegs invaded the region of the lower Danube, hitting Dinogetia and Capidava. Between 1032 and 1035, Dorostolon, Dervent, and Oltina were sacked, and in 1036, it was the turn of Capidava, Dinogetia, Isaccea, and Tulcea. This first wave of raids might have persuaded the central government to fully implement its “trade against raid” policy, succeeding indeed in supporting peace for the next decade. Nevertheless, the Petcheneg wars of the years to come would be much more disastrous for the settlements of the *Paristrion thema*. Capidava, Dinogetia, and Tulcea were hit again, the nomads reaching as far as Mesembria, following the roads that connected the border with the west coast of the Euxeinos. The debacle arrived between the years 1072 and 1091 when the rebellion of Nestor threw whatever was left of the imperial administration into disarray, with Hârşova and Dinogetia suffering the most. The Byzantine victory over the Cumans in 1095 signalled the conclusive restoration of the lower Danubian frontier, despite

⁴⁸⁸ STEPHENSON, *Balkan frontier*, 80—84; MADGEARU, *Military organization*, 30ff.

⁴⁸⁹ STEPHENSON, *Balkan frontier*, 84—89; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI – TALMAȚCHI, *Commercial traffic*, 334; KOSTOVA, *Settlement patterns*, 23, with detailed footnotes and tables, 25.

the last Petcheneg attack of 1122. However, the chain of settlements set up after the year 1000 was completely broken, and only Dorostolon and Isaccea survived for the rest of the twelfth century.⁴⁹⁰

Coastal settlements

The coastal settlements met with a different fate during both periods under investigation. Founded by the ancient Greeks as colonies along the western littoral of the Euxeinos Pontos, they could always use the sea for their connection with the outside world whatever the situation in their hinterland. The most important settlements were Constantia (Tomis), Kallatis/Mangalia, Odysos, Mesembria, Anchialos, Debeltos, and Apollonias / Sozopolis / Sozopol. Numerous harbours and anchorages, many of them continuously in use since Antiquity, were located along the coast. From north to south, these were the gulf east of the promontory of Kalon Akron / Kalliakra, with the harbours and anchorages of Bizone / Kavarna, Krounoi / Dionysopolis / Balčik, and Gerania / Kranevo. Then followed Naulochos / Templum Iovis / Obzor, Aimonion Akron / Emona / Nos Emine, Ropotamo, Bordobizu / Urdoviza / Kiten, Auleion Teichos / Agathopolis / Ahtopol, Kanstritzion / cape Kastrič(?), Akra Thyniados / Īgneada, and Medeia / Kiyiköy.⁴⁹¹

Among the various port cities of the west coast, the most important in geopolitical and economic terms were Mesembria, Anchialos, Debeltos, Sozopolis, and Agathopolis. As with those of the southern coasts of the Euxeinos Pontos, they manifested some common features such as their location on a naturally protected and thus easily defended promontory, the existence of two ports, and the survival, to some extent, of their ancient/late antique grid plan. Furthermore, their distribution across the extensive Gulf of Burgas with its relatively mild hinterland gave them further advantages such as the relatively easy sea and land connections with one another.⁴⁹² In any case, it must be considered that with such fragmentary records on the material and written side, the only way of piecing together a coherent picture is to combine the evidence of both.

Mesembria was the stronghold of the Byzantines in the area, gaining further importance as a Byzantine outpost after the establishment of the Bulgars in 681. It was built on a small peninsula, connected to the mainland by means of a 400-meter isthmus. Two harbours, one in the north and the other in the south, were built simultaneously on a grid plan replete with walls and other important public buildings, the most prominent being thermal baths. The existence of two harbours - one for the fleet, the other for commercial shipping, as in the case of Amastris - is a reasonable hypothesis. The southern port offered protection against the northern winds, while the roads passing nearby connected

⁴⁹⁰ STEPHENSON, *Balkan frontier*, 89ff.; MADGEARU, *Military organization*, 65ff., for each settlement see 101ff.

⁴⁹¹ Hierokles, *Synekdemos* (13—14 HONIGMANN). WINKLER, *Pontos Euxeinos*, 1066—1082; KOROMELA, *Ἑλληνες στη Μαύρη Θάλασσα*, 109—111, 163; HRISTOV, *Mare Ponticum*, 34—35, 41—45, 99ff., 113ff., SOUSTAL *Thrakien*, 148; KÜLZER, *Ostthrakien*, 210; KOSTOVA, *Settlement patterns*, 29—31 with footnotes and tables.

⁴⁹² SOUSTAL, *Thrakien*, 147; GEROLYMATOU, *Αγορές*, 151—152.

the city with centres such as Pliska, Preslav, and Tarnovo. The function of the city as a focus for international trade is confirmed by the lead seals of the *kommerkiarioi of Mesembria* that appeared in 698 / 699 or 713 / 714 (indiction date not secure), almost at the same time as the signing of the treaty between Byzantium and the Bulgarian khaganate (716) which, among other matters, regulated trade between the two states. Furthermore, for the years, 668 – 685 a series of coins have been discovered both in the form of hoards and single finds. And immediately before the battle with the Bulgars in 680, Constantine IV withdrew to Mesembria to make use of the thermal baths as he was suffering from gout. Finally, the economic potential of the city and its immediate region is proven by the settlement of Isaurian colonists in the closing decades of the seventh century, among these was the family of the future emperor Leo III. Some years later, they were able to offer to Justinian II and his Bulgarian allies five hundred sheep as a gift. Although suffering from the events of the fourth quarter of the eleventh century, Mesembria retained its commercial importance, notwithstanding the fact that the *kommerkiarioi* had already set up their base in nearby Debeltos.⁴⁹³

Anchialos was another important coastal settlement. Located on the neck of land between the mainland and the promontory where the modern city lies, its strategic location turned it into an important communications node. It was connected with the north, but more importantly with Phillipoupolis in the west and Adrianoupolis in the south-west. After the Avar depredation of 583, Anchialos was abandoned by most of its population and used as a base for the imperial armies during the years 592 – 602. Thereafter it is mentioned as a station used for the encampment of imperial land and / or naval forces, as in the year 708, when emperor Justinian II “anchored his fleet in front of the fortress”. It can be assumed that the settlement continued to exist as a *kastron* with a permanent garrison and a basic level of economic activity. In 763, Anchialos was destroyed by the Bulgars and then rebuilt in 784 under the auspices of empress Eirene. Until 971, when the hinterland of the city came under firm Byzantine control, Mesembria and Debeltos gained in importance as foci of trade and communication. Anchialos also served as an important military station during the war against the Cumans (1094–1095), and Byzantine coins from between the ninth and the twelfth century have been found along with many ceramic fragments.⁴⁹⁴

Debeltos, located on the shores of Lake Mandra and on the northern bank of the river Sredecka, was initially a Thracian settlement. It became a colony of veterans during the reign of Vespasian (69 – 79 BCE) and then fell into decay. Despite this, its location on the branch that led to Adrianople to

⁴⁹³ Theophanes (358, 27—29, 391, 5—10 DE BOOR). STOITSEVA, Τοπογραφία Μεσημβρίας, 14, 100, 219—222, for the late antique walls of the city see 28ff.; HRISTOV, Mare Ponticum, 141—143; STOITSEVA, Τοπογραφία Μεσημβρίας, 104—105, SOUSTAL Thrakien, 355—357.

⁴⁹⁴ Theophanes (376, 16—17, 457, 11 DE BOOR); Theophanes Confessor, 525. GJUZELEV, Anchialos, 23—27, 29, 32; SOUSTAL, Bulgarische Schwarzmeerküste, 60; IDEM, Thrakien, 175—177; HRISTOV, Mare Ponticum, 161.

the south and to the coastal road in the east was too advantageous to be overlooked. The neighbouring lake secured direct access to the sea, although today the ruins of the city are found about seven km west of the coast. It can be assumed that this is why after the fall of Mesembria to the Bulgars in 812, the *basilika kommerkia* moved their base to nearby Debeltos, which was fortified and probably adequately provided with the essential infrastructure to function as a customs post. The seals of the *kommerkiarioi Debeltou* survive for the tenth and eleventh centuries, yet the location of the Byzantine settlement is rather unclear. It seems however, to have moved from its earlier location to the nearby hill of Gorno Gradiste about a kilometre south-south-east, where a fortress with ceramic findings of the eleventh and twelfth centuries has been excavated.⁴⁹⁵

The evidence for Sozopolis is fragmentary. Its ancient walls were renovated at the end of the fourth century. Until the second century BCE, it had two ports that offered protection from various seasonal winds, but no remains have survived because of the intense erosion of the coast. It seems that during Roman and Byzantine times the two ports were replaced by two landing zones, known to be located on the northern side of the promontory thanks to the large number of late antique and medieval anchors found *in situ*.⁴⁹⁶ On the islet of Saint Ivan, about 1.33 km to the north-west, a monastic complex with two basilicas was active from the fifth / sixth century onwards. Its scriptorium is attested in the tenth century, and the churches were renovated in the tenth to eleventh centuries. On the smaller islet of Saint Kirik, now connected to the mainland through an embankment fill, Byzantine belt buckles found in the necropolis and an eighth / ninth-century tomb inscription confirm an imperial presence for the greater part of the eighth century. Parts of a church from the fifth / sixth century were reused for the construction of a basilica at the end of the ninth / beginning of the tenth century, itself further converted into a cross-dome church at the end of the eleventh century. A late antique building next to the church of Saint George was used in two distinct periods, from the fifth to the eighth, and the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries respectively. It had a ground floor and two or three levels and was used as a storage facility.⁴⁹⁷

Agathopolis was a fortified settlement inhabited according to the material evidence in two distinct phases: the first ending in the seventh century, and the second extending from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. The name of the settlement appears for the first time at the end of the ninth/beginning of tenth century. There were two ports, one to the north and the other to the south of

⁴⁹⁵ DIMITROV, Δεβελτός, 35—38, 44; SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 234—235.

⁴⁹⁶ HRISTOV, Mare Ponticum, 290—292, 294.

⁴⁹⁷ HRISTOV, Mare Ponticum, 280—281, 297, 302—304; DIMITROV, Harbour of Sozopol, 67—70. For the inscription, see BESEVLIEV, Inschriften aus Bulgarien, 123, n. 181a; SOUSTAL; Thrakien, 454—455.

the promontory, while the sandy beach west of the city provided a natural harbour: many antique and medieval findings, including ceramics and iron anchors, confirm its use.⁴⁹⁸

Among the harbours and anchorages along the coast, Emona, Ropotamo, Bordobizu, Kanstritzion and Medeia, the first and the latter will be briefly examined as representative examples. Emona has the most impressive location on a sheer cape at the furthest end of the Haemus Mountains hence its name. Medeia was the last stop before reaching the straits of the Bosphorus in the south-east. The features that these localities had in common were their permanent harbour installations, though of a smaller scale than those of the ports and an adjacent settlement sometimes fortified with an acropolis. Ceramic findings show a period of prosperity between the tenth and twelfth centuries, along with the remnants of ecclesiastical buildings. These settlements, often with the benefit of a river in their vicinity, offered a much-desired stopover for necessary replenishments in water and food supplies, and the chance to engage in less state-supervised, and even illicitly organised trading activities.⁴⁹⁹

Trade patterns

The transitional period

For the years 641 – 741, the fragmentary material evidence is our only source for reconstructing the trade patterns in the region of the lower Danube and beyond. In fact, there is no archaeological record concerning the Byzantine presence in the region of the Istros. Nonetheless the evidence for the north-west, the region controlled by the Avars, is far thicker. Once again, the numerous graves of the upper classes of the khaganate have precious and semi-precious Byzantine objects, or otherwise local manufactured ones copying Byzantine originals, which had entered the Avar-controlled territories. The geographical dispersion of the finds centres on the kernel of the Avar dominion that is, the south, centre, and eastern part of Austria, western Hungary, Moravia, Bohemia, Croatia, and western Romania. The findings all from burials (including the famous treasure of Nagyszentmiklós/Sânnicolau Mare) include a fifty-three-litre amphora, belt buckles and belt sets, golden jewellery comprising rings, earrings, and bracelets, and silver objects such as cups, plates, and jewellery entailing, for example, ornamented necklaces and bracelets along with granulated earrings.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁸ HRISTOV, *Mare Ponticum*, 364, 366—367, 369, 374—376; SOUSTAL, *Thrakien*, 168—169.

⁴⁹⁹ SOUSTAL, *Thrakien*, 215, 259—260, 298, 428—429; KÜLZER, *Ostthrakien*, 519—522; HRISTOV, *Mare Ponticum*, 311—314, 379—382.

⁵⁰⁰ KARDARAS, *Byzantium and the Avars*, 111—112, 115—123, 138, with literature.

The eleventh century

Trade in the region of the west coast of the Black Sea is well documented, although indirectly in the written sources. More details are given from the thirteenth century onwards thanks to the documents of Italian merchants. The material evidence is richer for the riverine settlements along the lower Danube but sparser for those along the coast due to the latter's urban and industrial development from the beginning of the twentieth century.

After the incorporation of the central and northern Balkans into the empire in 1018, Basil II stipulated "that each Bulgar possessing a yoke of oxen should give to the public purse a measure of grain, the same amount of millet and a jar of wine."⁵⁰¹ This passage from the chronicle of Ioannes Skylitzes recites the main agricultural products of the region from Antiquity into modern times. For centuries, the lower Danube and the west coasts of the Euxenos were centres of extensive cereal cultivation and animal breeding, while the mild climate was favourable to viticulture. Wheat, barley, rye, and the above-mentioned millet, along with the breeding of horses, buffalos, cows, sheep, and other livestock, contributed most to the economy of the region. The major centres of production and export were Mesembria and Anchialos, thanks to their extensive and easily accessible hinterland. Apiculture was also present with exports of honey and wax. Production of salt by virtue of the extensive lagoons along the coast must have been important in addition to fishing. Mining activity is attested for the antique period but what survived in the centuries to come is unknown. In any case, in a catalogue of professions from fourteenth century Mesembria, the usual urban occupations such as tanners, furriers, shoemakers, and goldsmiths are present, while in Anchialos constructors of wine casks are reported.⁵⁰²

Along the border of the lower Danube region, material evidence ranging from ceramic and metallic findings to residues from silk products found in many locations indicate the vitality of local, regional, and international trade, and the success, at least partially, of the Byzantine "trade against raid" policy. We will look at the evidence for these in turn, beginning with ceramics.

Pottery dated to the eleventh century has been found in various settlements of the *Paristrion thema*. Three kilns and a number of workshops active between the tenth and twelfth centuries have been excavated in Dinogetia, three kilns in Nufăru, and a further kiln in Păcuiul lui Soare. Circulation of various ceramic products can be gauged through analysis of fabric and the stamps applied to bases. Whiteware from Dinogetia has been found in -among other locations- Isaccea, Păcuiul lui Soare, present-day Moldavia, the intra-Carpathian territory at present day Brasov, and in the territory between the Prut and the Dniester rivers. There was also pottery of superior quality circulating jugs, pots, mugs,

⁵⁰¹ John Skylitzes (412, 67—72). John Skylitzes, Synopsis 387.

⁵⁰² SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 149—155.

cups, bowls, plates, and amphorae, some of them either with glazed body or relief ornament or zoomorphic decoration, sometimes in sgraffito technique. Ceramics with golden engobe have been found in Nufăru, Dinogetia, Capidava, and Păcuiul. They were most likely from Constantinople, although a local origin cannot be totally excluded. This superior-quality pottery has been found in unusual quantities; it was likely imported from Constantinople, was expensive to manufacture, and incurred high transportation costs on account of its nature. A special category of this high-quality variety of ceramics are the clay-glazed eggs decorated with yellow curly braces on a dark background that have an exceptionally low presence. They were found in Dinogetia, Isaccea, and Nufăru. The workshops producing them were in Kiev, implying trade with Rus merchants. Overall, this superior-quality craftsmanship can be traced either to Constantinople and other centres in the Aegean, or to the north of the Black Sea, for example Cherson or Kiev.⁵⁰³

Turning to metal objects, iron-processing was certainly present, with substantial amounts of slag found in Păcuiul lui Soare and smelters found in Capidava and Dinogetia. The demand for finished products would likely encompass armaments for the military forces stationed in the region and various tools used in farming, metal-processing, and other crafting activities. In fact, various tools and three moulds for bronze in Păcuiul lui Soare indicate the presence of workshops specialising in brass, bronze, lead, silver, and gold. The discovery of ceramic vessels designed for the transport of jewellery supports this. In Nufăru alone, a deposit of twenty vessels has been discovered, and Dinogetia had trade contacts with Nufăru, Tulcea, Isaccea, Păcuiul lui Soare, and Dorostolon. In Isaccea and other locations across the Delta region, the presence of objects such as crosses, and pendants show local demand. Distinctively decorated metal jugs have been found across a region extending from Istria into the intra-Carpathian area. These were made at the end of the eleventh/beginning of the twelfth century. Bearing ornaments made with a toothed metal wheel, these jugs appear in Dobrudja in the second half of the tenth century spreading extensively in the first half of the eleventh. Ornaments include rings, earrings, pendants, gold and silver bracelets, glass beads and glass bracelets, ornaments of religious character such as golden reliquary crosses adorned with filigree technique and semi-precious stones, bronze crosses, medallions in mail cloisonné with religious representations, small icons made of sandstone, steatite and amber, and miniature silver gilded diptychs from Byzantine, Russian, Bulgarian and central European workshops, indicating a vivid trade. Such objects have been found in Dinogetia, Isaccea, Nufăru, and Păcuiul lui Soare, among other locations.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰³ PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI – TALMAȚCHI, Commercial traffic, 336—338, KARAGIANNI, Medieval city-ports, 91; STĂNICĂ, Viața economică, 215ff.

⁵⁰⁴ PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI – TALMAȚCHI, Commercial traffic, 338; STĂNICĂ, Viața economică, 199ff.

In terms of garment and accessories production, weaving and bone- and horn-processing facilities have been excavated in Păcuiul lui Soare, Dinogetia and Isaccea. Spindle whorls from the area of Kiev have emerged in Nufăru and Dinogetia. Silk finds included fabric embroidered with gold thread of Byzantine origin in Dinogetia. Also found were clothing accessories from the northern Black Sea, the Byzantine Empire, and from central Asia, with oval or pear-shaped globular buttons along with metal needles, belt buckles and other belt ornaments, as well as bronze and bone objects from the Russian territories.⁵⁰⁵

The easy sea connection with Constantinople and the rest of the empire allowed the coastal settlements to benefit from intensive commercial activity. In Varna, for example, a significant quantity of eleventh-century Byzantine ceramics of Constantinopolitan origin has come to light, demonstrating a constant supply of glazed pottery. This includes glazed bowls with fine incised and slip-painted decoration, painted and incised sgraffito, polychrome and champlevé ware, dishes, bowls, cups, goblets, and oil lamps. From the city's wider hinterland, a variety of glazed plates, cups, bowls, and jars have been excavated some from the capital, others from local workshops imitating Constantinopolitan techniques, decorative motifs, types and forms.⁵⁰⁶ Glazed pottery imported from Constantinople has also been found in the settlement of cape Kalliakra. In Mesembria, material evidence for the earlier period includes various ceramic objects such as oil lamps dated 550 – 650, and also some glass products for example a candle and a choane - a funnel shaped metallic tube - of the seventh century, the latter being similar to findings from Saraçhane.⁵⁰⁷ From 1025 – 1095, glazed whiteware with polychrome decoration, the remains of a metal cross, and bracelets made of glass have been excavated, while glazed pottery has also been found in Sozopolis.⁵⁰⁸

The role of the state

Control and taxation

Between 641 and 741, the establishment of the Bulgar khanate north of the Haemus Mountains created a somewhat complex frontier since a series of Byzantine outposts like Mesembria continued to have direct contact with the rest of the empire thanks to the sea. Between 1025 and 1095, the restoration of the frontier on the Danube unified the entire region from the Adriatic to the Black Sea for the first time since the seventh century. Thus, control of trade was made easier for the state machinery by virtue of the clear delineation offered by the Danube between Byzantium and the world of the “barbarians”.

⁵⁰⁵ PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI – TALMAȚCHI, Commercial traffic, 338—339; STĂNICĂ, Viața economică, 260ff.

⁵⁰⁶ MANOLOVA, Varna and Anchialos, 353—355; KARAGIANNI, Medieval city-ports, 90—91.

⁵⁰⁷ STOITSEVA, Τοπογραφία Μεσημβρίας, 112—114, 116—117, 119—120, 162—163.

⁵⁰⁸ KIYASHKINA – BOZKOVA – MARVAKOV, Collections, 132—133; STOITSEVA, Τοπογραφία Μεσημβρίας, 159—160, KARAGIANNI, Medieval city-ports, 90.

The first surviving seal of an *apotheke* and with an associated *kommerkiarios* comes from the year 698 / 699 with *Theo* (-dore, -dosios, -doulos, -phanes) *genikos kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Mesembria*. After c. 730, the *apotheke* was reorganised as the *basilika kommerkia Mesembrias* while a single seal dated c. 741 / 750 combines Mesembria and Thrace. The importance of the city as a military outpost and as a centre of trade for the years 641 – 741 is therefore clear.⁵⁰⁹

As the frontier shifted again to the north after 1000, the *kommerkiarioi*, now general supervisors of trade were installed in the most important emporia along the lower Danube and the west coast. They must have been active at least until the middle of the eleventh century, when the disturbances across the northern border made their appearance. *Kommerkiarioi* (along with a *horeiarios*) are mentioned in Dristra and Nufăru (Prethlavitz).⁵¹⁰ The allocation of the officials follows the geopolitical realities. Dristra was the main administrative, military, and commercial centre on the Istros, while Nufăru at the beginning of the Saint-George branch of the Delta was the last post before exiting the river and the first post on entering it.

Along the coast, Debeltos had already replaced Mesembria as customs post.⁵¹¹ Here would have been managed the taxation of commodities leaving and entering the hinterland, and this activity possibly continued until the last decades of the eleventh century.

Monetary production and circulation

The coin circulation in the region of the lower Danube for the years 641 – 741 is attested by single finds of gold *solidi* and silver *hexagrams*. Their years of issue cover the period from 641 to 685 and they are distributed among the settlements of the Delta region. The nature of Byzantine control over these territories remains vague at best, but it seems reasonable to consider these finds in some way connected with the activities of the imperial fleet, meaning that some outposts the most important being Durostorum could have remained under Byzantine control for some time after the year 641.⁵¹² Of more interest are the finds across the Avar-controlled region, with a hoard excavated in south-western Slovakia being the most important since it contains silver hexagrams and *miliaresia* dated 641 to c.

⁵⁰⁹ The most recent catalogue of lead seals along with bibliography can be found in RAGIA, *Apothekai of the Balkans*, 109—112; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 607, MONTINARO, *Commerciaires byzantins*, 465 and passim.

⁵¹⁰ Nufaru (Prethlavitz): D. O. Seals I, 178, n. 78.1, 179, n. 78.3; Dristra: IORDANOV, *Corpus I*, 66—67, nos. 23.6, 23.7, 23.8, IDEM, *Corpus III*, 524—525, n. 1615, see also D. O. Seals, 150, n. 65.2, SEIBT, *Bleisiegel I*, 306 with fn. 9.

⁵¹¹ IORDANOV, *Corpus I*, 61—62, nos. 22.6, 22.7, 22.8; IDEM, *Corpus II*, 357—358, nos. 598—600; IDEM, *Corpus III* 1, 524, nos. 1613, 1614; D. O. Seals I, 172, n. 76.1; SEIBT, *Bleisiegel II*, 160—161, n. 151; Fogg XXXV 1786 (= *Photothek Seibt/ÖAW*); SHANDROVSKAYA, *Debelta*, 150—151; OIKONOMIDES, *Prethlavitz*, 3—4, n. 5 with fn. 9.

⁵¹² MADGEARU, *Military organization*, 7, 10—11; IDEM, *Dobrudja*, 271—272; KARDARAS, *Byzantium and the Avars*, 146—147; CUSTUREA, *Circulația monedei*, 60—61, 93ff. and passim with literature up to 2019, see also NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, *Κυκλοφορία*, 63—64, nos. 299—303; MORRISSON – POPOVIĆ – IVANIŠEVIĆ et al., *Trésors monétaires*, 180, n. 81.

670. Other finds include thirty-four coins of Constans II and seven of Constantine IV. Most of these are golden *solidi* and silver *hexagrams* (nineteen pieces of each). For the rest of the period up to 741, excavations have produced single *solidi*. With the annual tribute paid by the Byzantines to the Avars ceasing in 626, these latter finds are difficult to contextualise. They could be linked with trade, perhaps being payments made by the Byzantines in return for unknown commodities (slaves?) or other type of transactions.⁵¹³ Along with genuine Byzantine coins, imitations and forgeries are also present. The imperial authorities were doubtless ignorant of their existence, and it seems likely that they served as means for local transactions and funeral gifts.⁵¹⁴ In any case, the financial difficulties and consequent economic readjustment of the empire after 641 dictated a strict control of the outflow of precious metal, inevitably affecting whatever trade was conducted between Byzantium and central Europe at that time.

The years 1025 – 1095 saw the revitalisation of trade in the region of the Istros. With the implementation of the “trade against raid” policy, significant quantities of coins were available in the emporia along the river. This explains why most findings come from present-day urban centres or their vicinity (though there is intrinsic bias in the fact that most excavations take place in modern cities). Most of these finds consist of low-value copper coins, highly suitable for everyday transactions. The majority were excavated in Păcuiul lui Soare, Nioviodunum and Nufăru, with smaller quantities found in Dinogetia and Dristra, yet five pieces seem to have made their way up to Transylvania. Precious coins have been found in the form of hoards in Dinogetia, containing golden (*histamena* and *tetartera*) and silver *miliaresia*. A continuous flow between the years 1034 to 1081 confirms the deliberate financial policy of successive emperors, although a considerable percentage, especially of gold and silver coins, was used for the payment of local garrisons.⁵¹⁵ The mint of Constantinople was the main supplier of gold, silver, and copper coins, but it seems that an additional mint in Isaccea produced copper issues of inferior value to the official standard, being active during the second half of the eleventh century. An interesting parallel with the mint of Cherson can be drawn here: both mints produced cast copper-alloy coins of lower value than the standard ones, and in both cases these coins circulated within a limited area. Furthermore, the function of these coins would have been almost the same: the Chersonese coins were probably used to facilitate the purchase of cheap corn from the local population, while those of Isaccea may have been used by the garrisons stationed along the Delta

⁵¹³ For the slave trade in general see McCORMICK, *Origins*, 741ff.

⁵¹⁴ KARDARAS, *Byzantium and the Avars*, 124—127; SAMOGYI, *Byzantinische Fundmünzen*, 23ff. with table, 110; IDEM, *Byzantinische Fundmünzen der Awarenzeit*, 78—82, 92—93 with table 240—245; WINTER, *Byzantinische Fundmünzen*, 46—52 with table, 53—60; MORRISSON – POPOVIĆ – IVANIŠEVIĆ et al., *Trésors monétaires*, 420, n. 356 422—423, n. 359, 424, n. 361, 429—430, nos. 367 and 368.

⁵¹⁵ PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI – TALMAȚCHI, *Commercial traffic*, 340; CUSTUREA, *Circulația monedei (IX – XI)*, 102 ff. with detailed tables, STEPHENSON, *Balkan frontier*, 84—87; see also NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, *Κυκλοφορία*, 68, nos. 344, 345, 69, nos. 352, 354, 356, 74, n. 406, 75, nos. 409—411, 76, nos. 426—429, 81, n. 466.

region so that they could acquire all the necessities of life. The civilian population could have also benefited from this arrangement. Another plausible reason for the temporary operation of the Isaccea mint might have been the problematic supply of coins from the capital due to military events that may have obstructed the regular flow from Constantinople, especially after the 1050s.⁵¹⁶

Moving along the west coast of the Euxeinos, in Mesembria nine gold *solidi* and copper *folleis* the latter with two denominations have been excavated, dated between 661 and 695. An interesting finding is the hoard of golden *solidi* of between 607 and 692 excavated in Varna. From the seventy coins, fifty are dated between 674 and 680 that is, during the reign of Constantine IV, who tried to deal with the Bulgarian threat, though with negative results.⁵¹⁷ It is probable that they were part of the payment of troops during the 680 campaign. For the years 1025 – 1095 in Mesembria, the finds are exclusively bronze *folleis*, including imitations. An impressive hoard of six hundred copper coins dating to the tenth-to-eleventh centuries has been found in the hinterland of Burgas, but further details are lacking.⁵¹⁸

3.1.5 Regional conclusions

In view of the analysis offered above, there are now credible grounds for abandoning the older theories of an abrupt interruption of trade and communication during the years 641 – 741. The material evidence indicates the continuous inhabitation of many settlements, even if on a reduced scale. Cities of antiquity, such as Cherson, Sinope, Amastris, Mesembria, and Trebizond, survived within their (repaired) walls, and communicated without significant difficulty with their immediate countryside. Inevitably, communication and trade via the sea gained in importance because of occasional difficulties in the use of land routes. The absence of substantial coin finds especially copper, used for daily transactions still poses an unresolved issue concerning the volume of trade. However, there are other interpretations for this that offer a plausible explanation, the primary one being that the state was minting coins of all types at a lower rate due to a decrease in demand. It may be assumed, furthermore, that in specific regions such as the Caucasus the monetary circulation remained relatively high because of ongoing trade between Byzantium and the Middle- and Far-East, and also the large expenditure of

⁵¹⁶ OBERLÄNDER-TARNOVEĂNU, Un atelier monétaire, 262ff, and for the comparison with Cherson, 265. The author supports the idea that the mint was originally located in Dorostolon, then moving to Isaccea because of the revolt of Nestor in 1072; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI – TALMAȚCHI, Commercial traffic, 341; STĂNICĂ, Viața economică, 39–40.

⁵¹⁷ NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, Κυκλοφορία, 63, nos. 294, 297, 66 n. 328; MORRISSON – POPOVIĆ – IVANIŠEVIĆ et al., Trésors monétaires, 142, nos. 37, 38, 158, n. 60; STOYTCHIEVA, Coins from Mesembria, 44–45, nos. 30–44.

⁵¹⁸ NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, Κυκλοφορία, 72, n. 387, 73, n. 395; STOYTCHIEVA, Coins from Mesembria, 47–50, nos. 66–90.

the Armenian Church and aristocracy on religious and secular construction projects. A more permanent flow of connection between northern and the southern coast of the Black Sea is also apparent. Written and material evidence point to regular communication and trade especially between the coast of Paphlagonia and the Crimea, the main commodity being cereals shipped from the former in return for salt and garum from the latter. The *kommerkiarioi* and their subordinates regulated and levied the tax from these transactions since both cereals and salt were considered goods of high importance. Luxurious commodities could also have travelled by sea depending on the geopolitical situation on the north-eastern frontier of the empire. For example, silk, fur, and spices from central Asia and beyond normally came via the Caucasus and Trebizond, but they could alternatively reach the Crimea in the region of Kerch, and thence be transferred directly to Constantinople.⁵¹⁹

In the Crimea, Cherson remained the only settlement of the empire that was almost unaffected by threats, with only a handful of exceptions. The contrast with the rest of the empire is clear: the imperial possessions remained untouched by the crisis that befell the rest of the Byzantine state, to the extent that they managed even to expand territorially and commercially during the 1090s. As a result, in 1095 the region was characterised by lively mercantile activity that had developed unaffected by the troubles that had befallen the empire during earlier decades. With strategic control of the Kerch Straits secured, the Byzantines capitalised on new trading axes that had already emerged. It can be no coincidence that the Komnenian emperors consistently denied access to this area to western merchants throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁵²⁰

The region of the Caucasus offers a different picture of development. Squeezed between the dominant powers of the time Byzantium, on the one hand, and the Sassanids and the Arabs, on the other, it continued to function as the geographical borderline between the east and the west it had performed since antiquity. However, at the same time it was the node between these worlds, and so it had to adapt to the tendencies of both. As a result, trade and war alternated in the first period (641 – 741), and partially continued in this mode in the second (1025 – 1095), especially during the relatively peaceful phase of Byzantine expansion (1025 – 1055). Again, I am of the opinion that the ban on access to other traders to the Black Sea was likely crucial in bringing protection and thus a more secure profit to Byzantine and Armenian merchants since they were undisturbed by various outsiders. Even the Rus preferred to conduct business directly with the large market of Constantinople, and it seems that the Caucasus was out of their range. The intensification of the Turkish raids after c. 1055 and the events that followed must have led to a severe disturbance of communication and trade, ending after the 1080s with the restoration of a minimal level of order in the region. Up to 1095, trade undoubtedly resumed

⁵¹⁹ NOONAN, *Fur road and silk road*, 286ff.

⁵²⁰ LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, 136—144.

with both the east and the west, although the political landscape was now dominated by the various Turkish states.⁵²¹ In any case, the area never again came under Byzantine rule, even if political, economic, and cultural interactions continued by virtue of the long-lasting relationship between the Graeco-Roman world and the wider region. Before the end of the eleventh century, the empire re-established its authority along the southern Pontic coast, a development that would later lead to the founding of the empire of Trebizond during the first decade of the thirteenth century, and subsequently to a considerable revitalisation of communication and trade in the region of Caucasus itself.

This leads us to the third sub-region, the southern shores of the Black Sea. Isolated from the rest of the Asia Minor peninsula because of the geography, and especially in the region of Pontos, the coastal settlements and their hinterland were obliged to turn to the sea to secure their subsistence and further prosperity. Trebizond on the eastern flank of the region was the *entrepôt* for a series of exotic products, spices and silk being the commodities *par excellence*, and from there a chain of ports, harbours, and anchorages secured the transport and distribution of the merchandise. The years 641 – 741 did not affect the region seriously, and I would suggest that the landed wealth of the family of Saint Philaretos towards the end of the period may be taken, with a healthy dose of caution, as an indicator of a certain degree of prosperity. The years 1025 – 1095 were much more critical for the south of the Euxeinos Pontos. Major and minor settlements were looted and destroyed, in some cases more than once, and the land routes were completely disrupted, with only sea travel guaranteeing unhindered communication. By 1095, Byzantine rule had been re-established along the coastal areas, but now the wider hinterland marked the new border between the empire and the Turkish emirates. In view of the fact that the Caucasus was released from Byzantine control, Trebizond regained its function as a regional and international node of trade and communication. Thus, much of the trading activity that had taken place in the region of Transcaucasia in the previous period was now reoriented towards the Pontic metropolis.

The settlements of the Black Sea's western coast had always fallen under the influence of Constantinople, owing to their location along the shores north of the capital and to the fact that since antiquity they were intermediate stations along the route beginning at Cherson. The "Road of the Varangians" followed the same itinerary. The rich and easily accessible hinterland of ports such as those surrounding the Gulf of Burgas allowed for the cultivation of various crops, and for their easy transportation by land and/or sea. For the years 641 – 741, the overall instability of the Balkan Peninsula affected the economy of the west coast, even if the regular sea communication with Constantinople secured the continuation of urban life but to a lesser degree. As far as the settlements

⁵²¹ BEIHAMMER, *Emergence*, 202, 244—245; PAYASLIAN, *History of Armenia*, 75; BEDROSIAN, *Seljuk period*, 247—253.

along the lower Danube are concerned, the evidence is fragmentary in the extreme, yet the presence of precious Byzantine artefacts and coins north of the river points to a continuous communication between the empire and the *Barbaricum*. The years 1025 – 1095 mark the heyday, and later a crisis, for the region of the lower Danube and west coast of the Euxeinos Pontos, the latter the product of internal strife and enemy activity combined. In 1095, the region was again stabilised, but at great cost. All settlements along the Istros were abandoned with a few exceptions, while the Bulgarian plain was deliberately desolated to deter potential enemies from penetrating deep into the Balkans. The coastal settlements continued to flourish, thanks to their immediate hinterland and secure land and sea communications with the capital.

With regard to the role of the state, its strict control over access to the Euxeinos Pontos is more than obvious, while the *kommerkiarioi* stationed across the various entrepôts provided supervision of trade, ensuring that the Byzantine state would systematically collect its fair share. Strategic reasons made the imperial authorities reluctant to any opening of the Black Sea to foreign powers or their merchants, with the notable exception of the Rus and even here, a careful eye was kept on the situation. This policy was underpinned by the fact that no intruder was able to develop a naval presence in the region. Even great powers such as the Khazars and the Bulgarians did not take advantage of this opportunity along the shores of the Euxeinos Pontos. It is safe to assume that seaborne trade was conducted almost exclusively by Byzantine merchants and their ships. The infiltration of the Genoese and Venetian traders after 1204 took place within a completely different geopolitical context, and it was the result of developments that had already started two centuries before. These developments initially affected another region of the Byzantine heartlands, the sea that a traveller faces after exiting the Dardanelles, that is the Aegean archipelago with its numerous islands, gulfs, and coves. It is to this region that we will now turn our attention in order to better understand the patterns of trade and communication during times of crisis.

3.2 The Archipelago

Geography and geopolitics

The variously termed *Αργαίον Πέλαγος* of the Greeks, *Archipelago* of the Venetians, *Byalo / Belo More* (“White Sea”) of the southern Slavs, and *Ege Denizi* of the Turks was the de facto *mare internum* of the Byzantine state, and it is therefore our next region for consideration after the Euxeinos Pontos. Being an elongated bay of the Mediterranean Sea, it is located between the Balkan peninsula to its

north and west and Asia Minor to the east. In other words, it forms the geographical boundary between Europe and Asia, physically separating and at the same time geopolitically connecting these continents. With a total area of c. 215.000 km², and a length of c. 612 km and median width of 299 km (maximum c. 500 km, minimum c. 200 km), it is connected to the Black Sea in the north via the straits of the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus. In the south, the straits between the southern Peloponnese/the island group of Kythera and Antikythera in the west, and between the island of Crete and the island group of Kasos, Karpathos and Rhodes in the east, clearly separate the Aegean from the eastern Mediterranean basin (map 10).⁵²²

As Alfred Philippson has said “die ganze Umgebung des Ägäischen Meeres, nämlich Griechenland, Westkleinasien, die thrakisch- makedonische Küste, die Meerengen, bildet nach ihrer Natur und auch geschichtlich einen *einheitlichen Erdraum*, dessen Zentrum das Ägäische Meer ist, und den ich deshalb *Ägäis* genannt habe”.⁵²³ From a geographical perspective, all the sub-regions of the Aegean under examination in this chapter share many features with the rich and fragmented relief characteristic of high mountains disrupted by fertile valleys and flatlands, most of which were born of the sediments of the rivers. The mountain ranges protrude into the sea creating larger and smaller gulfs and inlets that are in many cases relatively isolated from the hinterland. The islands are a geographical continuation of the mainland, creating a chain of *terra firma* pockets except for the larger ones such as Crete.⁵²⁴

The Aegean is the birthplace and the core of Hellenic civilization. It has also been a principal area of interest for foreign powers such as the Romans, the Italian maritime republics during the High and Late Middle Ages and the Ottoman Turks. When under the control of a single political entity, its geopolitical stability was ensured. When this control was challenged by external actors, the political entity had to reaffirm its position of supremacy. If it failed to do so, the geopolitical space fragmented with long term consequences. The latter is true for both periods under consideration here since the Arabs and the Turks contested control over the Aegean and the routes traversing it with the Byzantines, though with no permanent success.⁵²⁵

Pathways of communication

It should be clarified from the outset that during the pre-industrial era it was nature that largely dictated the routes that were followed since seafaring depended upon the proclivities of prevailing currents and

⁵²² “<https://academic-eb-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/levels/collegiate/article/Aegean-Sea/3839> (24.11.2020)”; KODER, Χώρος, 37—38.

⁵²³ PHILIPPSON, Das byzantinische Reich, 124.

⁵²⁴ KODER, Χώρος, 35—40.

⁵²⁵ KODER, Χώρος, 19—23.

winds. In the case of the Aegean basin, before the introduction of the motorship it was the distinctive northern wind known as ἐτησῖαι (*etesiai*, i.e., “annual winds”) or *meltemi* / *meltem* that defined the itinerary of vessels. The main Aegean current derives from the western current of the Black Sea. After entering the Bosphorus, it continues through the sea of Marmara and -passing the Dardanelles- flows into the Aegean in a westerly direction, abetted by the prevailing north and north-western meltemi. In the region of the Thermaic Gulf, it turns southwards dividing into two branches: the first flows between Andros and Euboea in the vicinity of cape Maleas, continues along the east coast of the Peloponnese and then turns to the west. The second branch makes a right turn in passing from the northern Cyclades - namely, Andros, Tenos and Mykonos - towards the central Aegean, and finally joins forces with the south-to- northerly “Asia Minor current”, an extension of the west-to-easterly Mediterranean current. In addition, between cape Maleas and the northern Cyclades another branch turns to the south heading towards the central and southern Cyclades, and then finally to the east where it meets the “Asia Minor current”. This last follows a northerly direction and attenuated, enters the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmara and finally the Bosphorus.⁵²⁶

There were two main sea routes that connected Constantinople with the rest of the world, both of which passed inevitably through the Aegean. They are here designated “Sea Route A” and “Sea Route B” respectively, following the typology established by E. Kislinger.⁵²⁷

After leaving the Dardanelles, Sea Route A followed a north-westerly direction, passing the island of Lemnos and the Chalkidike peninsula. Then, regardless of whether Thessaloniki was included in the itinerary or not, it continued through the cluster of the (northern) Sporades, then southwards along the west or east coast of Euboea and reached the ports of Attica. From there, two options were available: Sea Route A1 continued eastwards through the Cyclades islands and mainly Melos, Thera and Ios, to Crete and Karpathos. Thence one could traverse the open sea to Cyprus or intersect with Route B (see below). Sea Route A2 started from Attica and then - either by changing ships in Corinth and sailing the homonymous Gulf, or by circumnavigating the Peloponnese by way of Cape Tainaron - it was possible to get to reached Patras. From here the route continued west to Sicily and the Italian peninsula, or north along the coast of the western Balkans up to Venice. From Methone - strategically located in the south-west of the Peloponnese -, the north African coast to the south was accessible.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁶ KODER, Χώρος, 33—35.

⁵²⁷ KISLINGER, Verkehrsrouten zur See, 149—174.

⁵²⁸ KISLINGER, Verkehrsrouten zur See, 151—153; Idem, Verkehrswege, 77—78; AVRAMEA, Επικοινωνίες, 164—165; DIMITROUKAS, Reisen und Verkehr, 453, 455—456.

Sea Route B⁵²⁹ went at Tenedos southwards along Lesbos, Chios⁵³⁰ and Samos. From there, it continued via Naxos, Ios and Thera to Crete,⁵³¹ or southwards to Ikaria, Patmos and Rhodes, and then turned east to Attaleia. From this stopping-off point (Alanya / Kalon Oros) two options were available: Route B1 following the south-eastern coasts of Asia Minor towards the ports of Syria and Palestine, or Route B2, heading via Cyprus to Palestine or Egypt.⁵³²

The two “standard” sea routes had many branches and various points of intersection. The most important junctions occurred at the island complex of the Cyclades and Crete. For example, the western branch of Sea route A connected with Sea Route B along the Methone – Crete - Rhodes corridor. Coming from the north, one could sail from Skyros on the high seas to Chios or Lesbos in the east and north-east. From Andros, Samos was within reach to the east, while from Andros and Kea one could sail the Cyclades -stopping off at Paros, Naxos, Thera or Ios- and then continue south to Crete, southeast to Rhodes and the rest of the Dodecanese, thus joining Route B.⁵³³ The pilgrimage to the Holy Land of Saint Willibald in 723, and Saewulf in 1102, indicates that the Cyclades were traversed - most probably by merchants - en route to other destinations.⁵³⁴

Except in the case of islands located along the known sea routes, there is no information concerning connectivity at a local level that is, between two or more islands belonging to the same geographical cluster such as the Cyclades or the Dodecanese. Tracing communication patterns within the islands themselves is even more difficult, though information from the local oral tradition can be used within certain limits. Voyages between and within the islands were undoubtedly frequent. Place names such as *limen* / *limenas* (λιμήν / λιμένας), *katabolos* (κατάβολος / καταβόλος), *empor(e)ion* (ἐμπόριον / ἐμπορεῖον) and *skala* (σκάλα) identify ports, harbours, anchorages, and trading *loci* possibly in use since ancient times. The majority of these were located within bays and coves with a gentle terrain and the presence of at least a permanent stream that guarantees the availability of drinking water.⁵³⁵

⁵²⁹ KISLINGER, Verkehrsrouten zur See, 153.

⁵³⁰ Miracles I 70, 76 (102, 6—10, 107, 18—20 LEMERLE).

⁵³¹ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, De Cerimoniis 45 (341, 333—349 ZUCKERMAN); HUXLEY, Portulan, 295—300.

⁵³² KISLINGER, Verkehrsrouten zur See, 153—154; Idem, Verkehrswege, 78; AVRAMEA, Επικοινωνίες, 162—163.

⁵³³ AVRAMEA, Επικοινωνίες, 165—167; KISLINGER, Verkehrsrouten zur See, 155; McCORMICK, Origins, 502—508.

⁵³⁴ Life of Willibald IV (93, 12—14 HOLDER-EGGER); Saewulf (59, 30—60, 42 HUYGENS). GEROLYMATOU, Εμπορική δραστηριότητα, 357; DIMITROUKAS, Reisen und Verkehr, 483—486; ROUSSOS, Ports and harbours, 334—335.

⁵³⁵ KODER, Χώρος, 103; IDEM, Aigaion Pelagos, 105—106, with a list of harbours and anchorages across the north Aegean; for Crete see ROUSSOS, Ports and harbours, 337—338. See also the respective lemmata in TLG.

Remnants of paved roads built during the ancient period have been recorded on Lemnos, Lesbos, Skyros, Chios, Paros, Naxos, and Crete.⁵³⁶ For the smaller islands, a network of dirt roads and pathways would have been sufficient for pack animals and humans to carry loads from one place to another.

3.2.1 The islands

The geopolitical context 641 – 741 / 1025 – 1095

The transitional period and the Arab threat

As with the rest of the Byzantine territories, the Aegean islands (map 11) were confronted from the middle of the sixth century by a series of adversities, including the early medieval (or Justinianic) plague, famines, climate change featuring prolonged winters, and a series of earthquakes that affected the Aegean basin during the sixth and early seventh centuries.⁵³⁷ The Slavic invasions penetrated the islands adjacent to the Balkan coast, although the testimonies that the Cyclades and Crete were attacked by the Slav *monoxyla* must be treated with caution.⁵³⁸

The naval battle of the Phoenix in 655, with its unfortunate outcome for the Byzantines, opened the Aegean to the Arab invaders.⁵³⁹ In preparation for its first attempt to take Constantinople, the Muslim fleet occupied locations of strategic importance on all the major islands along Sea Route B – namely, Rhodes, Kos, Crete, Chios, and Samos.⁵⁴⁰

The Arab defeat in front of the walls of the Byzantine capital during the summer of 668, and the imperial counteroffensive from c. 672 onwards as well, led to the evacuation of these temporary bases. Because of its strategic location, Crete suffered a series of Arab raids and the sporadic occupation of key positions between 675 and 730.⁵⁴¹ Rhodes is mentioned as a stop-over for the Byzantine fleet sent against Lycia in 715, with the orders to destroy the Arab supply bases and deny access to the inland forests.⁵⁴²

⁵³⁶ DARMC archaeological studies map, “<https://harvard-cga.maps.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=e097dbcc4ee04a34ab0d5b5169b8feae>” (04.03.2021); KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, 106–108; ROUSOS, Landscape, 78–83; 120, fig. 4.80; 278, fig. 5.112.

⁵³⁷ MALAMUT, Iles I, 67–68; KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, 74–75.

⁵³⁸ LEMERLE, Miracles I, 179; KORRES, Remarks, 178; KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, 75; MALAMUT, Iles I, 67, 105.

⁵³⁹ HALDON, Seventh century, 55; STRATOS, Εβδομος αιώνας, Δ', 55–62; CHRISTIDES, Naval engagement, 1340–

1342; COSENTINO, Constans II and the Byzantine navy, 586–593.

⁵⁴⁰ MALAMUT, Iles I, 68, 105; VASSE, Απόκρυψη “θησαυρού”, 71–73.

⁵⁴¹ TSOUGARAKIS, Byzantine Crete, 23–26; KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, 75–76; MALAMUT, Iles, 68–69.

⁵⁴² Theophanes (383, 22–386, 19 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 49–51 (116, 23–118, 20 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 119,

In contrast with Crete and the eastern Aegean islands, the Cyclades were not directly affected by the first wave of Arab expansionism. With the focus of the Caliphate on the capture of Constantinople, the islands near the coasts of Asia Minor offered more suitable bases for the support of expeditionary forces against the Byzantine capital. As a precautionary measure and a response to the new threat, the Cyclades were integrated into the new administrative and military structure of the empire. From the 670s onwards, the local naval command of the *Kyklades Nesoi* (along with that of the *Helladikoi*), operating under the direct command of the central fleet of the *Karabisianoï*, was responsible for the security of an area that probably included the island complex itself and perhaps the wider region of the central Aegean. Its organisation was, at least partially, in the hands of the *kommerkiarioi* and the subsequent *basilika kommerkia* stationed in the region. Most probably during the 720s, it was re-established as a naval *thema* of the *Kyklades Nesoi*, with its own territorial and recruitment base (the neighbouring command of the *Helladikoi* following a similar evolution). The last event recorded in the Aegean islands for the period 641 – 741 is the well-known rebellion of these two naval *themata* in 725 / 726 that ended with the defeat of the insurgents.

“Pax Byzantina” and the appearance of the Turks

The year 1025 found the Aegean under complete Byzantine control and in relevant stability after the fall of the Emirate of Crete (c. 824 – 961), the piratical activity of which had extensively disrupted communication and trade in the Archipelago. Sporadic raids by the Arab fleets of north Africa and Sicily in the years 1028 and 1034 / 1035 were successfully repulsed by the thematic fleets of *Samos*, *Chios* and the *Kibyrhriotai*.⁵⁴³ These years of economic and cultural development are reflected in the establishment of the important monastery of Nea Moni on Chios. Nea Moni was founded shortly before 1042 by the empresses Zoe and Theodora, and in subsequent years was supported by them both and also Constantine IX Monomachos. Its land was situated on the opposite coast of Asia Minor, and the monastic foundation owned several ships to cover its needs for communication and trade with the outer world.⁵⁴⁴ This policy of founding or at least sponsoring monasteries as a means of displaying imperial power and to stimulate economic activity was continued by Alexios I on the islands of Thera, Amorgos, and Patmos, though concrete evidence survives for the latter only.

Actual disruption in communication and trade came around 1081, with a collapse of Byzantine control in Asia Minor that allowed several Turkish warlords to occupy strategic locations along the

1—6 (178, 1—179, 37 WAHLGREN); Zonaras XIV 27 (245, 1—247, 11 BÜTTNER—WOBST). HALDON, Seventh century, 80—82.

⁵⁴³ John Scylitzes (373, 11—14, 397, 44—45, 398, 75—76, 97—399, 3 THURN), KISLINGER, *Ruhm der Romania*, 44—45;

⁵⁴⁴ MPOURAS, *Nea Moni*, 21ff.

eastern coast of the Aegean. Like the Arabs four centuries earlier, the nomads quickly accepted the challenge of the sea and - as in the case of Syria and Palestine - the necessary conditions were met: the mountains of western Asia Minor provided raw materials, the shipyards their skilled shipbuilders, and the coastal areas their Christian inhabitants as crews. Thus, Sea Route B and its local branches were critically disturbed, and it would take the Byzantines almost fifteen years to deal successfully with the new naval threat and secure the corridor connecting Constantinople with the east.⁵⁴⁵

The most substantial and long-lasting threat was Tzachas (Çaka), who around 1081 conquered Smyrna. With the help of local shipbuilders, he constructed a fleet and began his attacks against the neighbouring coastal settlements and islands. The *Χώρα* of Chios was captured but the Byzantines established a stronghold in the settlement of Bolissos in the west of the island, allowing them to monitor enemy activity.⁵⁴⁶ Tzachas continued to disrupt sea communication routes in the region until the middle of the 1090s, when the empire was able to concentrate its military and diplomatic effort against him achieving his downfall.⁵⁴⁷ Further south, the city of Ephesos along with its seaport was in the hands of the warlords Tangripermes (Tanripermiş / Tanrivermiş) and Marakes (Marak / Barak). Several other emirs had also made conquests along the coast of Lycia and Caria, and it is probably their naval raids that are recorded in the testament of Christodoulos, abbot of the monastery of Saint John the Theologian at Patmos, written in March 1093. This report is confirmed by Anna Komnene who mentions that the radius of action of Tanripermiş' fleet had reached the island of Rhodes, and it was probably these raids that caused the flight of the monks from Patmos.⁵⁴⁸ It can be said with certainty that the Cyclades, Crete, and the rest of the islands remained out of the reach of the Turkish pirates, although in Crete itself the rebellion of a certain Karykes (at some point between early 1091 and late 1094) had to be suppressed by an expeditionary force sent from Constantinople.⁵⁴⁹ On the eve of the First Crusade, the Aegean islands were again under firm imperial authority and would remain so until the beginning of the thirteenth century.

⁵⁴⁵ Anna Komnene VII 8, IX 1, 3, XI 5, 1—5 (222, 68—226, 35, 258, 1—261, 31, 263, 92—265, 44, 335, 20—337, 96 BÜTTNER-WOBST); Zonaras XVIII 22, 13—15 (736, 17—737, 6 BÜTTNER-WOBST). KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, 82, 144, 210; VRYONIS, Decline, 114—116; BEIHAMMER Emergence, 315—316.

⁵⁴⁶ Anna Komnene VII 8, 1—6 (222, 68—224, 59, 226, 27—32 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS). BEIHAMMER, Emergence, 273—275.

⁵⁴⁷ Anna Komnene VII 8, 6—10, IX 1, 2—9, 3, 1—4 (224, 50—226, 35, 258, 18—261, 31, 263, 93—265, 44 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS). BEIHAMMER, Emergence, 281 and passim.

⁵⁴⁸ Anna Komnene XI 5, 1 (335, 24—336, 30 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS); MM V, 81; Lives of Christodoulos I 58 (163, 1—5 POLEMIS – ANTONOPOULOU).

⁵⁴⁹ FRANKOPAN, Revolts, 382—392; KOURMPETES, Η στάση του Πατριάρχη, 155ff.

Settlement patterns

Kyklades

The issue of settlement patterns in the islands of the Aegean in both periods under review can be approached through a combination of written and material evidence.⁵⁵⁰ An indication of population size for both the islands and the regions of Hellas and the Peloponnese is given by Theophanes in two instances. In the year 754 / 755 after the end of the last wave of the early medieval plague, Constantine V “brought families from the islands, Hellas, and the southern parts and made them dwell in the City so as to increase population”.⁵⁵¹ Almost ten years later, in 765 / 766, the same emperor decided to reconstruct the aqueduct of Valens, which had been out of use since its partial destruction by the Avars well over a century earlier. Among other artisans there came “from Hellas and the islands 500 clay-workers” to participate in the project.⁵⁵²

This reference is supplemented by data that can be extracted from the study of landscape and settlement development for some islands of the Cyclades, mainly Paros and Naxos. In the region of the main urban settlement on Paros, Paroikia, the impressive late antique -probably Justinianic - religious complex of Panagia Ekatontapyliane was maintained and embellished with new frescoes from local donors. This alongside other material evidence suggests the continuity of the settlement, though at a reduced scale. In the region of Naoussa bay, running along the north coast of the island, the remnants of ceramic workshops, port infrastructures, the presence of chapels, and the construction of a fortified installation on the offshore islet of Viokastro, all point to the presence of rural settlements that had survived the troubles of late antiquity, even if smaller. Continuity of settlement and economic activity are archaeologically attested on the rest of the island as well, but not to the same extent as in the Paroikia and Naoussa regions.⁵⁵³ Naxos offers more evidence thanks to its richer and more diverse relief which allowed the development of settlements with distinct characteristics determined by location: coastal along the shores and inland across the lowlands, the valleys, and the mountains.

The (late) antique settlement of *Χώρα* shows signs of dense habitation until the middle of the eighth century at the latest, including the continuous functioning of the ancient aqueduct.⁵⁵⁴ From the middle of the seventh century, and primarily because of the gradual rearrangement of the military structure of the Byzantine state, the newly established fortified settlement of *Kastro Apalirou* (*Κάστρο Απαλίρου*) became the main settlement of Naxos until the thirteenth century. Constructed on a steep mountainous location at an altitude of c.500m on the south-western side of the island, about 6 km from

⁵⁵⁰ For an overview along with an index of locations see MALAMUT, *Isles I*, 181—294.

⁵⁵¹ Theophanes (429, 22—25 DE BOOR). Theophanes Confessor, 593.

⁵⁵² Theophanes (440, 17—23 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 85 (160, 5—12 MANGO). Theophanes Confessor, 608.

⁵⁵³ ROUSOS, *Landscape: Paroikia*, 83—84, *Naoussa*, 104—110, other regions of Paros, 113ff.

⁵⁵⁴ ROUSOS, *Landscape: Chora*, 177—183, 188—189.

the nearest coasts and with a field of vision covering the western half of the central Aegean, Kastro Apalirou was a large settlement with an organised plan, including public infrastructure, religious establishments and domestic buildings.⁵⁵⁵ There are strong indications of administrative, military and ecclesiastical officials residing within the walls, whilst the surrounding countryside provided the necessary supplies. Kastro Apalirou was the key element in a network of fortresses and observation posts across the central Cyclades that included Viokastro, off the north-eastern shore of Paros, and Palaiokastros (i.e., “Old castle”) on the north-western shore of Ios, south of Naxos. These allowed almost total control over the sea routes that passed through the central Cyclades.⁵⁵⁶ In Thera, a basilica at the coastal settlement of Perissa features a second building phase dating to the eighth century, while the fortified antique polis of Mesa Vouno - on a hill over the Perissa coast - shows indications of habitation during the transitional period.

Amorgos was another important island, with two deep natural harbours and numerous coves. The fortified acropolis of Arkesine, located on a steep promontory in the north, offered a field of view that covered the island complex of the *Mikres Kyklades* between Naxos and Amorgos in the north-east, and the open sea up to Ikaria in the north.⁵⁵⁷ On the south side of Amorgos, the settlement of Chora with its castle monitored the open sea up to the arc created by Ios, Thera, Anaphe and Astypalaia.⁵⁵⁸ A large elongated building with vaulted roof, today known as *Φρούριο* (i.e. Fortress) may have been used as an *apothēke* by the state authorities.⁵⁵⁹ Seventh and eighth-century material has been recorded in the locality of the *Πύργος της Αγίας Τριάδας* (i.e. Tower of the Holy Trinity),⁵⁶⁰ featuring belt buckles and pottery. This potential *apothēke* and the presence of *kommerkiarioi* encompassing Melos, Ios, Thera, Anaphe and Amorgos is not coincidental if one considers the presence of critical natural resources, fortifications, and other infrastructure in these places.⁵⁶¹ In Siphnos, in the church of Agios Thomas there survives a dedicatory inscription dated to 787 and referring to the activities of the local population.

Somewhat closer to the mainland, Kea was probably a naval base for the *Karabisianoï* fleet and acted as a safe harbour after the eighth century. Indeed, the numerous accessible bays and coves along the shores combine with its geographical position between Euboea, Andros and Attica to turn

⁵⁵⁵ For Kastro Apalirou and the region of the Cyclades within the broader context of the Aegean in general, see the contributions along with extensive bibliography in CROW – HILL (eds.), *Naxos and the Byzantine Aegean* esp. section 2.

⁵⁵⁶ ROUSOS, *Landscape: Kastro Apalirou*, 213ff. For the other regions of the island, see 234ff. See also below for the years 1025 – 1095; EBERHARD, 157—162; ROLAND, *Fortifications of Apalirou*, 90—98.

⁵⁵⁷ MELIARAKES, *Αμοργός*, 44—46.

⁵⁵⁸ MELIARAKES, *Αμοργός*, 24—25.

⁵⁵⁹ Photographic material is to be found at <https://www.kastra.eu/castlegr.php?kastro=valsamitis> (29.03.2021); MELIARAKES, *Αμοργός*, 51.

⁵⁶⁰ MELIARAKES, *Αμοργός*, 46.

⁵⁶¹ For further details, see below.

Kea into a communications node.⁵⁶² This would seem to be confirmed by the Hellenistic tower of Hagia Marina on the western side of the island, and the Byzantine Panagia Episkope in the east.⁵⁶³ As a general pattern, the ancient (possibly Ptolemaic) towers at Amorgos, Kea, Seriphos or Naxos were probably used as look-out posts and/or storehouses during the Byzantine period, and in some cases a small settlement developed around them.

The south: Dodecanese and Crete

The city and fortress of Rhodes is also briefly mentioned in the accounts of Byzantine and Arabic sources as a naval station used by both sides. The antique *polis* shrank within the limits of a new fortified settlement, although sparse habitation continued outside the walls, and the two adjacent harbours in the north and the east provided shelter for cargo- and warships alike.⁵⁶⁴ In Kos, the coastal settlement of Kardamaina survived well into the seventh century, now supplemented with a hilltop *kastron* – a pattern discerned also with other settlements on the island. On the islands of Kalymnos, Telendos and Karpathos, the new fortified settlements were now located on promontories and hillsides, allowing for the surveillance of sea crossings. These were connected with a nearby seaport to facilitate communication and transactions with the outer world. On the island of Saria, just to the north of Karpathos, the settlement of Palatia forms a special case because of the peculiar planning and the “primeval” architecture of many of the buildings.⁵⁶⁵

As far as Crete is concerned, three different *Vitae* describing events relating to the island between the years 700 and 770, combined with the surviving material evidence, indicate that the antique centre of Gortyn, located in the region of Messara in the south, remained for some time the administrative, economic, and religious centre, while Herakleion (referred to as “Kastron”) on the northern shore, and in direct contact with Constantinople, was emerging as the main port. In the north-west, Kydonia - another ancient city - retained its importance until the Arab conquest of Crete. All three settlements were (re)fortified during the seventh century.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶² Life of Willibald IV (93, 14 HOLDER-EGGER). STEPHAS, Κέα, 30—34.

⁵⁶³ STEPHAS, Κέα, 102. For the islands mentioned, see POULOU-PAPADIMITRIOU, “Transitional” period, 35—37 with further literature.

⁵⁶⁴ MICHAELIDOU, City of Rhodes, 244—245; DELIGIANNAKIS, Dodecanese, 99—100; POULOU-PAPADIMITRIOU, “Transitional” period, 30—31; MANOUSSOU-NTELLA, Byzantine Rhodes, 171—174.

⁵⁶⁵ DELIGIANNAKIS, Dodecanese: Rhodes, 98—104, Kos, 104—105, Kalymnos and Telendos, 105—107; Karpathos, 107—109; Saria: 77—96; POULOU-PAPADIMITRIOU, “Transitional” period, 31—32.

⁵⁶⁶ PAPADOPOULOS-KERAMEUS, *Analecta*, 177, 3—16; AUZEPY, *Vie d’Etienne*, 160, 7—14; *Martyrdom of Andrew in Krisei*, 135—149. ANDRIANAKIS, Herakleion, 254—255; TSOUGARAKIS, Byzantine Crete, 114—117, 135—136, 310—311, 346; LAOURDAS, Άγιος Ανδρέας εν Κρίσει, 35—36; MALAMUT, *Isles I*, 298—299; PORTALE, *Sunset of Gortyn*, 477; ZAVAGNO, *Cities in transition*, 62—65; ROUSSOS, *Ports and harbours*, 340—343.

The north

The settlement patterns on the north Aegean islands for the period 641 – 741 are virtually untraceable. On Lesbos, the main settlement of Mytilene, equipped with two harbours and an aqueduct erected by Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, probably survived the transitional period reduced in size, while the ancient city of Methymna seems to have remained continuously under habitation during the Byzantine period.⁵⁶⁷ On Chios, the fortified settlement of Emporeion had been active during the years 641 – 668, but was then reoccupied in the eighth century probably after a disaster between 668 and 685 that may be connected with the Arab expedition against Constantinople.⁵⁶⁸ In the central Aegean, the *kastron* of Pythagoreion in Samos provides evidence of continuous habitation between the seventh and ninth centuries.⁵⁶⁹

Continuity and further development of settlements

It seems that settlements such as Kastro Apalirou and Paroikia continued to exist at least until the thirteenth century. The Arab geographer Al-Idrisi travelled across the islands around 1153 and - though his journey took place in the middle of the twelfth century - it is reasonable to argue that the overall development of the islands was already underway from the beginning of the eleventh century.⁵⁷⁰ Al-Idrisi describes Andros, Naxos and Amorgos as populated and flourishing. Naxos was also rich in oxen and sheep, while Amorgos was “an important island, very populated and with a lot of profit to be made”. One may assume that the existence of the imperial monastery of Panagia Chozoviotissa, re-established by Alexios I in the 1080s, had significantly boosted trade on the island with its generous endowment.⁵⁷¹ Kalymnos, Kos and the volcanic Nisyros are also mentioned as sufficiently populated and equipped with ports. Interestingly, Al-Idrisi confuses Samos with Chios when referring to the production of mastic.⁵⁷² At the beginning of the twelfth century, Andros had a flourishing silk industry that undoubtedly had its origins in the eleventh century, if not earlier. It contributed to the overall wealth of the island, which is reflected in the existence of numerous churches founded in this period.⁵⁷³ In Kea, two monasteries and a church are dated to the eleventh century. One of the monasteries, Saint John the Baptist, was founded by Alexios I according to the testimony of Michael Choniates.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁶⁷ KODER, Aigaion Pelagos: Mytilene, 233, Methymna, 228—230.

⁵⁶⁸ KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, 150; POULOU-PAPADIMITRIOU, “Transitional” period, 34; BALANCE, Byzantine fortress, 80ff., ARMSTRONG, Trade in the east Mediterranean, 170.

⁵⁶⁹ POULOU-PAPADIMITRIOU, “Transitional” period, 33—34.

⁵⁷⁰ VIONIS, Aegean archaeology, 33; ROUSOS, Landscape, 298—299.

⁵⁷¹ For the history of the monastery of Chozoviotissa see, MARANKOU, Μονή Χοζοβιώτισσας, 26—31. The monastery seems to have had extensive property across the Aegean islands: see MELIARAKES, Αμοργός, 84—85. In the Chora of Amorgos there was also a dependency (μετόχιον) of the monastery of Patmos.

⁵⁷² Géographie d’Edrisi, 127—128.

⁵⁷³ HUYGENS, Peregrinationes tres, 38—39. POLEMES, Άνδρος, 49, 51—53.

⁵⁷⁴ Michael Choniates, Letters 179, 8 (285, 50—52 KOLOVOU); STEPHAS, Κέα, 100—105.

The settlements of the larger islands continued to develop despite the temporary setback of the Turkish raids along the west coast of Asia Minor. On Lesbos, the capital city of Mytilene was besieged and captured by Tzachas but Methymna in the northwest resisted. The same pattern can be observed for Chios. Although the Kastron was taken by the competent emir, in the north-west, Bolissos - with its seaport Lemnia - was used by the Byzantines as their operational base. After their final recapture, both *kastra* of Mytilene and Chios were refortified. The (re)emergence of other settlements across the islands can be dated to the eleventh century, yet some are mentioned in written sources only after 1204 – the city of Rhodes and Herakleion in Crete being two characteristic cases.⁵⁷⁵ Settlements such as Bolissos on Chios,⁵⁷⁶ and Methymna, Pyrra, and Sygri on Lesbos, likely existed already from the early Byzantine period, but regained importance gradually after the end of the tenth century.⁵⁷⁷

The evolution of settlement patterns on the smaller Aegean islands can be followed more closely thanks to fragmentary but nevertheless reliable evidence. The archive of the monastery of Saint John the Theologian on Patmos gives a more than welcome insight. A series of imperial privileges issued in 1088 resulted in a census on the islands of Patmos, Leros, and Leipsoi that included all the houses and infrastructure situated within the limits of the monastery's future property. Patmos is described as an island of such rocky terrain and minimal water reserves that its limited fertile soil required intensive labour to make it suitable for farming.⁵⁷⁸ According to the *praktika* drawn up by the state officials, the neighbouring island of Leros was in a much better state.⁵⁷⁹ The two *proasteia* given to the monastery of Saint John, Parthenion and Temenia included infrastructure which comprised a cistern (*κινστέρινα*), a water well (*φρέαρ*), houses that in some cases included a store for grain (*ώρεϊον*) and other commodities (*ἀποθήκη*) or a barn (*ἀχυρῶνα*). Some of the houses had rock walls, others rock combined with adobe, while the rooves were either of tile or reeds. There were also a wine vat (*ληνός*) and stables for traction animals. In the *κάστρον τοῦ Παντελίου*, half of which was given to the monastery of Patmos, the houses are recorded as two-storey with additional rooms used as a kitchen (*μαγειρεϊον*) and bakery (*φουρνάριον*). On Leipsoi, houses, stables for cattle (*σταῦλος τῶν βοϊδίων*), and huts are mentioned.⁵⁸⁰ It is noteworthy that an extensive production complex of pottery of the earlier period has been discovered on this island. Both on Leros and Leipsoi, churches were a frequent sight, some of them painted and all of them furnished with the necessary liturgical accoutrements.⁵⁸¹ From the above mentioned, it goes without saying that with concerted labour even the seemingly

⁵⁷⁵ MICHAELIDOU, Rhodes, 245—246; ANDRIANAKIS, Herakleion, 256—259.

⁵⁷⁶ KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, 138—139; KOUKOUNI, “Capitania Valisso”, 54ff.

⁵⁷⁷ KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, Methymna: 229, Pyrra: 271, Sigri, 277.

⁵⁷⁸ NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Έγγραφα Πάτμου, 39 (n. 51).

⁵⁷⁹ NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Έγγραφα Πάτμου, 54—56 (n. 52).

⁵⁸⁰ NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Έγγραφα Πάτμου, 61 (n. 52).

⁵⁸¹ NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Έγγραφα Πάτμου, 48 (n. 52).

intractable land of the small Aegean islands could be satisfactorily cultivated, leading to the growth of local settlements that could provide surplus or generate demand for market and trade.⁵⁸²

Trade patterns

Minerals

Because of its geological history, the Aegean basin is rich in minerals, some of them present only on certain islands with specific geophysical features such as the volcanic Melos and Thera. On Melos, obsidian, bentonite, perlite, kaolin, barium, gypsum, sulphur, alum, pozzolana, limestone, and *Melian earth* (μηλία γῆ) have been mined and exported along the centuries, while the last was used as pigment by painters. Pumice from Thera was excavated and exported for a major part of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Lesbos had deposits of alum, as did Phokaia / Foça on the opposite shore. Naxos and Paros have rich deposits of white marble. In Naxos, emery (σμίριδα) - a granular rock consisting of mineral corundum and iron oxides - is still extracted and used as an abrasive or polishing material.⁵⁸³ Lemnian earth (λήμνια σφραγίς / *terra sigillata*) from the homonymous island was used as a styptic for snakebites, general wounds, and as an antibiotic against the plague.⁵⁸⁴ Unfortunately, the limited information on the utilisation of minerals during the Byzantine period (with the exception of Lemnian earth) does not permit us to reconstruct a reliable picture of their role as trade commodities at the time.

Flora and Fauna

As far as the flora is concerned, xerophytes and succulents predominate on islands exposed to the winds and with limited precipitation. Simultaneously, the presence of grazing and browsing animals such as sheep and goats further contributed to the degradation of close-growing plants. Forests are present where the annual rainfall and the local climate allow for the continuous moistening of the soil. As a result, the vegetation that has survived into the modern era consists mostly of cultivated species: mastic tree of Chios (*Pistacia lentiscus*, var. *Chia*), olive, strawberry, mulberry, lemon, quince, apricot and peach, and also grape, cotton, rye, and melon. From the mastic tree, the homonymous resin was used primarily for the making of pale varnish for the protection of metals and paintings, and as an adhesive in dental work.⁵⁸⁵ Sericulture and a silk industry were also present.⁵⁸⁶ Local varieties of wine were also cultivated from ancient times, including *Phokiano* (Φωκιανό), a semi-sweet *brusco* coming

⁵⁸² See below for the distribution of the products of the Patmian monastery and its dependencies.

⁵⁸³ For the minerals in the Aegean basin see the portal <https://www.orykta.gr/> (08.03.2021).

⁵⁸⁴ <https://academic-eb-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/levels/collegiate/article/Lemnos/47726> (06.03.2021); KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, 96—97.

⁵⁸⁵ <https://academic-eb-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/levels/collegiate/article/mastic/51328> (06.03.2021); KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, 61—62, 67—68.

⁵⁸⁶ KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, 98.

from sun-dried grapes, or the wine of Methymna, mentioned by Corippus in the panegyric to Justin II (565).⁵⁸⁷ It is self-evident that cereals were produced on all islands, with barley predominating on the smaller and wheat on the larger ones.⁵⁸⁸ The fauna of the islands include sheep, goats, donkeys, the Skyrian horse (*σκυριανό άλογο* / *equus Cubulus*) and a wide variety of fowl. The Aegean Sea has included a wide range of fish and molluscs. A sixteenth century source mentions among others comber, (dusky) grouper, (sand) smelt and whitebait. Octopus, calamari, mussel and even sea urchin are also present and a basic part of the diet of the Aegean and Mediterranean civilisations since prehistoric times.⁵⁸⁹

Trade 641 – 741: continuity and adaptation

In terms of trade, the following observations can be made for the period 641 – 741. Firstly, the volume of trade had undoubtedly reduced compared to the previous period, although it is still in evidence even after the appearance of the Arabs in the Aegean. The scanty written evidence offers some insight here: in the Miracles of Saint Artemios, written between 658 – 668, a merchant from Chios bearing the characteristic name *Εὐπορος*,⁵⁹⁰ and Georgios, a shipowner from Rhodes, seem to have been travelling to Constantinople on a regular basis.⁵⁹¹ Two sailors are also mentioned in the Miracles, the second travelling “beyond Abydos”.⁵⁹² In the city of Chios, shards of LRA 1 and 2, ceramic utensils, and *unguentaria* - including fine Phocaeen red slipware - have been excavated within the walls of what appears to have been a building of commercial and residential function. The written evidence is thus corroborated by the material remains.⁵⁹³ In general, ceramic workshops across the islands continued to produce amphorae and ceramics for daily use, such as plates, cups and chafing dishes.⁵⁹⁴ Imports from Constantinople included luxury wares, as indicated by fragments of Glazed White Ware I and II found on Melos, Thera, Kythera and Crete (Gortyn, Herakleion and elsewhere).⁵⁹⁵ As for amphorae, the older LRA 1 type continued to be produced after the early fifth century. It had a thin-walled cylindrical body with a rounded base and thickened rim. Many locations have been identified as places of origin, including Cilicia and Seleukeia on the south coast of Turkey, west Cyprus, Rhodes, Caria, and probably Chios. Imitations were produced in Egypt, Carthage, Crete, Kos, and the Black Sea. LRA

⁵⁸⁷ Corippus, In laudem Iustini III (63, 96 CAMERON). KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, 93.

⁵⁸⁸ KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, 92–93.

⁵⁸⁹ KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, 67, 94 with fn. 13.

⁵⁹⁰ In this case meaning a wealthy person. See TLG lemma *εὐπορος*.

⁵⁹¹ Miracles of Artemios, 84, 17–18; 184, 12–14.

⁵⁹² Miracles of Artemios, 86, 22, 102, 1.

⁵⁹³ VASSE, Απόκρυψη “θησαυρού”, 67–70.

⁵⁹⁴ POULOU-PAPADIMITRIOU, “Transitional” period, 32, 38.

⁵⁹⁵ POULOU-PAPADIMITRIOU, “Transitional” period, 36.

1 was widely traded from north Africa, Tunisia and Egypt, as far afield as Constantinople, the Black Sea, the Aegean, the Balkans, and even south-west England and Ireland.⁵⁹⁶

Already from the beginning of the seventh century, developments in systems of exchange and transport of products led to the introduction of Byzantine Globular Amphora (BGA). These included a wide range of globular and globular-ovoid vessels such as LRA 2C/13 – an evolution of the earlier and widely used LRA 2, in production from the fourth century. In general, this extensive group of amphorae features a globular body with broad belly. The style originated probably from the Aegean islands, Cyprus and Byzantine Italy. It had a wide distribution across the Mediterranean and constituted the main transportation vessel from the end of the seventh up to the ninth century in all regions of the empire.⁵⁹⁷ Indeed, it can be designated as one of the last material objects that unified the different regions of the Romano-Byzantine world. BGA were produced to standard capacity probably to facilitate the identification of its content for trade and taxation purposes, or for its use for the transportation of staples requested by the state. Olive oil and wine were the products par excellence carried in amphorae.⁵⁹⁸ Ceramic production facilities have been excavated almost everywhere throughout the Aegean, from the largest to the smallest islands. On Paros, workshops along Naoussa bay continued to operate during the eighth century, the same applying also for those on Naxos. On Leipsoi, a rather extensive production complex continued to produce LRA 1 vessels until the eighth century.⁵⁹⁹ On Kos, ceramic workshops excavated in Alasarna and Kardamaina produced BGA, LR 2 *unguentaria* and wheel-made lamps.⁶⁰⁰ BGA from Kos and Samos were found in Gortyn on Crete, along with locally produced ones, probably indicating a regional movement of goods.⁶⁰¹ The introduction of the globular type can be explained not only in terms of imitation of the older LRA 2, but also in terms of developments in ship design. At this point the testimony of shipwrecks can help shape a clearer picture.

The ship of Yassi Ada

The best-known seventh-century wreck is that found about forty metres to the south of the islet of Yassi Ada, in the south-eastern Aegean within the territorial waters of present-day Turkey. It had a

⁵⁹⁶ VROOM, Pottery in the Aegean, 52—53.

⁵⁹⁷ VROOM, Pottery in the Aegean, 52, 55, 58, 60—61; PIERI, Commerce du vin, 88—89; POULOU-PAPADIMITRIOU – NODAROU, Vessels and routes, 874—875 with further bibliography.

⁵⁹⁸ For a general introduction on the subject matter see, GREENE – LAWALL, Amphora standardization, 3—16; for the restudy and further measurement and capacity analysis of the LRA 2 (BGA) amphorae from the Yassi Ada wreck see, van ALFEN, Restudy of amphoras, 17—34; for the same analyses of the piriform jars from the Serçe Limani ship see, van DOORNINCK, Metrology of amphoras, 35—54. I will return to the topic below, in the chapter dealing with the role of the state.

⁵⁹⁹ DIDIOUMI, Pottery production, 169—172.

⁶⁰⁰ PAPA VASSILIOU – SARANTIDIS – PAPANIKOLAOU, Ceramic workshop, 159—163.

⁶⁰¹ PORTALE, Sunset of Gortyn, 478—481.

length on deck of 20,52 m, a maximum beam of 5,22 m and a total displacement of 72,86 tons, with 60 tons being her loading capacity.⁶⁰² Its captain was the ναύκληρος Γεώργιος, who was a πρεσβύτερος – either a senior sea captain, or a priest and sea captain.⁶⁰³ The cargo comprised approximately 900 amphoras: 719 globular (BGA of various LRA 2 subtypes) and 103 cylindrical (LRA 1).⁶⁰⁴ They were filled with wine and oil.⁶⁰⁵ On the basis of coin finds, which were mainly copper and are dated by regnal year and by mint, the research team has suggested a *terminus post quem* for the wreck of 625 / 626.⁶⁰⁶ Taking into account the correlation between the production and distribution of LRA 2 and the *annona militaris*, along with the standard size and capacity of the amphorae, an elaborate speculation has been floated – namely, that the ship was part of the *annona* fleet that supplied Constantinople on a yearly basis with staples. By the time she perished, she had likely begun her journey from Samos to Cilicia, transporting oil and wine to the Byzantine army fighting the Persians in the east.⁶⁰⁷

There are more shipwrecks along Sea Route B, some of them dated in general terms between 400 and 600, and others more precisely between 650 and 750. They concentrate geographically between Chios and the Erythraia / Karaburun peninsula, and in the triangle between Syme, Rhodes, and the Harikarnassos / Datça peninsula. They carried mainly BGA and LRA 1 vessels, the most impressive quantity being found in the wreck of Agios Stephanos, an islet off north-eastern Chios, which boasts more than one thousand pieces.⁶⁰⁸

Trade in the eleventh century

The restoration of peace and security in the Aegean basin after the reconquest of Crete in 961 marked the beginning of a new era. Despite some temporary political setbacks, communication and trade between Byzantium and the Muslim states of the Middle East and north Africa, especially the Fatimids of Syria and Egypt, was regular and unhampered. At the same time, trade with the West and especially the maritime city-states of Italy, was on the rise, with Amalfi and Venice paving the way towards the commercial unification of the Mediterranean.⁶⁰⁹ Within the empire, local and regional trade would soon reach a new peak for the first time since the sixth century. Raw materials and finished products show continuity, with the notable addition of the silk industry. I will begin with this commercial sector and then move on to other areas.

⁶⁰² STEFFY, *The Hull*, 86.

⁶⁰³ SAMS, *Weighing implements*, 212—213; van DOORNINCK, *Final voyage*, 205.

⁶⁰⁴ BASS, *The pottery*, 155—165; van ALFEN, *Restudy of amphoras*, 17.

⁶⁰⁵ WARD, *Plant remains*, 55, 58—59 with figures.

⁶⁰⁶ FAGERLIE, *The coins*, 144—154.

⁶⁰⁷ van DOORNINCK, *Final voyage*, 206—213.

⁶⁰⁸ McCORMICK, *Origins*, 600—603 with table 20.5.

⁶⁰⁹ MALAMUT, *Iles II*, 439—440.

Andros appears as an island with a significant silk industry. The English pilgrim Saewulf, who visited Andros at some point between 1101 and 1103, mentions two textiles – namely *sendal*, a lightweight cloth in a mottled weave, and *samite*, a strong and rather heavy glossy silk cloth in twill weave. Other silks were also produced on the island. Later in the twelfth century, *sendal* acquired widespread fame across Europe, and it is safely to assume that the silk industry of Andros was well underway from the eleventh century on.⁶¹⁰ Unfortunately, this is the most detailed reference we have on the subject. Without doubt, the islands with geophysical conditions favourable to sericulture might also have once been centres of production, but the information, if there ever was any, is now missing.⁶¹¹

Finds from luxury items such as Constantinopolitan polychrome ware are extremely rare in the Aegean islands, exceptions being shards of a dish in the main Byzantine fortification of Samothrake and an assemblage of six vessels found in Herakleion. They all date to the second half of the tenth century.⁶¹² In tracing commercial patterns we are forced back therefore on the Aegean products par excellence, that is olive oil and wine. Amphorae remained the dominant type of container, although wooden barrels were gradually making an appearance.⁶¹³ The extensive group of BG amphorae survived probably until the early ninth century and were then replaced by the more rounded Günsenin I amphora. Made in the region of Ganos, a wine-producing district on the north-western shore of the Propontis,⁶¹⁴ Günsenin I journeyed with its contents from present-day southern France, Italy and Montenegro into Turkey, across the Aegean, the Black Sea and up into southern Russia and Sweden.⁶¹⁵ Like the BGA / LRA 2 carried by the Yassi-Ada ship, the Günsenin I in the vessel that sank off the port of Serçe-Limani around 1025 were of standard size and capacity to facilitate the identification of their content for trade and taxation purposes, or their use for transporting staples requested by the state. Günsenin II type had a pear-shaped body with a rounded base and two slightly upward sloping handles to facilitate easier handling, thus to an extent imitating the (late) Roman (third and fourth century) Kapitän 2 amphora.⁶¹⁶ It is worth noting that if this ergonomic interpretation of the design is correct, it would indicate the predominance of multiple beachside sales of small scale - in other words, tramp - trade, at least to a degree. In the Aegean region, and especially in terms of the islands with their bays and coves, this type of commerce is unlikely to have been uncommon over the centuries. Günsenin II, in contrast with Günsenin I, seems to have been produced in various centres across the Aegean, the

⁶¹⁰ Saewulf (60, 38—39 HUYGENS). JACOBY, Silk in western Byzantium, 460—461.

⁶¹¹ For Chios and Lesbos after the seventeenth century, see the brief reference in KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, 98.

⁶¹² POULOU, Polychrome ware, 93—94; GEROLYMATOU, Αγορές και εμπόριο, 138—40.

⁶¹³ McCORMICK, Movements and markets, 74—77.

⁶¹⁴ KÜLZER, Ostthrakien, 371—373.

⁶¹⁵ GÜNSENIN, Typologie, 92—98; VROOM, Pottery in the Aegean, 94—95.

⁶¹⁶ For the Günsenin II amphora, see GÜNSENIN, Typologie, 98—99; VROOM, Pottery in the Aegean, 96—97; and McCORMICK, Movements and markets, 62—64 for an experimental approach on the handling of Kapitän 2 amphora. For the specifics of Kapitän 2 amphoras, see “<https://doi.org/10.5284/1028192>” (02.04.2021).

Black Sea, and the region of Marmara, and has also been found in present day Turkey, Russia, Rumania, and Bulgaria. As for the movement of goods, once again the study of preserved shipwrecks is of great importance.

The “Glass wreck”

The best-known wreck of the eleventh century was found in the haven of Serçe Limani (i.e., Sparrow Harbour) on the southern shore of the Bozburun peninsula. The ship was a two-masted lateener, well-suited to shallow-water coastal navigation and with an overall length of 15.66 m, a maximum breadth of 5.2 m, and a total displacement of 78.9 tons with an estimated tonnage of thirty-five tons.⁶¹⁷ The merchants aboard were probably the Greek-speaking Leon, Nikolaos, Michael and Ioannes, and the Bulgarian Miroslov. Lead-analysis of the personal possessions and objects, and chemical analysis of some of the Günsenin XIII amphoras found on board point to the region of Rhaidestos (perhaps Ganos?) as the ship’s home port. Its destination was the shore of Fatimid Syria. From there, the ship took as cargo three metric tons of cullet, including a ton of broken Islamic vessels, some eighty pieces of intact glassware, almost four dozen glazed Islamic bowls, the same quantity of red-ware cooking vessels, six copper cauldrons and buckets, as well as sumac and raisins. The people on board must have engaged in a rather marginal level of international commerce with a few cargoes of fairly substantial size and quite a number of much smaller, seemingly personal, cargoes. They were already involved in trade with the Levant, as the presence of Islamic ceramic vessels with considerable wear suggest. It was during this return voyage that the ship sank, having sought refuge in the haven of Serçe Limani probably because of a strong gale coming from the mainland.⁶¹⁸

The glass of the Serçe Limani ship includes drinking vessels, shallow dishes, bowls, bottles, pouring vessels, storage vessels, lamps, and other glass objects. Raw glass and factory waste formed a significant proportion of the total freight. They were probably being transported to Constantinople as ballast to be used as raw material by the local glass industry, demonstrating that the recycling of finished or unfinished products was an important part of the production process.⁶¹⁹ Some of the Günsenin XIII amphorae found on board seem to have been made especially for commerce in Syria because of their standardized capacity.⁶²⁰

Other shipwrecks dated with relative security are that found in the Mandalya Gulf / Güllük Körfezi to the south-west of Miletus, which was loaded with pear-shaped Byzantine amphorae, and “Dia B”

⁶¹⁷ STEFFY, Construction and analysis, 166—169.

⁶¹⁸ BASS, Introduction, 4, 8—9, with notes 5 and 6; van DOORNINCK, The Voyage, 3—4; GÜNSENIN, 146—149.

⁶¹⁹ Van DOORNINCK, The Voyage, 4; for a detailed analysis on the glass found in the wreck see the respective chapters in volume II of the Serçe Limani publication.

⁶²⁰ GÜNSENIN, Typologie, 113—114.

between the island of Dia and Crete with Günsenin I-like vessels that could possibly indicate a cargo provenance from the region of Mount Ganos.⁶²¹

The role of the state

Control and taxation 641 – 741

Between 641 – 741 the Aegean islands came under the jurisdiction of *kommerkiarioi* and *basilika kommerkia* in several geographical several new geographical entities: in 687 / 688 the *Nesoi* were combined with the provinces of *Caria* and *Asia*,⁶²² probably a distant echo of the Justinianic *Quaestura exercitus*,⁶²³ while in 690/691 *Asia* was put together with *Chios* and *Lesbos*.⁶²⁴ On the eve of the expedition to recapture Carthage from the Arabs, the *apotheke* of *Asia*, *Caria*, *Lycia*, *Rhodes* and *Cherronesos* / *Chersonesos* came under the jurisdiction of the [*kommerkarios*] Georgios *apo hypaton*.⁶²⁵ The seal is marked with two successive indictions corresponding to the years 695 – 697, thus giving the time needed to raise the local resources for the campaign. These could have also included the taxation of whatever domestic and international trade was conducted in the region. Another interesting regional combination was that of *Asia*, *Caria*, [and] *all the islands* and *Hellespont* under Anastasios, *hypatos*, *basilikos balnitor* and *genikos kommerkarios* of the respective *apotheke* in 721 / 722.⁶²⁶ This extensive area of responsibility may be connected with the gradual evolution of the *strategidai* into (naval) *themata*. Its material attestations may include the vaulted complex of *Θόλοι* (i.e., vaults) on the eastern side of Agathonisi island, c. 20 kilometres from Didyma / Didim on the opposite Asian coast, which was likely a warehouse on Sea Route B.⁶²⁷ Smaller areas of responsibility also emerged during the period of study, with some interesting cases in point. The *apotheke of the Kyklades Nesoi* seems to have undergone a straightforward development. It is probably first attested in 687 – 689,⁶²⁸ and more securely in 696 / 697,⁶²⁹ turning into the *apotheke* of the *Aigaion Pelagos* in

⁶²¹ McCORMICK, *Origins*, 602, table 20.5; for a catalogue up to 2013 see DELLAPORTA, *Greek seas*, 391—397; see also the DARMC archaeology map for wrecks between the seventh century and the beginning of the twelfth.

⁶²² ZARNITZ, *Drei Siegel*, 184, n. 1 with annotation, 181—182; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 525, n. 74.

⁶²³ GKOUTZIOUKOSTAS – MONIAROS, *Quaestura exercitus*, 93—99, 222—232.

⁶²⁴ ZV I 1, 249, n. 168; D. O. seals II, 141—142, n. 51. 3; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 529, n. 92.

⁶²⁵ BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 536—537, n. 129 identifies *Χερρόνησος* / *Χερσόνησος* with the Cretan bishopric of the same city. ZV I 1, 268—269, n. 189 and NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, D. O. seals II, 166—167, n. 65. 1 identify the locality with the Knidian Chersonesos to the south of Kos an identification that must be accepted, based on the historical geography of the region since ancient times.

⁶²⁶ LICHACHEV, *Molivdovuly*, 216—217, M-7961, M-7963 and table LXXIII, nos. 5 and 6; ZV I 1, 306—307, n. 226; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 548, n. 186.

⁶²⁷ POULOU-PAPADIMITRIOU, “Transitional” period, 32, 38, 48.

⁶²⁸ ZV I 1, 244—245, n. 163; D. O. seals II, 127—128, n. 42. 5; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 526, n. 78.

⁶²⁹ ZV I 1, 274, n. 196; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 539, n. 139.

713 / 714,⁶³⁰ and finally into the *basilika kommerkia* of the islands of the *Aigaion Pelagos* in 734 / 735.⁶³¹

During the 730s, however, some special cases surface, as is indicated by the lead seals *τῶν βασιλικῶν κομμερκίων τῆς Μήλου* in 730 – 731⁶³² and *τῶν βασιλικῶν κομμερκίων τῆς διοικήσεως Ἀνδρου* in 736 / 737.⁶³³ This notable trend reached a peak with the emergence of *τῶν βασιλικῶν κομμερκίων Μήλου, Θήρας, Ἀνάφης, Ἰου καὶ Ἀμοργοῦ* in 738 / 739 as an administrative unit.⁶³⁴ I will begin the analysis of these exceptional cases with the island of Andros, then Melos, and finally discuss the combination of the latter with the other islands.⁶³⁵

The case of Andros

The *διοίκησις* of Andros is not an unusual administrative division for the years 641 – 741. It designates the area of responsibility of the *διοικηταί*, who operated as local and regional tax-collectors for the most important taxes – that is, the land-tax and the hearth-tax – for the greater part of the eighth century and subsequently. The first mention of the term *διοικηταί* is found in Theophanes in the entry for the years 692 / 693, with a second mention occurring in 740: following an earthquake that damaged the walls of Constantinople, Leo III introduced the *δικέρατον*, a special tax for the repair of the walls, which was collected by the *dioiketai*. In general, the *dioiketai* were appointed on an ad-hoc basis to collect taxes for a certain period, as in the case of the *dikeraton*. The sigillographic evidence allows us to discern five categories of *dioiketai*: a) those with a geographically designated area of responsibility; b) those combining more than one office; c) those without a geographically designated area; d) those bearing honorific titles; and e) those with high honorary titles and a designated area of authority. In general, the *dioiketai* of the first category were active in the Aegean and the western provinces during the years 641 – 741.

In Andros two *dioiketai* are attested solely by the lead seals. The first is an anonymous *διοικητῆς τῆς Ἀνδρου*, with his seal dated generally between the seventh and eighth centuries, and the second is *Στέφανος διοικητῆς Ἀνδρου* with a seal dated to the first half of the eighth century.⁶³⁶ These officials must have been responsible for the collection of at the very least the land-tax, and their presence may also be connected with the fiscal reforms introduced by Leo III – namely, the census

⁶³⁰ ZV I 1, 288—289, n. 213; D. O. seals II, 119—120, n. 40. 23; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 544—545, n. 168.

⁶³¹ ZV I 1, 328, n. 249; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 554—555, n. 220.

⁶³² ZV I 1, 323, n. 242; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 553, n. 211.

⁶³³ ZV I 1, 193, table 34; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 555, n. 226.

⁶³⁴ ZV I 1, 323, n. 242; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 556, n. 229.

⁶³⁵ STAVRAKOS, *Basilika kommerkia* of southern Aegean, 264—276, served as a starting point for the analysis made below.

⁶³⁶ ZV I 2, 1302, n. 2388; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 212.

that led to an extensive revision of the tax register and the imposition of the hearth-tax. Furthermore, these fiscal reforms went one step further in establishing the *themata*, since the provinces of the empire were now expected to rely more on their own resources for defence. In this context, the seals of the two *dioiketai*, together with the seal of the *dioikesis* of Andros and its *basilika kommerkia* dated to 736 / 737, indicate the presence of officials tasked with raising taxes, while the *basilika kommerkia* may have been responsible for the management of the local *apotheke*.

The “southern arc” and Crete

The *basilika kommerkia* of Melos (730 – 731) and Melos, Thera, Anaphe, Ios and Amorgos (738/739) form the other peculiar case of local fiscal management. Since the *apotheke* / *basilika kommerkia* of *Kyklades Nesoi* / *Aigaion Pelagos* had long been established to support the network of local defences, other necessities must have dictated their creation. Melos is an island rich in minerals – some of these of strategic importance in the pre-industrial era and even today. Most notable is sulphur, used in various combustibles by ancient and medieval armies. Obsidian, gypsum, alum, pozzolana, and limestone were also of significance during the Byzantine period, though details of their extraction, handling and use are currently lacking. Furthermore, the volcanic soil of the island offered an increased productivity for various crops that would have been important both as provisions for the armed forces and as commodities. In this context, the presence of the *basilika kommerkia* on the island becomes explicable, itself prompting a further suggestion concerning the combining of Melos, Thera, Anaphe, Ios and Amorgos as a unit. These islands form a belt with a north-westerly to north-easterly direction, thus creating the first zone of defence for the central Aegean. Whoever wanted to penetrate the centre of the Archipelago had of necessity to pass through these islands – indeed, to occupy them – in order to control the regional sea lanes. It is no coincidence that Melos was considered of strategic importance during the Second World War, when a series of fortifications, including underground bunkers and radar installations were constructed. Thera and Anaphe enjoy full visibility over the south Aegean, while Ios and Anaphe control access to the larger islands of Paros and Naxos. Furthermore, all of these islands are fertile to a greater or lesser degree, with the volcanic Melos and Thera particularly so, and there are numerous bays and coves that could be used as shelter from the strong winds that are a feature across the year. Taking also into account the existence and spatial distribution of fortifications and watchtowers across the islands, the existence of *basilika kommerkia* makes perfect sense. They would have been responsible for the collection and allocation of supplies and materials to local military regiments, along with the regulation of whatever domestic and foreign trade was taking place. Finally,

the lead seal of *Ioulianos, apo hypaton and genikos kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Crete* for the years 688 – 690⁶³⁷ confirms a key geopolitical role for the island during the years 641 – 741.

Monetary production and circulation 641 – 741

The coin finds help us draw a clearer picture. In the northern and eastern Aegean, a hoard from Lesbos includes fifty *folleis* of Herakleios and Constans II, likely deposited in 672 / 673.⁶³⁸ In the city of Chios, 113 *folleis* of Constans II from the years 642 – 651 / 652 were excavated in the same building as shards of amphorae and other ceramics. Thus, and despite their (very) low quality of mintage, the use of these *folleis* for purposes of commercial transaction is almost certain.⁶³⁹ In Samos, coins of Constans II have been found in the Eupalinos Tunnel, at that time used as a refuge, and also in the seventh-century castle called “*Κάστρο του Λαζάρου*”.⁶⁴⁰

In the Cyclades, a hoard excavated at the acropolis of Arkesine on Amorgos includes sixty specimens dated to the reign of Constantine IV (668 – 685): fifty-two *solidi*, four *semisses* and four *tremisses*. They were likely part of a larger sum destined for the payment of the land and naval forces stationed on the island.⁶⁴¹ A *miliaresion* of Leo III has been excavated in the upper layer of the proto-Cycladic (3200 BCE – 2200 BCE) settlement of Markiane. Other finds include those from the basilica at Perissa in Thera, with three *folleis* of Constans II and one *solidus* of Leo III.⁶⁴² A single *solidus* was found in the *Kastro* of Siphnos, dated to 662 / 667.⁶⁴³ On Naxos, a single *follis* of Constans II somehow contradicts the emerging picture of a rather economically active island. On the other hand, a *solidus* of Constantine V found in the *Χώρα* and minted between 741 – 751 seems to support this picture.⁶⁴⁴ In such cases the fragmentary nature of the evidence must be always kept in mind.

In the Dodecanese, Rhodes preserves the richest material to date, including six *solidi* and more than eighty *folleis* of Constans II, along with some imitations and one *solidus* of Justinian II. They were found within the limits of the *polis* of Rhodes and in important settlements in the countryside

⁶³⁷ ZV I 1, 149, Table 5 for the seals of Ioulianos; OIKONOMIDES, Dated seals, 35—36, n. 22; BRANDES, Finanzverwaltung, 527, n. 83.

⁶³⁸ NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, Κυκλοφορία, 66, n. 327; KOUREMPANAS, “Θησαυρός” Μυτιλήνης, 132—142.

⁶³⁹ NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, Κυκλοφορία, 66, n. 325; NIKOLAOU, Νομισματική κυκλοφορία I, 80—86; 89—91. See also page 12 with footnote 71; PENNA, Monetary circulation, 57. For coin production and circulation see the relevant chapter on the role of the state.

⁶⁴⁰ EUGENIDOU, Νομίσματα Σάμου, 126.

⁶⁴¹ PENNAS – SAMOLADOU, Ευρήματα Κυκλάδων, 145; MORRISON – POPOVIC – IVANISEVIC, Trésors, 385, n. 315; NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, Κυκλοφορία, 63, n. 295; PENNA, Monetary circulation, 57.

⁶⁴² PENNAS – SAMOLADOU, Ευρήματα Κυκλάδων, 145—147.

⁶⁴³ PENNA, Monetary circulation, 57; PENNAS – SAMOLADOU, Ευρήματα Κυκλάδων, 153.

⁶⁴⁴ PENNA, Monetary circulation, 57; EADEM, Κυκλάδες, 403—404; PENNAS – SAMOLADOU, Ευρήματα Κυκλάδων, 138.

such as Ialysos.⁶⁴⁵ On Kos, *folleis* of Constans II have been discovered in the fortified settlement of Εβριόκαστρο, while a *solidus* of the same emperor was part of a hoard now lost.⁶⁴⁶ Two *folleis* of the years 642 / 643 and 669 – c. 674 have been found in the Κάστρο της Χώρας on Kalymnos, and likewise one *solidus* of Theodosius III on nearby Telendos, indicating economic and commercial activity even on the smaller islands during this period.⁶⁴⁷

Control and taxation 1025 – 1095

For the years 1025 – 1095, the lead seal of *Georgios, protosynkellos* and *kommerkiarios* of Crete is the only one attested for the Aegean islands.⁶⁴⁸ The strategic position of the island explains the presence of this official, although in general *kommerkiarioi* seem to be absent from the Archipelago. Considered a *mare internum* after the reconquest of Crete in 961, and with international trade centred on Constantinople, Trebizond, and the Danube, *kommerkiarioi* had no role to play in the new era, or at least not a prominent one that would necessitate the use of an official means of verification such as a lead seal.

Monetary production and circulation 1025 – 1095

As far as the numismatic evidence is concerned, on Samos two *histamena* of Constantine IX and Constantine X were part of a larger, now scattered, hoard, while 167 *anonymous folleis* constitute the bulk of the eleventh century findings.⁶⁴⁹ For Crete, a hoard found in the village of Αγίες Παρασκιές, on the inland of Herakleion comprised ninety-two *histamena* of Nikephoros II, Basil II, and Constantine VIII. It seems likely to represent the ready cash of someone involved in continuous transactions, but any further detail and context is lacking.⁶⁵⁰ In the Dodecanese, for Rhodes *anonymous folleis* of the years 1025 – 1095 have been found in relative abundance. The majority are poorly minted and in general of low quality, and they might even be considered imitations. The historical context of their production and circulation can be traced to the turbulent years between 1081 and 1095, when

⁶⁴⁵ KASDAGLE, Νομίσματα Ρόδου, 269 with footnote 11, 270 table 1, 271 with table 3; PSARRE, Νομίσματα από την ύπαιθρο, 269, 275—276.

⁶⁴⁶ MPROUSKARE – NTINTIOUME, Βυζαντινή Κως, 299, 311 table 10, 312.

⁶⁴⁷ MORRISON – POPOVIC – IVANISEVIC, Trésors, 386, n. 316; NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, Κυκλοφορία, 66, n. 326; KASDAGLE, Νομίσματα στα Δωδεκάνησα, 262—263.

⁶⁴⁸ TSOUGARAKIS, Lead seals of Crete, 246, n. 5; D. O. seals II, 96, n. 36. 4.

⁶⁴⁹ TOURATSOGLU – NIKOLAOU, Σύνταγμα “Θησαυρών”, 80, n. 56; NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, Κυκλοφορία, 69, n. 355; EUGENIDOU, Νομίσματα Σάμου, 128.

⁶⁵⁰ PENNA – BORBOUDAKIS, Ayies Paraskies hoard, 196, 199, 200—201; TOURATSOGLU, Νομισματικά πράγματα, 525—526; NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, Κυκλοφορία, 68, n. 343.

continuous naval raids by the Turkish emirs were the order of the day.⁶⁵¹ For Kos, forty-five *anonymous folleis* constitute the bulk of the material published to date.⁶⁵²

In the Cyclades, the finds are limited to Naxos and Siphnos, with six *anonymous folleis* of the late tenth – mid-eleventh centuries.⁶⁵³ Again, the highly fragmented evidence does not readily support any meaningful conclusions about coin circulation and usage during the years 1025 – 1095. It can only be hypothesised that the intensification of commercial activity resulted in currency constantly changing hands, thus leading to increased wear especially in the case of copper.

3.2.2 The northern coast of the Aegean (south coast of the Balkans)

Geography and geopolitics

The next region of the Aegean to be considered is that extending from the southern slopes of Mount Olympus up to Melas Kolpos / Saros Körfezi to the west and forming the coast of Macedonia and Thrace with its hinterland to the east (maps 12 – 15). Despite a lack of natural harbours, the shores of Macedonia and Thrace were of critical importance in connecting the western provinces of the empire with Constantinople by land – primarily by way of the Via Egnatia and by Sea Poute A.

Along the Thracian-Macedonian coastline, the valleys of the great rivers predominate. Most have a north-to-south course dictated by the terrain. From west to east, the sequence runs as follows: the Aliakmonas, Loudias, Axios / Vardares / Vardar and Echedoros / Gallikos, the Strymonas / Struma, the Nestos / Mesta and Evros / Marica / Meriç. The first four flow into the Thermaikos Kolpos / Thermaic Gulf after passing through the mountain ranges of western and north-western Macedonia: Pieria, Vermio, Voras / Kaimaktsalan and Kroussia. Strymonas passes through the mountains of Kerkine / Belles / Belasitza and Orvelos, and Nestos through those of Pirin and western Rhodope. The Evros passes through the mountains of Haemus and Rhodope in a west-to-east direction. In the region of Adrianople, it turns southwards, crosses the Tundža / Tunca and Arpessos / Ardas / Arda rivers, and further south the Ergines / Ergene Nehri, finally flowing into the Aegean. In eastern Thrace, the Kavak Deresi flows into Melas Kolpos, which forms the north-eastern boundary of the Aegean Sea.⁶⁵⁴ The climate is that of the transitional Mediterranean type, with hot dry summers and mild winters. During

⁶⁵¹ KASDAGLE, Νομίσματα Ρόδου, 271—272, 273, table 5; EADEM, Νομίσματα στα Δωδεκάνησα, 259.

⁶⁵² MPROUSKARE – NTINTIOUME, Βυζαντινή Κως, 314—315, table 11, 317—318; GERASKLE, Ανώνυμοι φύλλεις, 398—401.

⁶⁵³ PENNAS – SAMOLADOU, Ευρήματα Κυκλάδων, 139, 140, 141, 153.

⁶⁵⁴ SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 55—57; KÜLZER, Ostthrakien, 64—66; SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 105—110, 258—259; Bardarios, 473—474; Haliakmon, 691—692; Ludias.

the latter, large amounts of precipitation are usual in the mountainous hinterland, with snowfall almost on a yearly basis even in regions at a lower altitude.⁶⁵⁵

The region of Macedonia and Thrace has served as a geopolitical hub since ancient times, originally with the colonization of the coastal zone by the Greek city-states of the south and later with the rise of the Kingdom of Macedon (359 BCE). The founding of the city-port of Thessalonike in 315 BCE redirected all local, regional, and interregional trade routes to the Thermaic Gulf, and the establishment of Constantinople as the new capital of the Roman Empire six centuries later completed the long process of the region's emergence as a "central place" for the Eastern Roman state.

Historical developments 641 – 741 / 1025 – 1095

In 641, Slav tribes controlled the northern shore of the Aegean and its hinterland. The Berzitai occupied the region between Skopje and Stoboi, the Dragoubitai had settled near Heraclea Lynkestis, the Sagoudatoi in the region of Berroia, and the Smoleanoi had appropriated an area that included the western part of the Rhodope mountains, the valley of the river Nestos and Serres and its surroundings.⁶⁵⁶ The city that held the key to the region was Thessaloniki. Already besieged unsuccessfully by the Avaro-Slavs twice (615, 618), it stood its ground through this transitional period.⁶⁵⁷ A new Slavic attack took place in the summer of 676, ending unsuccessfully the following summer.⁶⁵⁸ By 700, the Slavic threat was waning and the recovery of the city with its neighbouring and more distant territory from the so-called "Dark Ages" started at a slow pace.

With the appearance and establishment of the Bulgarians, the military command (and later *thema*) of *Thrake* was founded in 680/681 to cope with the new threat. In 687/688, Justinian II undertook an expedition against the Bulgarians and Slavs in northern Thrace and central Macedonia. Though ending in disaster – the Byzantines were ambushed on their return, the emperor himself only escaping with great difficulty – it achieved its main objective, which was the securing of the *Via Egnatia* between Constantinople and Thessalonike.⁶⁵⁹ This incident shows the precarious state of the region. The treaty of 716 between Byzantium and Bulgaria offered some measure of stability since it defined the border between the two states in detail. In the south it was marked by a (still unidentified)

⁶⁵⁵ SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 57–58; PETALAS et al., Κατανομή βροχοπτώσεων στην Ανατολική Μακεδονία και Θράκη, 1056–1062.

⁶⁵⁶ Miracles of Demetrius 179 (175, 4–5 LEMERLE); DAPERGOLAS, Σλαβικές εγκαταστάσεις, 67–74; MALINGOUDES, Σλάβοι στη μεσαιωνική Ελλάδα, 87–107. SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 75.

⁶⁵⁷ Miracles of Demetrius 180–193, 196–214 (175, 12–179, 16, 185, 4–189, 24 LEMERLE); POHL, Die Awaren, 240–243.

⁶⁵⁸ Miracles of Demetrius 230–281 (208, 8–221, 11 LEMERLE). BAUER, Stadt und Patron, 224–225, 238–240.

⁶⁵⁹ Theophanes (364, 10–18 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 38 (92, 5–9 MANGO); Symeon Magistros, Chronicle 114, 2 (170, 7–9 WAHLGREN); Ioannes Zonaras XIV (239, 9–240, 1 BÜTTNER–WOBST). SOUSTAL; Thrakien, 78; ZIEMANN, Vom Wanderfolk zur Großmacht, 180–182; DAPERGOLAS, Σλαβικές εγκαταστάσεις, 80–82; BAUER, Stadt und Patron, 247–249.

location called τῶν Μηλεώνων on the right bank of the Evros, and in the east by the borders of the *thema* of Thrace, which extended along the shores of Propontis, taking in the cities of Herakleia, Selymbria and Panion, parts of the Black Sea coast with Mesembria and Sozopolis, and Bizye in the interior.⁶⁶⁰

The end of the Bulgarian war in 1018 signalled the beginning of an era of relative stability and prosperity. The undisputable administrative, economic, and commercial centre was Thessalonike with its hinterland. With nearby harbours such as Christoupolis (modern day Kavala), and conveniently located on the *Via Egnatia*, the southern branch of the *Basilike Odos* and also Sea Route A, the city attracted the agricultural and artisanal production of the interior.⁶⁶¹ The expansion of many surrounding towns such as Serres accelerated during this period. Furthermore, the growing religious and economic importance of the monastic community on the Mount Athos peninsula, regulated through a series of imperial charters, also contributed to overall regional development.⁶⁶²

Pathways of communication

There were two major highways traversing the Balkans to connect the northern Aegean with Italy and central Europe: the *Via Traiana* / *Basilike Odos*, which crossed the peninsula from northwest to southeast, and the *Via Egnatia*, which crossed in an east-west direction. The *Basilike Odos* started from Sirmium / Sremska Mitrovica, led on to Singidunum / Belgrade, and then went in a southerly direction to Naissos / Niš, where it branched off to Thessalonike, the main route continuing via Serdike / Sofia, Phillipoupolis / Plovdiv, and Adrianople / Edirne on to Constantinople. The *Via Egnatia* began at the port of Dyrrachion / Durrës or Aulona / Vlorë on the eastern coast of the Adriatic. From there it proceeded to Achrida / Ohrid, passed via Bodena / Edessa to Thessalonike, and continued on via Philippi, Rhaidestos / Tekirdağ and Selymbria / Silivri to Constantinople.⁶⁶³

Another highway ran along the southern bank of the Danube, starting from Sirmium, and passing through Belgrade and Viminacium (near present-day Kostolac) to end at Dorostolon / Silistra. It was connected to the coastal road that ran along the Black Sea and led from the mouth of the Danube through Varna, Mesembria / Nesebar and Debeltos / Debelt to Constantinople. From Debeltos, a branch continued in a southerly-south-easterly direction to the interregional node of Adrianople. From

⁶⁶⁰ SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 76, 353.

⁶⁶¹ HARVEY, Economic expansion, 220—221; LAIOU – MORRISON, Byzantine economy, 136—137; GEROLYMATOU, Αγορές και εμπόριο, 144—149; LAIOU, Regional networks, 136—137.

⁶⁶² GEROLYMATOU, Αγορές και εμπόριο, 141—144; ŽIVOJINOVIĆ, Trade of Mount Athos, 104—106; CURTA, Southeastern Europe, 206—209.

⁶⁶³ KISLINGER, Verkehrswege, 76; POPOVIC, Von Budapest nach Istanbul, 103—105 and 15, map 1; LOLOS, Εγνατία Οδός, 34—39 with map, 72—73, 82—89, 102—104, 119—120, 133—134; SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 408—410.

there, all points of the horizon lay open: in the east was Constantinople with its Thracian hinterland, in the south the littoral of Thrace and the *Via Egnatia*, and in the west the road that traversed the Rhodope mountain range.⁶⁶⁴

Two other roadways were also of importance: the first started at Naissos, continuing to the south via Scupi / Skoupoi / Skopje and entering the plateau of Pelagonia by way of Heraclea Lynkestis / Boutelion / Bitola. From there, the route continued southwards, and before reaching Kozani turned to the east towards Berroia and Thessalonike.⁶⁶⁵ The second started at the Danube and the valley of the Velika Morava outside of Belgrade, running southwards to Naissos and Skoupoi, where it met the valley of the Axios. It went past Stobi / Stoboi and via the narrow pass of the Axios headed south to the Aegean across the plain of Thessaloniki.⁶⁶⁶

The Avar wars, the Slav invasions, and finally the settlement of the Bulgarians north of the Rhodope (c. 580 – 681), led to a serious interruption in land communications for many decades. The *Basilike Odos* was now under the control of various Slavic groups, while the Bulgarians and the Byzantines had effective control of only the southernmost part of the highway from Adrianople to Constantinople. Imperial control over the *Via Egnatia* was no better, with Justinian II managing to secure the segment between Thessalonike and the capital at great cost in 688. The establishment of the military command of Thrace in 680 / 681 showed a gradual return to some form of normality, and a century later Empress Irene was able to make a ceremonious tour of the region of Thrace, reaching Beroe, Philipoupolis and Anchialos exclusively by land. The highways leading to the capital had perhaps been repaired and secured against brigandage, the latter being sporadically present until the early ninth century.⁶⁶⁷ The western segment of the *Via Egnatia* saw a temporary revival during the ninth century, but the delicate relations between Byzantium and Bulgaria from 894 up to 1018 meant that it could be used only during times of peace. After 1018, and with brief interruptions until 1204, the *Via Egnatia* served as a military and trading axis between the West and the East along with the *Basilike Odos*.⁶⁶⁸

As far as secondary roads are concerned, the archives of the Mount Athos monasteries preserve unique information for the Chalkidike peninsula, for Thessalonike and its inland, and for the region of the lower Strymonas. The picture that appears is of a surprisingly dense network of local roads, some

⁶⁶⁴ SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 132—135; 136, 142—144; KÜLZER, Ostthrakien, 194—195, 197, 199—203.

⁶⁶⁵ KODER, Χώρος, 98.

⁶⁶⁶ AVRAMEA, Επικοινωνίες, 135—138, 140—143, 145—146; KODER, Χώρος 96—99; KISLINGER, Reisen und Verkehrswege, 232—233.

⁶⁶⁷ Life of Gregor Dekapolites, 21 (86, 1—4 MAKRIS).

⁶⁶⁸ OIKONOMIDES, *Via Egnatia*, 9—13; BELKE, Roads and bridges, 297—298; IDEM, Roads and travel, 77—79; KISLINGER, Reisen und Verkehrswege, 352—354; SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 81; KÜLZER, Ostthrakien, 105—106; McCORMICK, Origins, 559—562; SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 111.

of them paved. Although it is hazardous to generalize on the basis of evidence concerning specific regions only, it can be assumed that the network of main and secondary roads in the territory between Thessalonike and Constantinople was properly maintained because of its strategic importance for the state.⁶⁶⁹

Some useful details on secondary infrastructure along the roads can be found in the *Typikon* written in December 1083 by Gregorios Pakourianos for his religious foundation, the monastery of Theotokos Petritziotissa.⁶⁷⁰ The monastery is located south of Stenimachos / Asenovgrad on one of the two branches of the road that connected Philippopolis with the Aegean littoral. Its real estate was substantial, including three *ξενοδοχεία* for travellers to rest. The first was just outside of Stenimachos on the branches of the road that led to the south: the western at Xantheia (modern-day Xanthi), and the eastern at Mosynopolis, just six kilometres to the west of modern-day Komotini.⁶⁷¹ The second was further to the west at a locality called Marmarion in the vicinity of a bridge that probably crossed the Strymonas,⁶⁷² and the third, *παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὴν καθ' ἡμᾶς μονὴν τοῦ ἁγίου Νικολάου*, probably at a locality on the *Via Egnatia* to the north-east of Rentina.⁶⁷³ Considering the geographical extent of the monastery's property across Macedonia and Thrace, the distribution of the three *xenodocheia* appears to be somewhat uneven. Other criteria must have prevailed when choosing the respective locations: the first *xenodocheion* was close both to the Theotokos Petritziotissa and the settlement of Stenimachos and the most important within the nucleus of the monastery's property. Thus, supplying it with the necessary provisions for its seamless functioning was vital. Furthermore, a traveller making for Stenimachos, or from there continuing on south, faced a journey through the passages of the Rhodope Mountains, a rather difficult task. The hospitable environment of a well-provided *xenodocheion* would have been much appreciated. The other two *xenodocheia* were located along the *Via Egnatia* within a short distance of each other. Located on the most frequented section of the road, they were also established in the vicinity of the Petritziotissa's properties in the region. Their income must have been substantial to cover operating costs. These were significant, with two *modioi* (c. 25, 6 kg) of wheat and two *metres* (c. 20 l) of wine being provided daily for the *xenodocheion* at Stenimachos⁶⁷⁴ whilst the other two were supplied with one *modios* (12,8 kg) of meat and one *metre* (c. 10 l) of wine, respectively. Legumes, vegetables and (roast) meat were a staple for all three inns.⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁶⁹ BELKE, Roads and travel, 86—90.

⁶⁷⁰ For a thorough analysis of the *Typikon* see LEMERLE, Cinq études, 115—191.

⁶⁷¹ GAUTIER, *Typikon du Pakourianos*, 111, 1532—1533.

⁶⁷² “ξενοδοχεῖον τὸ λεγόμενον Μαρμάριον, ὃ ἐστὶ πλησίον τῆς γεφύρας”.

⁶⁷³ GAUTIER, *Typikon du Pakourianos*, 113, 1559—1563.

⁶⁷⁴ GAUTIER, *Typikon du Pakourianos*, 111, 1533—1537.

⁶⁷⁵ GAUTIER, *Typikon du Pakourianos*, 113, 1565—1573.

The most important ports along the northern Aegean coast were Ainos, Makre, Maroneia, Poroi, Polystylon, Neapolis/Christoupolis (modern-day Kavala) and Thessaloniki.⁶⁷⁶ The natural barrier of the Chalkidike peninsula compelled ships to go round it to reach the Thermaic Gulf, as the Roman-built canal of Potidaea, at the narrowest point between the Kassandra peninsula and the mainland, had long fallen into disuse.⁶⁷⁷ To the south of Thessalonike, the port of Kitros was the last stop in the region of Macedonia en route to the coasts of Thessaly and Euboea. Alongside these organised facilities, numerous havens, bays, and coves were used as trading points and shelters from bad weather. The seaports of the coastal Athonite monasteries are a characteristic example. They included a dock, a boatyard for the repair and / or construction of their vessels, and a tower with a double role as a fortification and a storage facility.⁶⁷⁸

Finally, until the (early) modern period the navigable rivers of the northern Aegean coast were the Evros and the Strymonas. Along the Evros, larger ships entered the river at Ainos and sailed up to the node of Adrianoupolis. From there, river boats could continue up to Philippopolis or follow the Tunca up to Kabyle / Kovel and Diampolis / Jambol.⁶⁷⁹ Along the Strymonas, Chrysoupolis was the port of entrance at the estuary of the river. Through the now drained Lake Kerkinitis, river boats navigated northwards and reached the waterside about nine kilometres – as the crow flies – to the south of Serres. Internal navigation across the shores of Kerkinitis is attested in the *Vita* of Athanasios the Athonite⁶⁸⁰ and also during the late Byzantine period. The entire waterway of the Strymonas was used until the late nineteenth century, though with increasing difficulty because of the gradual erosion of the estuary. When the collapsing ruins of ancient Amphipolis came to permanently block access to Kerkinitis, river navigation and trade with the interior came to an end.⁶⁸¹ With the major draining and water-management projects of the twentieth century, the water levels of both the Strymon and the Evros dropped dramatically, and they became unsuitable for navigation except from their deltas.

Settlement patterns

The settlements of Thrace and Macedonia located along the Aegean littoral were dispersed across a region of overall strategic importance because of the natural resources and roads that traversed it. The

⁶⁷⁶ SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 146; KÜLZER, Ostthrakien, 205—206; DADAKE – DOUKATA et al., Ακτές βορείου Αιγαίου, 211—219.

⁶⁷⁷ SAMSARES, Ρωμαϊκή αποικία, 361 with fn. 5 ; SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 541—543: Kasandreia.

⁶⁷⁸ A detailed catalogue of anchorages along the coasts of the Chalkidike peninsula with an attendant map can be found in PAPANKELOS, Λιμάνια και σκάλες, 292—310.

⁶⁷⁹ SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 239—240; IDEM, Makedonien Süd, 1025—1027: Strymon.

⁶⁸⁰ Lives of Athanasios of Athos A 249—252 (120, 1—121, 57 NORET), B 77 (210, 1—211, 47 NORET)

⁶⁸¹ SAMSARES, Κάτω Στρυμόνας, 130—133. SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 203—207: Amphipolis, 356—358: Chrysoupolis.

founding of Thessalonike at a nodal geographical position along the northern sea route of the Aegean created a constellation of cities around the new metropolis that prospered until the third century CE thanks to the *Pax Romana*. From this point on, the continuous waves of invaders – culminating with the Avar and Slav incursions which lasted from the middle of the sixth until the third decade of the seventh century – caused a gradual transformation of the character of these *poleis*.

The first stage of this transformation was a contraction of the urban space behind the – now renovated – antique walls. The second stage included their final shrinkage to fortified *kastra* of considerably reduced scale and civic function, which were used as places of refuge by the rural population. Even Thessalonike did not escape this fate for some decades during the seventh century, although sea communications especially with Constantinople facilitated the continuation of an urban life that retained some of its late antique character.

The countryside was populated by various Slav tribes, initially in a state of war with Byzantium, as is colourfully described in the Miracles of Saint Demetrios. Any attempt to quantify the number of Slavs that ultimately settled across the southern Balkans would be pure speculation. It can only be said that their footprint was significant when we consider the toponymy of Slavic origin that has survived across modern Greece alongside vocabulary additions to rural terminology connected with everyday life. With the beginning of the eighth century, a *modus vivendi* had already been established between the newcomers and the existing population, and about half a century later the acculturation of at least the Slavic elites was underway.⁶⁸² In any case, it must be made clear that the material evidence relating to the period 641 – 741 is scarce for all settlements. Thessalonike hardly survives this general picture with the notable exception of two religious buildings, namely the church of Hagia Sophia, completed around the end of the seventh century⁶⁸³ and the basilica of Saint Demetrios were the embellishment with mosaics and frescos continued through the years.⁶⁸⁴ Most of the archaeological reports date their findings “as belonging to the middle Byzantine period,” and only after the ninth century can we discern specific chronologies with more accuracy.

This observation leads us to the years 1025 – 1095, which are diametrically opposed to the earlier period. The richer written sources along with the thicker material evidence allow us to draw a clearer picture of settlement patterns and their function within the region of Thrace and Macedonia. In Thrace, Adrianople resurfaces as a commercial centre, with Ainos as its seaport. Serres was an important city on the fringes of the Via Egnatia, with Christoupolis as its haven. Bodena and Berroia

⁶⁸² For a thorough analysis of the still hotly-debated issue of the Slavic settlement in Greece, see, CURTA, *Making of the Slavs*, 403–478 with exhaustive references to all literature available up to 2010.

⁶⁸³ For a detailed architectural analysis of the Hagia Sophia of Thessalonike, see, THEOCHARIDOU, *Αγία Σοφία Θεσσαλονίκης*, especially 189–197.

⁶⁸⁴ BAUER, *Stadt und Patron*, 208–209, 242–248.

covered the western approaches to Thessalonike, being at a relatively short distance from the shore. Finally, Kitros and Platamon in the south served as connecting points with central and southern Greece by land and sea. This situation lasted until 1204 when new historical developments would alter once more the regional settlement patterns.

Thessalonike

The central settlement of the region remains to this day Thessalonike. Founded in 316 / 315 BCE near the Eretrian (or Corinthian) city of Therma by the Macedonian king Kassandros, it was named after his wife, Thessalonike, daughter of Phillip II and half-sister of Alexander the Great. Continuously expanding and successively embellished by its Greek and Roman rulers, this city-port entered the Byzantine era as the most important centre in the region of the Aegean. It retained its Hippodamian system until 1917 when the Lower City (*Κάτω Πόλη*) was consumed by fire. When a group of architects under the direction of Ernest Hébrard were assigned to redesign the sites of devastation, they followed the basic principles of the ancient urban plan. This included three main arteries with a west-to-east orientation (*decumani*) and more than twenty vertical *cardines* running north-to-south. The three horizontal arteries were the *Via Regia* / *Mese Odos* / *Leophoros* – also known as the *Decumanus Maximus* (present-day Egnatia Street) – Philippou Street, and Agiou Demetriou Street. Most of the *cardines* can be identified with the modern vertical streets lying to the north of Agiou Demetriou Street. The main market occupied the *Roman Agora* / *Megalophoros* in the quarter between the Leophoros and today's Philippou Street.⁶⁸⁵ Three harbours already existed in the early Byzantine period, and were used at least until the thirteenth century: the Constantinian port with a commercial and naval function located in the southwest of the city, the *Ekklesiastike Skala* probably at the south-eastern end of the sea wall near the Leukos Pyrgos (i.e. White Tower), and the *Kellarion* in one of the coves out to the east.⁶⁸⁶ After years of neglect during the early Roman era, the walls of Thessalonike were rebuilt from the ground up in the middle of the third century, receiving enhancements and repairs throughout the Byzantine period. An acropolis was added probably in the tenth century.⁶⁸⁷

Thessalonike was the urban centre *par excellence* of the western provinces of the empire, and an administrative, military, financial and cultural centre of major importance – the widespread cult of

⁶⁸⁵ AKRIVOPOULOU, Τοπογραφικά Θεσσαλονίκης, 142—146; ANTONARAS, Byzantine Thessaloniki, 41—43; TOURTA, Thessalonike, 75—80; RAPTES, Εμπορικός χάρτης, 112—115. SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 159: Leophoros.

⁶⁸⁶ ANTONARAS, Byzantine Thessaloniki, 17—18, 43; AKRIVOPOULOU, Τοπογραφικά Θεσσαλονίκης, 148—153; EADEM, Ekklesiastike Skala, 27—31; MARKE, Βυζαντινά λιμάνια Θεσσαλονίκης, 174—179; LEIVADIOTE, Λιμάνι Θεσσαλονίκης, 163—169. SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 150: Ekbolos.

⁶⁸⁷ ANTONARAS, Byzantine Thessaloniki, 17—18, 43. SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 122—125.

Saint Demetrios adding even more significance to the city.⁶⁸⁸ It avoided the misfortunes of the Balkan provinces thanks to its unhindered sea communication with the rest of the empire. Surviving a series of Avar and Slav sieges during the late sixth and seventh centuries, the city was on a steady ascent that was slowed down only temporarily by the Arab plundering in 904 and the wars between Byzantium and Bulgaria up to 1018. With the ending of this long-lasting conflict, Thessalonike entered a new period of prosperity that, despite setbacks, would endure until the second half of the fourteenth century.⁶⁸⁹

Other settlements in western Thrace and Macedonia

East of Thessalonike

Setting Thessalonike at the centre of the map, I will touch on further important settlements for trade and communication along the northern shore of the Aegean from east to west. Adrianople was the most important centre of the Thracian hinterland. Founded as Uscudama by the ancient Thracians at the junction of the rivers Tunca, Ardas and Evros, it gained in significance during the rule of emperor Hadrian – hence its name ever since. A strategic node, it became the key settlement of the region of Thrace and at times the bone of contention of geopolitical instability. Its importance as a production and trading centre must have been substantial, since the city is mentioned in the *chrysoboullon* of 1082 for the Venetians, though generally poorly attested in both written and material evidence.⁶⁹⁰

To the south of Adrianople, Ainos, centred on a fortified hilltop, was a much-frequented station on the way to Thessalonike. Lying on the coast and surrounded by lagoons to the south and west, and from the lower reaches and the Delta of Evros to the north and northwest, it was separated from the Aegean by lake Dalyan (Dalyan Gölü). An ancient Greek colony, Ainos appears more systematically in the sources after the middle of the twelfth century. In view of the fact that the Evros was navigable up to Adrianople for larger vessels, and up to Philippopolis with smaller, the city profited from a position that facilitated the connection of eastern Thrace's interior with the rest of the Aegean. A combination of written evidence and archaeological research has allowed for the approximate identification of the sites of the city's harbours on the south-eastern and north-eastern sides of the settlement.⁶⁹¹

⁶⁸⁸ ANTONARAS, Byzantine Thessaloniki, 41; TOURTA, Thessalonike, 79, 83–85; BAKIRTZIS, Tomb of Saint Dimitrios, 183; BAUER, Stadt und Patron, 284–287; 399–400. SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 147–149.

⁶⁸⁹ SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 115–120.

⁶⁹⁰ SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 161–163.

⁶⁹¹ BRÜCKNER – SCHMIDTS et al., Häfen von Ainos, 53–63; 69–73; SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 170–173; SCHMIDTS, Ainos and Anastasioupolis, 222–225.

Makre and Maroneia were two further ports further along the coast, while – across Lake Vistonida and Porto Lagos Bay – Poroi, Peritheorion and Polystylon formed a triangle of safe havens and emporia.⁶⁹²

Drama, Philippi, and Christoupolis (present-day Kavala) formed a further triad of settlements. They are located along the vertical axis that connected the Via Egnatia with the hinterland, passing along the ridges of a landlocked alluvial plain. Drama and Philippi are located inland while Christoupolis is on the coast. Drama has been continuously inhabited from the fourth century BCE. In the ancient period, the city's name was *Δραβησκός* / *Daravescos* (lat.) surviving in the contemporary Greek form *Δράμα*. Fortified between the third and sixth centuries, its walls were extensively repaired in the eleventh. The city seems to have been important and prosperous, judging from the construction of the Hagia Sophia basilica in the tenth century and the remains of baths that operated at least until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In the central square of the modern city, coins and ceramics of the middle Byzantine period have been found in considerable quantities, probably originating from a large building in the same location (perhaps the central market?).⁶⁹³

Further to the south, Philippi – initially the Thasian colony of Krenides, founded in 360 / 359 BCE – fell quickly into the hands of Philip II three years later. He established Macedonian settlers and gave the city the name by which it has come down in history. Further additions included a wall with an acropolis, a theatre, and probably a royal mint. The most important and complex undertaking was the drainage of the neighbouring swamps, which allowed the exploitation of the plain. Under Roman rule, a *decumanus maximus* was paved across the city. Its extension led to the port of Philippi, Christoupolis. In 49/50 CE, the apostle Paul founded in the city the first Christian community on European soil,⁶⁹⁴ and a period of almost continuous development ended only with a series of earthquakes in the early seventh century. The settlement survived the transitional period from the seventh to the ninth centuries, probably as an imperial outpost that controlled the northern approaches of the *Via Egnatia*. The acropolis was extensively repaired in the years 963 – 969, and the settlement was revitalised until another earthquake caused the gradual abandonment of the city, with the marshlands regaining the lost ground.⁶⁹⁵ The time had come for Neapolis – the port of Philippi and now renamed Christoupolis – to take over the reigns as regional commercial centre. Also established by the Thasians on a promontory with two natural harbours and numerous bays in its vicinity, it had a

⁶⁹² SOUSTAL, Thrakien: Makre 342—343, Maroneia, 350—351, Poroi, 412, Peritheorion, 394, Polystylon, 408—410; SCHMIDTS, Ainos and Anastasioupolis, 226—228.

⁶⁹³ KARAGIANNE, Βυζαντινοί οικισμοί, 107—108. SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 394—396.

⁶⁹⁴ KOURKOUTIDOU-NIKOLAIDOU, Philippi, 94—101; KARAGIANNE, Βυζαντινοί οικισμοί, 147—151.

⁶⁹⁵ KOURKOUTIDOU-NIKOLAIDOU, Philippi, 101—103; KARAGIANNE, Βυζαντινοί οικισμοί, 151—152. SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 852—860.

defensive system with land and sea walls and an acropolis since the fifth century BCE, with the Romans adding an aqueduct. Extensive repairs took place during the sixth, early tenth and late twelfth centuries. An important port since antiquity, it was frequently used as a transfer station by travellers. Christoupolis, renamed Kavala in the late Byzantine period, would have stood out as a production and trading centre from the ninth century onwards.⁶⁹⁶

On the island of Thasos, the walled city-port of antiquity located in the north-east survived until the seventh century. After a series of catastrophic earthquakes followed by Slavic raids, the inhabitants abandoned the flatland and retreated uphill, fortifying the ancient acropolis. On account of its position along Sea route A, for the rest of its history the island was occasionally the theatre of war between the Arab and Byzantine fleets, and – under the control of the Gattilusi family – it gained some importance in the later period.⁶⁹⁷

Serres was an important administrative, military, and economic centre. It was located on the north-east of Thessalonike, at a junction of roads the most important of which was the vertical axis that connected the *Via Egnatia* with Serdike, running along the ridges of the alluvial plain of Strymonas. The city was built on a hillside to overlook the plain and has been continuously occupied from antiquity onwards. The earlier phase of the surviving walls and the acropolis dates to late antiquity, with subsequent renovations in evidence, including those of the late tenth/early eleventh century. A significant military centre during the Byzantine-Bulgarian conflict, Serres enjoyed a long period of prosperity during the eleventh and twelfth century. The lush plain of Strymon and its tributaries with abundant water reserves secured the cultivation of various crops and fruits. In *Pentegostis* (*Πεντήγοστις*), an area in the vicinity of Serres, the Doukas family had their landed possessions: Anna Komnene characteristically describes “a delightful place with a good supply of cold, drinkable water and apartments big enough to receive an emperor as guest”.⁶⁹⁸ The riverine region also offered abundant catches of fish. The city was an important centre of manufacture and trade. In the eleventh century the splendid basilica of Saints Theodore Tiron and Theodore Stratelates was erected on the ruins of an early Christian church, thus strengthening the importance of Serres as a religious centre.⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁶ DADAKE – DOUKATA et al., Ακτές βορείου Αιγαίου, 214—215; DIMITROUKAS, Reisen und Verkehr, 350—352, 464—465. SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 350—354.

⁶⁹⁷ KARAGIANNE, Βυζαντινοί οικισμοί, 132—137; KODER, Aigaion Pelagos, 291—293, 220—222; DADAKE – DOUKATA et al., Ακτές βορείου Αιγαίου, 215.

⁶⁹⁸ Alexias IX 5 4 (269, 60—62), Anna Komnene, Alexiad, 247: “ἐπιτερπὴ ὄντα καὶ ὕδασι ψυχροῖς καὶ ποτίμοις κατάρρυτον καὶ ἀποχρῶντα οἰκήματα ἔχοντα πρὸς τὴν βασιλέως ὑποδοχὴν”. SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 837.

⁶⁹⁹ KATSONE, Χρονικό των Σερρών, 81, 87—88; KARAGIANNE, Βυζαντινοί οικισμοί, 206—208; PENNA, Σέρρες, 107ff.; for a detailed study of the basilica of the two Saint Theodores see DADAKE, Άγιοι Θεόδωροι Σερρών, 167—218. SOUSTAL Makedonien Süd, 967—977.

Chalkidike

On the peninsula of Chalkidike, Rentina – located on a hilltop above the *Via Egnatia* and the Richios river, which flows out of lake Volve only to enter the gulf of Strymonas, just a few kilometres to the northeast – was a settlement of significant importance. It controlled the passage of the *Via Egnatia* across the north of the Chalkidike, while commanding a full view of the basin of the Volve and Koroneia Lakes. The initial phase of fortification dates to the late Roman period, with a major reconstruction happening during the reign of Justinian I. The walls were repaired and extended in the tenth and twelfth centuries. In the earlier period, the main ecclesiastical building of the settlement – a three-aisle basilica – was also erected. Numerous buildings have been excavated, either single- or two-storey, the latter with a dual function of workshop and dwelling. A sophisticated water-supply system has also been revealed. It included a network of cisterns, some connected through pipes with a dam that collected water from the surrounding streams.⁷⁰⁰

West of Thessalonike

To the west of Thessalonike, Vodena – formerly and subsequently Edessa - was an important station on the route of the *Via Egnatia*, controlling the traffic between northwest and central Macedonia. The city expands on two levels with a difference in altitude between them, as is thrown into relief by the course of the river Edessaïos. The river flows just a few kilometres to the west of the city, becoming a series of waterfalls within the limits of the city. The defensive circuit dates to the early Hellenistic period but with subsequent repairs. Three early Christian basilicas – boasting rich decoration and porticoes, with additional dwellings and commercial stores, and also many surviving ceramics and inscribed tombstones – indicate a prosperous city, with manufacture and trade playing an important part in its economic life. After the Avaro-Slav invasions of the late sixth and early seventh centuries, the settlement contracted to within the limits of the ancient acropolis. A large cemetery of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries testifies to the importance of Vodena, continuing to control the *Via Egnatia* and other secondary routes and becoming a bone of contention between the imperial forces and the Bulgarian armies. From the middle period only the remnants of a small house survive.⁷⁰¹

Berroia was one of the most important cities in the Macedonian kingdom, located only a few kilometres from the political and religious centre of Aigai / Vergina. The city was first fortified during

⁷⁰⁰ KARAGIANNE, Βυζαντινοί οικισμοί, 127—129; the excavation reports of Rentina have been published in thorough detail by MOUTSOPOULOS, Πεντίνα I—IV, with at least one further volume pending. On the fortification, see MOUTSOPOULOS, Πεντίνα II, 67—134; for the water supply, 135—179; and for a general introduction to the location and locality of the settlement and its historical development, 34—65. See also, SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 301, 935—937.

⁷⁰¹ KARAGIANNE, Βυζαντινοί οικισμοί, 176—180; KRAVARI, Macédoine occidentale, 68—70. SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 404—408.

the Hellenistic period, and it retained in its general form the grid plan of antiquity into the Middle Ages. The walls were extended and renovated in the Roman and Byzantine periods, including a reconstruction programme by Basil II in 1016. A network of hydraulic works made in the late first / early second century supplied the city with water from nearby rivers and streams. Excavations have revealed a palimpsest of richly decorated secular and religious buildings, constructed and then successively reused. Such was the bath complex of the third and fourth centuries that it was transformed into two basilicas in the fourth and fifth, and finally into a ceramics workshop and a cemetery in the twelfth century. Within the historic urban fabric of Berroia thirty-eight churches are preserved, all with wall paintings dating from the eleventh century onwards. Dozens of burials have been excavated covering a chronological range from the tenth to the thirteenth century. Many of the deceased were accompanied by precious personal belongings, including earrings, bracelets and rings, which would indicate a rather prosperous society.⁷⁰²

The southernmost settlements of Macedonia were Kitros and Platamon. Kitros – ancient Pydna, where the final battle between the kingdom of Macedon and Rome was fought in 168 BCE – was located at the entrance of the Thermaic Gulf on the shore. The late-antique walls were reinforced during the Byzantine period, while the episcopal church of the tenth century was built on the floorplan of the early Christian Basilica. Important findings outside the fortified settlement include a small public bath, an inn, houses, and workshops. The bath and the inn are related – the first being part of the latter, (re)constructed at the end of the eleventh century and continuing to operate until the end of the twelfth/beginning of the thirteenth century. The ceramic and metal workshops were operational from the eleventh century onwards and include interesting finds such as a ceramic oven and an iron-casting vat along with iron rust, worn bricks and firebricks. Kitros was sacked by the Latins after 1204 and consequently diminished in size and importance until its fall to the Ottomans at the end of the fourteenth century.⁷⁰³

Finally, established at the main artery that connected central Greece with its northern parts, Platamon is situated on a hill right above the seashore. It offered an unhindered view within an arc that extended from Mount Ossa and the geographical border of Thessaly to the south, right up to the Thermaic Gulf in the northeast, including the entire area between mount Pelion and the peninsula of Kassandra, itself a part of the Chalkidike peninsula. The precinct, surrounded by a curtain wall, is attended by a second bulwark with towers that covered the acropolis with an impressive central keep

⁷⁰² KARAGIANNE, Βυζαντινοί οικισμοί, 110—113; PETKOS, Berroia, 104—113; KRAVARI, Macédoine occidentale, 63—67. SOUSTAL Makedonien Süd, 283—290.

⁷⁰³ KARAGIANNE, Βυζαντινοί οικισμοί, 191—194; KRAVARI, Macédoine occidentale, 75—76. SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 573—576.

in the form of an octagonal tower to complete the fortification. This tower dominates the landscape to this day. The initial phase of the castle can be dated to the tenth century, sitting on the remains of an earlier settlement. Later repairs and additions made up to the Ottoman period give the fortress its final appearance. A three-aisle basilica of the eleventh century addressed the spiritual needs of the inhabitants, who lived in single-storey houses with cobbled alleys connecting them. Many burials attest the continuous occupation of the fortified hill and its surroundings up to the seventeenth century.⁷⁰⁴

Trade patterns

Natural resources

Macedonia and Thrace are rich in natural resources that allowed for the development of a diverse regional economy. The available minerals included gold, silver, copper, iron, lead, and alum. Gold and silver were intensively mined from Mount Pangaion and in the region of Philippi during the ancient period, although information concerning their exploitation during Byzantine times is lacking. It seems that the feverish rate of extraction after the middle of the fourth century BCE led to the exhaustion of the available deposits at some point during the early Roman years. Gold was also collected along the riverfront of Echedoros and Aliakmon in the form of mud lumps, which were then flushed with water to separate out the precious metal. Copper and iron were extracted in various locations in eastern and western Macedonia, while alum is attested after the fourteenth century in the region of Maroneia. Marble of high quality was present on the island of Thasos and the mountains of Pangaion and Menoikion. The regional clay deposits were also rich.⁷⁰⁵

Flora and fauna

The region had an abundance of flora and fauna. The mountains were covered with dense forests, very suitable for exploitation including for carpentry and shipbuilding. Beech, oak, elm, and dogwood belonged to this category of trees, while chestnut and walnut offered their fruit. As far as crops were concerned, these included the wide range found all around the Aegean: cereals, wheat, barley, and rye. Viniculture had always been present.⁷⁰⁶ Extensive grassland and meadows favoured animal breeding, and horses were the animals par excellence across Macedonia and Thrace. Their breeding continued to play a crucial role during the Roman and Byzantine period, supplying the army with horses and pack mules. Bovines including the water buffalo, sheep and goats offered dairy, meat, and skins, and

⁷⁰⁴ KARAGIANNE, Βυζαντινοί οικισμοί, 195—197. SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 875—878.

⁷⁰⁵ SAMSARES, Ανατολική Μακεδονία, 32—42; IDEM, Δυτική Μακεδονία, 18—20; SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 151—152. For a detailed geological study of the minerals of the region, see VOUDOURIS, Ορυκτά Απ. Μακεδονίας – Θράκης, 68—74. SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 811—812: Pangaion.

⁷⁰⁶ SAMSARES, Δυτική Μακεδονία, 16—18; IDEM, Ανατολική Μακεδονία, 24—32.

were also used as traction animals. Apiculture produced honey and wax, while fishing was present along the rivers and their estuaries and on the coast. Typical fish included eel, smelt, anchovies, trout, and molluscs – mainly octopus, squid, cuttlefish, and mussels.⁷⁰⁷

The siege, the famine, and the Saint

There is scarce reference in the written sources concerning trade in the region of Thrace and Macedonia for the years 641 – 741. What there is comes from the Miracles of Saint Demetrios, the hagiographic source par excellence of the period. As such, the little information provided is confined to the historical context of the troubled period, c. 580 to 680. This means that we do not have a picture of trade at times of peace and stability, but only for times of emergency and, in particular, famine. Inevitably, the only type of products referred to in the *Miracula* are staples – notably grain, the dearth of which had severe repercussions for the population of Thessalonike, which were always resolved after the intervention of the city’s patron saint. It is difficult to tell from the surviving evidence whether there was any kind of *annona civica* arranged for Thessalonike. “Shipowners” (ναύκληροι) and “merchants” (ἔμποροι) are mentioned interchangeably, transporting and selling their merchandise apparently in unrestricted conditions until the 620s. The production of staples from the hinterland must have been substantial and crucial in terms of meeting the city’s regular needs.⁷⁰⁸ An indication of this comes from the fact that, under siege from the Avars and/or Slavs, famine became imminent. In the case of the Slav siege of 676 – 678, which caused yet another famine, the picture is more complicated. According to the *Miracula*’s narrative, the emperor had here given explicit orders to the authorities of Thessalonike for the prompt storage of provisions, and this was indeed what happened since the “public (i.e., state) granaries” were filled with wheat. Famine broke out after “those responsible for the administration of the city sold the reserves to the foreign ships (i.e., merchants) for seven *modioi* for a (gold) *nomisma*”.⁷⁰⁹

This passage requires some further analysis. It is not clear whether the seven *modioi per nomisma* were being sold in this instance under black market conditions. We may say at least that our source does not imply this. Considering the testimony of the exiled pope Martin I in around 655 – commenting on the price of grain in Cherson to the effect that the normal price was four *modioi per nomisma* – we can assume that in Thessalonike, and under the circumstances, there was a regular supply of wheat. This led to what was presumably an illegal “sell-off” of grain from the state granaries

⁷⁰⁷ SOUSTAL, Thrakien, 149—151.

⁷⁰⁸ LAIOU, Ανταλλαγές και εμπόριο, 476—477.

⁷⁰⁹ Miracles of Demetrius 243—244 (211, 27—212, 4 LEMERLE): “κελεύσαντος τοῦ ἐναποθέτου τῆς πόλεως φροντίσαι... καίτοι ὄντος ἐν τοῖς ἐνθάδε δημοσίοις ὠρείοις σίτου οὐκ ὀλιγοστοῦ, οἱ τῆς διοικήσεως τῆς πόλεως τότε λαχόντες, κατὰ ἑπτὰ μοδίων τοῦ νομίσματος ἐπὶ τῶν ξένων πλοίων κατέπρασαν.”

on the eve of the siege. Hunger was the inevitable result of this action. When the emperor subsequently sent ten warships filled with necessary supplies, the crews of the vessels engaged in overtly black-market activities, compelling buyers to give away not only their jewels but even mattresses and clothes in return for items of foodstuff. Furthermore, house investigations were ordered by the authorities – though it is not clarified which authorities, whether local or imperial – and these were probably conducted by the sailors of the imperial fleet. It seems that the richer citizens had hoarded the sums won from the selling of grain or they had hidden reserves. When the situation became extreme, the administrators and citizens decided to load whatever valuables they had left onto the ten vessels and some *monoxyla*, and then to sail for Thessaly where the valuables could be exchanged for provisions from the Belegezetai Slavs. In the end, the emperor sent 60.000 *modioi* (c. 768 t) of wheat in contrast to the calculation of the city authorities who had minimised the quantity needed to 5.000 *modioi* (c. 64 t), probably to cover up their punishable actions. Hence, it may be hypothesised that the illegally sold and exported wheat amounted to more than 5.000 *modioi*.⁷¹⁰

We are faced with a complex situation where the people in charge of the city affairs took advantage of their position by making money out of an extreme condition thus creating an even harsher one – namely, widespread famine among their poorer fellows. The crews of the warships that arrived with provisions did not behave any better: indeed, they created a “regular” black market in which the personal belongings of the buyers were used as a medium of exchange.⁷¹¹ The social and professional identity of the members of the local authorities that exported the wheat illegally is not given. On the other hand, events described in a hagiographic text filled with the *topoi* used in the genre should always be treated with caution, although the historical core of the narrative is indisputable. The editor of the *Miracula*, P. Lemerle, assumed that the members of the city’s government came from the trading class.⁷¹² He uses this to explain the selling and export of the wheat from the state granaries, a facility to which – at least in theory – only a limited group of people would have had access.

In my opinion, the whole episode as it has come down to us can be understood as follows. Though the blockade of Thessaloniki was imminent, the local authorities failed immediately to stop the sale and export of the grain. They might have thought that there were enough reserves available – hence the relatively normal selling price of seven *modioi per nomisma*, which was not a profiteering one.⁷¹³ The anonymous redactor makes it perfectly clear that the state granaries were full before the

⁷¹⁰ Miracles of Demetrius 251–254, 281 (213, 22–214, 13, 221, 3–11 LEMERLE). LEMERLE, *Miracles II*, 127.

⁷¹¹ STATHAKOPOULOS, *Famine and pestilence*, 61.

⁷¹² LEMERLE, *Miracles II*, 118–119; LAIOU, *Ανταλλαγές και εμπόριο*, 477.

⁷¹³ Miracles of Demetrius 243 (211, 17–26 LEMERLE). MORRISSON – CHEYNET, *Τιμές και αμοιβές*, 633 and 641 with table E’ and older literature; STATHAKOPOULOS, *Famine and pestilence*, 357, 393–394; MALINKOUCDES, “Λιμός” της Θεσσαλονίκης, 56 ft. 7.

siege, leading one to suppose that the officials in charge hadn't failed to secure the necessary surplus. It might be possible also that they were not taking into account the influx of numerous refugees from the countryside, the presence of whom is also implied. In any case, it proved a fatal miscalculation. When the siege became protracted, those who were able to store large quantities of staples did so, leading to an artificial shortage of wheat. As a result, famine descended, even if its extent cannot be precisely determined. The whole affair culminated in the series of events described above, ending with the shipment from Constantinople of a quantity of wheat sufficient enough to cover the needs of the inhabitants.

Indeed, the state granaries or warehouses that are the “silent protagonist” of the story can possibly be identified with the building complex discovered within the site of the Constantinian harbour: three elongated gallery buildings have been excavated and identified as the public *horeion* and/or *apotheke* of the early and middle Byzantine periods. They were probably erected in the middle of the fourth century, and then extensively reconstructed in the seventh or eighth. The three galleries have been partially preserved at 88 m in length and 62 m in width, while the original dimensions are thought to have been 180 m by 95 m. The orientation of the structures offers a direct relationship with the main gate of the city to the north and also with the port to the south. Most likely they also had a storey that housed the administrative services of the *horeion/apotheke*. The archaeological stratum from the seventh/eighth centuries and subsequently includes survivals of the LRA 1 and probably BGA variants used for the transportation of oil and wine, along with ostraca of Glazed White Ware.⁷¹⁴

Thessalonike as a centre of production

Thessalonike was of course a major centre of production, and the remains of workshops of all trades and professions have been excavated – a case in point being the *Χαλκευτική Στοά* (i.e., “loggia of the coppersmiths”) to the west of the ancient agora on the Leophoros. Kilns and pottery manufactures are recorded inside the city in the vicinity of the port, and outside the city in proximity to the coast. Textile production is attested from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. Weaving of linen, cotton and wool took place in households and workshops, and in 1155 Benjamin of Tudela noted that five hundred Jews were occupied with sericulture. Woodworking is also attested in the ninth century. Basket and mat-weaving, along with the production of flax and hemp ropes, were clearly already substantial industries in the city. Lime kilns, ceramic workshops, metal refineries and workshops, glass workshops, tanneries, dyeworks, mosaic workshops, numerous other unidentified types of workshop with evidence of water usage (or not), wine presses and water mills, all saw different levels of use

⁷¹⁴ CHATZEOANNIDES – TSAMISES, *Λιμενικές αποθήκες*, 187—197.

across different periods. Amphorae dated between the seventh and the end of the twelfth centuries have been excavated in various locations. They range from LRA 2 survivals and BGA of the seventh to ninth centuries to the “standard” Günsenin types of the tenth to twelfth centuries. Polychrome and glazed White Ware from Constantinople have also been discovered.⁷¹⁵

Trade in eleventh century Thessalonike

Thessalonike was the centre of local, (inter)regional and international trade during the years 1025 – 1095. The most detailed source on the great trade fair of Saint Demetrios that took place in the vicinity of Thessalonike is the satirical work, *Τιμαρίων*. The exact date of composition is unknown, as is the writer – although the name of Nikolaos Kallikles, scholar, and physician at the Komnenian court – has been proposed. If correct, *Timarion* was written in the first half of the twelfth century.⁷¹⁶ It seems to describe the fair as it had developed in that period, but we know that a fair or market centred on the feast day of 26th October was held inside the city from at least the beginning of the tenth century, starting eight days before the feast day and ending eight days afterwards.⁷¹⁷ After the second decade of the eleventh century, the geopolitical situation was much more auspicious for the expansion of trade across the central and northern Balkans. Particularly after the conversion of the basic tax from kind to cash in the territories of the former Bulgarian kingdom, the rural population of the region had no choice but to sell their surplus in the market to obtain the cash necessary for the payment of taxes. Despite immediately sparking widespread rebellion, in the long run the decision led to the incorporation of the northern Balkans into a wider trade network.

In geographical terms, the nearest and most accessible node of this network was Thessalonike with its large market and harbour. The Petcheneg wars must have caused distress to the system, stabilising only with their defeat in 1091. However, the overall growth rate should be viewed as positive, leading ultimately to the boom of the twelfth century. Thus, the development of the great fair of Saint Demetrios described in *Timarion* had its origins back in the second half of the eleventh century at the latest. The site of the fair was located outside the city walls in a somewhat systematic arrangement. The merchant’s booths were arranged facing each other, set out in parallel rows. These extended a long way, forming a broad walkway down the middle, so that visitors could move about unhindered. Smaller vertical rows bifurcated from the main avenue, reminiscent of “a centipede with a very long body showing innumerable little feet under its belly.” Merchants were of various

⁷¹⁵ Benjamin of Tudela, 11. For an overview with additional literature up to 2019, see ANTONARAS, Byzantine Thessaloniki, 94ff.; LAIOU, Regional networks, 136–137; RAPTES, Εμπορικός χάρτης, 106–108.

⁷¹⁶ Pseudo-Lucian, *Timarion*, 25–31 (introduction ROMANO); *Timarion*, 28–37 (BALDWIN); *Timarion*, 19–21 (VLACHAKOS).

⁷¹⁷ RITTER, Panegyric markets, 373.

ethnicities, including Bulgarians, Italians, Venetians, Spaniards, Portuguese, and Franks. They are mentioned in the text with their “proper” archaic names: “Mysians, who are our neighbours as far as the Danube and Scythia, Campanians, Italians in general, Iberians, Lusitanians and Transalpine Celts.” Even with a touch of rhetorical exaggeration, it seems that the fair was an attraction for merchants across the Mediterranean.

Merchandise sold at the fair included clothing products “from Boeotia and the Peloponnese and from Italy which are brought to the Greeks with merchant ships”. In this passage the high-quality silks of Thebes, Corinth and southern Italy are clearly implied. Fine furniture from the Muslim countries namely “Phoenicia, Egypt, Spain and the Pillars of Hercules” was brought (i.e., imported) directly from the merchants to “old Macedonia and Thessalonike”. The Euxeinos Pontos brought its own merchandise to Constantinople and then to Thessalonike, “conveyed by large numbers of horses and mules”. This last passage reveals an interesting detail, namely the fact that products from the Black Sea region had to be cleared first in the capital and then forwarded to other markets. It is certain that even in the twelfth century, merchandise from this region was managed under special status by the state authorities, indicating that trade across the Euxeinos Pontos was still under close Byzantine control. Logistics must have also played a role in this itinerary, since it would have been easier to transport the merchandise by land following the relatively secure Via Egnatia with its maintained infrastructure. Indeed, the “large numbers of horses and mules” that carried the commodities affirm that transport by land between Constantinople and Thessalonike was deemed more advantageous and profitable than sea transport. Finally, the fair included an astonishing number of animals such as horses, cattle, sheep, and pigs. Man’s best friend came along barking, “following their masters as a defence against wolves and thieves”.⁷¹⁸

The great fair of Thessalonike was thus the most important in the Balkan region. The description in the *Timarion* mentions a wide range of merchandise, ranging from animals and likely their products, to clothing and imported furniture, in all probability made from rare and exotic materials. This indicates consumers willing to spend a considerable amount on niche products, indirectly confirming the affluence of some social classes in Thessalonike and its region. Other more permanent markets in the city included that situated in the *Megalophoros*, another in the *Phoros of Stauriou* around Agios Menas and which was located close to the port, and that by the Kassandreia gate on the site of the former Hippodrome where transactions between Thessalonians and the

⁷¹⁸ Pseudo-Lucian, *Timarion* 5—6 (53, 114—55, 164 ROMANO); *Timarion*, 44—45 (BALDWIN). VRYONIS, *Panegyris*, 202—204; RAPTES, *Εμπορικός χάρτης*, 120—122; RITTER, *Glaube und Geld*, 148.

inhabitants of Kalamaria took place.⁷¹⁹ An additional fair in Stenemachos is also mentioned in the *Typikon* of Pakourianos.⁷²⁰

The periphery

Other regions of Macedonia and Thrace specialised in specific forms of production. The “region of Strymonas” – and likely the territory of the *thema Strymonos* – is mentioned in the *Book of the Eparch* as a manufacturer of processed linen along with Trebizond and Kerasous.⁷²¹ Serres, the capital of the *thema Strymonos*, was during the tenth century an important centre for the manufacture and trading of glazed pottery and textiles, including dyes. Although much of the evidence comes from the thirteenth century onwards, it may be assumed that these economic activities were in train from the beginning of the tenth century at the latest.⁷²²

Monasteries were also important centres of economic activity. The Theotokos Petritziotissa was endowed with extensive property across the region of Macedonia. Unfortunately, only a brief list has come down to us, which comprised villages – including Xanthe – estates, a courtyard in Mosynopolis, two monasteries, and other properties. At the end of the eleventh and for most of the twelfth century, the Theotokos Petritziotissa doubtlessly benefited from the overall economic development in the region and the increased volume of trade that came with this.⁷²³ However, the most important religious institution with a strong economic footprint was the monastic community of Mount Athos. Already in the earliest stage of organised coenobitic life, monasteries had engaged in commercial activities.

At the end of the tenth century, Megiste Laura, Iviron, and Vatopedi⁷²⁴ had recourse to a considerable commercial fleet, along with the infrastructure to support it. From the very beginning, the monastery of Megiste Laura had its own vessel (or vessels)⁷²⁵ and, soon enough, its founder Athanasios constructed an artificial harbour on the nearest shore – a steep and rocky cove with precipitous ledges that required extreme caution when approached.⁷²⁶ Over the next decades, the monastery acquired property overseas – namely on the islands of Skyros, *Gymnopelagision* (or Kyra Panagia), and *Neon* (present-day Agios Eustratios) – along with an annual state subsidy (σολέμνιον) of 244 nomismata,

⁷¹⁹ ANTONARAS, Byzantine Thessaloniki, 56—59; GEROLYMATOU, Αγορές και εμπόριο, 144—149; RAPTES, Εμπορικός χάρτης, 117—120. SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 510—511: Kalamaria.

⁷²⁰ GAUTIER, Typikon du Pakourianos, 131, 1842.

⁷²¹ Eparchenbuch 9 1 (106, 420—423 KODER).

⁷²² KATSONE, Χρονικό των Σεργίων, 91—92.

⁷²³ GAUTIER, Typikon du Pakourianos, 35, 257—41, 362, 127, 1774—131, 1844. LEMERLE, Cinq études, 188—191; LAIOU, Regional networks, 130—134.

⁷²⁴ SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 266—269: Batopedion, 491—495: Iberon, 655—659: Laura.

⁷²⁵ Lives of Athanasios of Athos, A 90 (42, 16—18 NORET), B 30 (159, 14—16 NORET). ŽIVOJINOVIĆ, Trade of Mount Athos, 102.

⁷²⁶ Lives of Athanasios of Athos, A 108 (51, 1—8 NORET), B 35 (166, 7—21, 167, 39—45 NORET).

later increased to 488 nomismata.⁷²⁷ At the end of 984, Megiste Laura received a tax exemption for a ship with a capacity of 6.000 modioi (c. 102 m³), which was at once generously donated to the monastery of Iviron.⁷²⁸ In 985, the latter received the right to build a dwelling for sailors in the port of Galeagra, located in a bay roughly in the “middle” of the eastern coast of the Athos peninsula (εἰς τὸν ὄρμον τῆς Μέσης). This bay was held in common by all the monasteries.⁷²⁹ Shortly afterwards, the monastery of Ioannes Prodromos of Galeagra was founded in its vicinity, and in 1036 the monastery was already in possession of four boats and one ship.⁷³⁰

By the middle of the eleventh century, these monasteries were engaging in trading activities which included the production and export of cereals, oil, vegetables, firewood, lumber, pine and pitch.⁷³¹ Initially the substance of this trade stemmed from the surplus of their constantly expanding fields, but soon enough, it seems, they started to produce specifically for the market. The gradual establishment of *metochia*, i.e., monastic dependencies across Macedonia and Thrace – and especially in Thessalonike – boosted regional trade further. These dependencies with their property, usually fields for crops and vineyards, were of major importance for the economic life of the city in which the *metochion* was located. By engaging directly in local commerce, *metochia* were avoiding the burden of long-distance transport risks and expenses, thus increasing their profit. At the end of the eleventh century, the monasteries’ area of activity expanded from Thessalonike to Ainos, and further to Constantinople – that is, the whole northern Aegean coast, with Peritheorion and Christoupolis acting as nodes for this unified interregional network.⁷³²

At the same time, new players came to be added to the trading network of the northern Aegean shore. After 1082, the Venetians were allowed to trade under certain conditions across specific cities in the region: namely, Adrianoupolis, Peritheorion, Chrysoupolis and Thessalonike itself.⁷³³ Thus, the gradual incorporation of Macedonia and Thrace into a network of international trade was accelerated, and the effects of this development are obvious in the description provided in the *Timarion* some decades later.

⁷²⁷ Actes de Lavra I, 125, 28—25 (n. 10), 158, 2—159, 9 (n. 20). DÖLGER – MÜLLER – BEIHAMMER, Regesten I 1, 2 117—118 (n. 699a), 146 (n. 744).

⁷²⁸ Actes d’Iviron I, 139, 22—23 (n. 6). DÖLGER – MÜLLER – BEIHAMMER, Regesten I 1, 2 174 (n. 768)

⁷²⁹ Actes d’Iviron I, 150, 46—48, 51—52 (n. 7); Actes de Lavra I, 176, 32. SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 433—434.

⁷³⁰ Actes d’Iviron I, 239, 44 (n. 25); Actes de Saint-Pantéléémon, 48, 6—49, 13 (n. 4). ŽIVOJINOVIĆ, Trade of Mount Athos, 103; SOUSTAL, Wirtschaft und Handelsleben, 276.

⁷³¹ ŽIVOJINOVIĆ, Trade of Mount Athos, 102; SOUSTAL, Wirtschaft und Handelsleben, 276—277.

⁷³² ŽIVOJINOVIĆ, Trade of Mount Athos, 104—106; SOUSTAL, Wirtschaft und Handelsleben, 277—278. The efforts of the state to regulate the trading activities of the monasteries will be examined below.

⁷³³ POZZA – RAVEGNANI, Trattati, 40 (n. 2). GEROLYMATOU, Αγορές και εμπόριο, 149—151; LAIOU, Regional networks, 134—135; LILIE, Handel und Politik, 54—55.

The role of the state

Control and taxation

According to the sigillographic evidence, the administrative system of the *apothekai* and their *kommerkiarioi* was introduced along the littoral of Macedonia and Thrace in the second decade of the eighth century. The public granaries of Thessalonike and the officials responsible for their administration are mentioned in the Miracles of Saint Demetrios in conjunction with the Slav siege of 676 – 678 and the resultant famine that broke out because of the mismanagement of the grain reserves. It can be assumed that already in this period the granaries were under the authority of the *kommerkiarioi*, although it is more likely that this responsibility fell to an *horeiaros* or *horeiarioi* along with local clerks. In any case, an anonymous *genikos kommerkiarios* of the *apotheke* of Thessalonike is mentioned for the first time on his seal for the year 712/713. In 734 the *apotheke* and its *kommerkiarios* were replaced with the *basilika kommerkia* of Thessalonike.⁷³⁴

During the ninth and tenth centuries, the *basilika kommerkia* – later replaced again by *kommerkiarioi* – continued to function in a Thessalonike that was regaining its importance as an economic centre. The restoration of Byzantine control across the southern Balkans turned the city into an interregional trade hub. However, military needs were still present and, at least until the establishment of the *thema Thessalonikes* during the late eighth/early ninth century, the *basilika kommerkia* must have been responsible primarily for the collection, storage, and distribution of supplies to the armed forces. During the same period, the agency of the ἄβυδος, with the ἄβυδικός as its officeholder, made its first appearance in Thessalonike. The agency of the *abydos* was originally established at the homonymous port station at the entrance to the Hellespont. Its task was to exercise strict control over entering and exiting vessels – both cargo and passengers – while supervising the *kommerkiarioi* in the collection of the various taxes. Another official stationed at Abydos was the παραφύλαξ, the military commander responsible for keeping law and order in the fortress and its vicinity. Thessalonike was given an *abydos* for a period between the late eighth and (early?) tenth centuries, at times combined with the office of *kommerkiarios*.⁷³⁵

There are no seals associated with *kommerkiarioi* for the eleventh century either from Thessaloniki or the northern Aegean region. Undoubtedly, they were still actively assessing various commodities in specific ports and entrepôts, though the *horeion/apotheke* complex of Thessalonike was gradually abandoned during the tenth and eleventh centuries. The *kommerkiarioi* stationed in the

⁷³⁴ BRANDES, Finanzverwaltung, 609; MONTINARO, Commerciaires byzantines, 510—514 (nos. 156—158, 163); NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, D. O. seals I, 63 (n. 18. 32), 64 (n. 18. 33), 69 (n. 18. 49); ZV I 1, 309 (n. 230), 310—311 (n. 231a and 231b), 313 (n. 233), 317 (n. 237); RAGIA, Apothekai of the Balkans, 97—97, 110—112.

⁷³⁵ NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, D. O. seals II, 50ff. with numerous seals; OIKONOMIDES, Thessalonique et le commerce Bulgare, 241—248.

city were no longer important enough to bear their own lead seals, in sharp contrast with their colleagues along the Danube frontier who were responsible for regulating the strategically important trade with the nomads of the north.

Monetary production and circulation

As far as monetary production and circulation across the northern Aegean region is concerned, it seems that Thessalonike's mint suspended operations in 629/630. Two classes of Constantinopolitan *folleis* – one dated 639/640 – 640/641 and the other between 666 – 668 – seem to have been produced in the capital and then consigned to and put into circulation in Thessalonike.⁷³⁶ Thus it can be assumed that the city's mint was also functioning as a regional distribution centre. After a period of activity during the ninth and early tenth centuries, the mint suspended operations until the eleventh century when it was twice in evidence again: the first occasion was during the Bulgarian rebellion of 1040 – 1041, when emperor Michael IV moved to the city to better coordinate the military operations. On this occasion gold coinage was produced. The mint resumed continuous production sometime in the reign of Constantine X (1059 – 1067) with the minting of copper *folleis*.⁷³⁷

Striving to cope with enemy activity in the Balkans, Alexios I's residing at Thessalonike during the early years of his reign led to the issue of extremely debased gold, silver and copper coins in order to cover the needs of the army and imperial entourage.⁷³⁸ After the monetary reform of 1092, the mint gradually became more specialised: during the first stage, gold *hyperpyra* and billon *trachea* were minted at a steadily decreasing rate while copper *tetartera* and *half-tetartera* predominated. These coins circulated mainly within the administrative region of Thessalonike-Strymon-Boleron – that is, along the northern Aegean coast and its hinterland.⁷³⁹ Finally, a hoard of *histamena* dated between 976 and 1055 has been discovered in the region of the Constantinian port, probably belonging to a merchant.⁷⁴⁰

Regulating trade on a Holy Mountain: the case of Athos

From the end of the tenth and beginning of the eleventh centuries, the state had to deal with a new situation, namely the rapid expansion of the commercial activities of the Mount Athos monasteries.⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁶ HENDY, Monetary economy, 417—419 with table 12; GRIERSON, Catalogue II 1, 36—37; 230—231, 307—314; Catalogue II 2, 465—466; MORRISSON, Catalogue I, 282—285, 350, is sceptical.

⁷³⁷ The question is still open: see HENDY, Monetary economy, 424—428, contra GRIERSON, Catalogue III 2, 641—643.

⁷³⁸ HENDY, Monetary economy, 434, IDEM, Catalogue IV 1 187—192, 202 ff.

⁷³⁹ HENDY, Monetary economy, 434—437; IDEM, Catalogue IV 1, 192—200, 214 ff.; MORRISSON, Catalogue II, 665—674, 680—686.

⁷⁴⁰ LAIOU, Regional networks, 137.

⁷⁴¹ SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 240—244.

The written sources give indirect information on the matter: that is, we learn about trading practices through imperial decrees that tried to regulate them *post hoc*. Thus, we lack specifics, yet the information provided allows us to form an adequate picture of the subject. Already from the 970s, the central government was intervening to regulate the monks' worldly activities – that is, almost a decade after the establishment of the coenobitic way of life by Athanasios the Athonite, founder of the Megiste Laura monastery. In 972, Emperor Ioannes I Tzimiskes issued the decree known as the *Tragos* (i.e., the “billy goat”, on account of the parchment on which it was written) in which he attempted to regulate all things relevant to life on the Holy Mountain. This is why the document is also conventionally referred to as a *Typikon* – that is, as the foundation document of the monastery, although it is not.⁷⁴² Setting aside the reasons that led to the issuing of this decree, one of its features is the evidence of commercial activity not only within Athos but also with the outside world. Subject to regulation was trade between the monks and laymen, with two products being mentioned in particular – namely wine and firewood. With regard to wine, no monk was allowed to sell it to laymen within the territory of the Holy Mountain.⁷⁴³ It is acknowledged, nonetheless, that some of the recluses might be enjoying a surplus, while others lacked the very necessities.⁷⁴⁴ The latter were thus permitted to sell their wine to laymen in exchange for any supplies that they needed in return.⁷⁴⁵

The terminology used here refers both to monetary (πιπράσκειν, πιπρασκέτω, ὠνούμενων) and exchange transactions (ἀντίλαβέτω, ἀντικατάλαττεσθαι), leading thus to potential for confusion. My reading of the situation is that the heads of the monastic community (γνώμη κοινῇ) were trying to prohibit monetary transactions between monks and laymen, especially since these were taking place within the limits of the Holy Mountain. Thus, a kind of internal economy of barter between monks “has been declared and permitted” (διοριζόμεθα [καὶ] προτρεπόμεθα), while the same was stipulated also for transactions with outsiders (i.e., laymen). In the case of the *Tragos*, which was a document drawn up to be used within a religious community, the precise use of terminology was of secondary importance. The same might be said of the stipulation concerning the selling of firewood that was to be bartered between the monks for other goods within the Athos boundaries and transacted with laymen only in emergencies.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴² Foundation Documents I, 232; DÖLGER – MÜLLER – BEIHAMMER, Regesten I 1, 2 147 (n. 745).

⁷⁴³ “μηδένα τολμᾶν ἀπὸ τοῦ ποταμοῦ τοῦ Ζυγοῦ (καὶ) ἐνδοτέρω ἐπὶ τὸ Ὄρος τοῦτον εἰς κοσμικοὺς πιπράσκειν”.

⁷⁴⁴ “ἀλλ’ εἰ καὶ περισσεύοντα γεωργοίε τίς τούτον, μοναχοῖς πιπρασκέτω (καὶ) παρὰ τῶν ὠνούμενων ὃ μὴ ἔχει ἀντίλαβέτω· διὰ δὲ τὸ ἐνδεεῖς χρεῖων εἶναι τινὰς τῶν ἐν τῷ Ὄρει μοναχῶν”.

⁷⁴⁵ “εἰ καὶ κοσμικοὶ τινες τύχοιεν πρὸς τὸ Ὄρος φοιτῆσαι μετὰ χρεῖων τινῶν ὧν τὸ Ὄρος ἐπιδέεται, το τινικαῦτα διὰ τὴν ἀπαραίτητον χρεῖαν (καὶ) αὐτοῖς ἀντικατάλαττεσθαι συγχωρεῖσθω ὁ οἶνος”. Actes du Prôtaton, 212, 95—100 (n. 7); Foundation Documents I, Tzimiskes, 238.

⁷⁴⁶ Actes du Prôtaton, 213, 139—140 (n. 7); Foundation Documents I, Tzimiskes, 240.

It seems that the stipulations of the *Tragos* had only temporary results. Some of the monasteries continued to expand their real estate within and beyond the territory of the Mountain. This led inevitably to the expansion of their economic activities including trade with the outside world. New sources of tension arose within the brotherhood and the matter reached emperor Constantine IX in the mid-1040s. He immediately dispatched his trusted monk Kosmas Tzintziloukes to summon the monks to Karyes, Athos most important settlement, to draft a new *Typikon*.⁷⁴⁷ In the second part of the text dealing with the economic activities of the monks, it is stated that “some of the monks and superiors had fitted out boats to sell wine and some other products and had gone to Constantinople and to other cities and had sold these goods commercially.” It was thoroughly examined “whether it had been specified in some document after the *Typikon* (i.e., the *Tragos*) had been drawn up that they (i.e., the monks) could possess boats”.⁷⁴⁸ A “*Typikon*” written and signed by Basil II was brought out according to which these activities were not only prohibited but met with expulsion from the Mountain as a punishment. The “*Typikon*” of Basil II permitted the monks to own small boats and “to sell excess wine as far as Thessalonike and the settlements within that region, if in fact no ships from outside were at hand”.⁷⁴⁹ The purchase and selling of wine, however, were strictly prohibited.⁷⁵⁰ It was difficult for the monks to follow this rule, Tzintziloukes concludes: “for they demonstrated that, if they owned no boats to supply the very needs of the monastery and to sell its fruits and surplus wine to people, they could not remain a single day on the Mountain”.⁷⁵¹ Although the Athos peninsula was rocky and densely forested, and intensive manual labour was required in order to achieve sizeable areas of farmland, the monks had made significant progress since the middle of the tenth century. On the other hand, the growing number of ascetics living on the Mountain made the import of foodstuffs and other provisions essential.

After a detailed examination of the subject, it was agreed that “the monasteries would own small boats having a capacity of 200 to 300 *modioi* (c. 2.3 m³ to 3.4 m³), sufficient only to meet their needs and to labour in their service”.⁷⁵² The monks were allowed to travel as far as Thessalonike in the west and Ainos in the east, and “offering their excess produce to these people, they would take in exchange whatever they needed.”⁷⁵³ Again, the use of a verbal formula denoting barter is remarkable

⁷⁴⁷ DÖLGER – WIRTH, Regesten I 2 19 (nos. 874, 876a). SOUSTAL, Makedonien Süd, 538—540.

⁷⁴⁸ Actes du Prôtaton, 226, 53—55 (n. 8); Foundation Documents I, Constantine IX, 285.

⁷⁴⁹ “κεκτῆσθαι δὲ συγχωροῦν πλοιάρια μικρά καὶ μέχρι Θεσσαλονίκης καὶ τῶν ταύτης ἔνδον πολιχνίων τὸν περιττεύοντα οἶνον τοῖς μοναχοῖς ἀπεμπολεῖν παρεγγυώμενον, εἴ γε μὴ πλοῖα ἔξωθεν παραγένοιτο”.

⁷⁵⁰ “μὴ μέντοι ἐξ ἄλλων ὀνεισθαι καὶ εἰς ἑτέρους πωλεῖν”.

⁷⁵¹ Actes du Prôtaton, 226, 56—227, 65 (n. 8); Foundation Documents I, Constantine IX, 285—286.

⁷⁵² “συνηρέσθησαν ἅπαντες ἵνα κέκτηται τὰ μοναστήρια πλοιάρια μικρά, χωρήσεως ὑπάρχοντα σ’ ἢ καὶ τ’ μοδίων εἰς χρεῖαν μόνην καὶ ὑπηρεσίαν ἐξαρκούντα αὐτῶν”.

⁷⁵³ “ἀπέρχονται δὲ μέχρι Θεσσαλονίκης καὶ Αἴνου καὶ τὰ περιττεύοντα τούτοις διδόντες οἱ μοναχοὶ ἀντιλαμβάνωσι τὰ ἐνδέοντα”.

(διδόντες, ἀντιλαμβάνωσι). In any case, any act of trade was strictly forbidden on penalty of the boats being sold by the *Protos* and the community and their price given to the authorities of the Mountain “so that it can be spent for the common need”.⁷⁵⁴

There were nonetheless exceptions to these strict regulations: although it was decided to immediately decommission the larger vessels,⁷⁵⁵ the monasteries that had already received imperial *chrysoboulla* could hold onto this valuable property. Vatopedi had already been granted a ship by means of a written decree from the *Protos* and superiors.⁷⁵⁶ It is likely that Megiste Laura and Iviron, which owned ships under imperial concession, insisted on keeping this privilege. After all, the monasteries that lost their larger vessels had to turn to the three others for the use of their ships if needed.

Other interesting information can be found sporadically in the text of the “Monomachos Typikon”. The monastery of the Amalfitans was alone in retaining its large boat. Its use for commercial purposes was forbidden, the brotherhood having only the right to travel as far as Constantinople “if they wanted to import anything they needed for their monastery.”⁷⁵⁷ Furthermore, it seems that some monks were using a boat to export from the Mountain “thin planks, firewood, and pitch, selling these commodities to men of the world”. This activity was also banned again on penalty of the boat’s confiscation.⁷⁵⁸

The last passage concerning the “sinful” relationship of monks with trade is the most impressive: it denounced that “the Lavra of Karyes had become an *emporium* instead of a *lavra*”⁷⁵⁹ so that even things forbidden to monks are sold in it”.⁷⁶⁰ The aggressive language referencing “forbidden things” (αἰδοῦμαι γὰρ κατ’ ὄνομα λέγειν αὐτά) could easily be taken as a rhetorical exaggeration to emphasise the moral collapse of some of the monks and decisive intervention of Tzintziloukes in restoring law and virtue to the Holy Mountain. A more plausible interpretation is that the community of Mount Athos was actively engaged in the production and trade networks of the northern Aegean coast, thus having been completely assimilated within the economic life of the region.

It is entirely credible that the steadily increasing number of ascetics on the Mountain – along with the need to construct the necessary infrastructure (aside from the construction of monasteries themselves) – led swiftly to an exploration of all possible ways of increasing the income of religious institutions. After all, the construction workers employed were laymen who had to be paid in cash.

⁷⁵⁴ Actes du Prôtaton, 227, 65—75 (n. 8); Foundation Documents I, Constantine IX, 286.

⁷⁵⁵ “τὰ δὲ μεγάλα πλοῖα κέκριται παρασταλῆναι τέλεον”.

⁷⁵⁶ Actes du Prôtaton, 227, 75—77 (n. 8); Foundation Documents I, Constantine IX, 286.

⁷⁵⁷ Actes du Prôtaton, 228, 99—101 (n. 8); Foundation Documents I, Constantine IX, 287.

⁷⁵⁸ Actes du Prôtaton, 228, 102—106 (n. 8); Foundation Documents I, Constantine IX, 287.

⁷⁵⁹ “Τὴν δὲ λαύραν τῶν Καρεῶν φασὶν ἀντὶ λαύρας ἐμπόριον γενέσθαι”.

⁷⁶⁰ Actes du Prôtaton, 229, 133—136 (n. 8); Foundation Documents I, Constantine IX, 289.

Furthermore, the various standardised payments to monasteries in the form of *solemnia* granted by emperors were inadequate to cover their needs.

Despite the strictness of regulation and specification in which both the *Tragos* and the “Typikon of Monomachos” were formulated, the monasteries continued their mercantile activities. From a chrysobull issued by Alexios I in 1102 for Megiste Laura we learn that during the preceding period the monastery owned seven ships with a total tonnage of 16.000 *modioi* (272 m³) and which were exempt from taxation. At the time of the monks’ appeal to the emperor only two or three of these had survived the wear of time. Alexios I granted Megiste Laura the right to own four ships of 1.500 *modioi* (17 m³) each – amounting, that is, to a total tonnage of c. 6.000 *modioi* being completely exempted from taxes.⁷⁶¹ Again, the attempt of the emperors to somehow curtail the trading activities of the monasteries is evident but with meagre results. For the rest of the twelfth century and after 1204, the community of the Holy Mountain continued to be an integral part of the trade and communication networks across the north Aegean region, stimulating supply and demand despite the state’s effort to regulate their activities within the acceptable limits of canon law and virtue.⁷⁶²

3.2.3 The eastern coast of the Aegean (west coast of Asia Minor)

Geography

The east coast of the Aegean has similar geophysical features to the west coast. A series of mountain ranges – natural extensions of the Anatolian plateau – extend right to the coast in an east-west direction. They are separated from fertile valleys, most of these created by the alluvium of rivers that flow through the mountains. From north-to-south the sequence of mountains and rivers is as follows, starting from the region of the straits in Abydos / Çanakkale: Mount Ide / Kaz Dağı with Skamandros / Küçük Menderes flowing to its north; Mount Pindasos / Madra Dağı with the River Euenos / Büyük Menderes running between it and Ide; Mount Aspordenos with Kaikos / Bakırçay flowing between it and Pindasos; Mount Tmolos / Boz Dağları with its extensions Olympos / Nif Dağı and Sipylus / Spil Dağı, and the Hermos / Gediz Nehri flowing between it and Aspordenos; then finally, Mount Messogis / Aydın Dağları, with the Kaystros / Küçük Menderes flowing between it and Tmolos; Mount Idrias / Madranbaba Dağları with its extension Latmos / Beşparmak Dağları, and the Maeander / Büyük

⁷⁶¹ Actes de Lavra I, 285—287 (n. 55). ŽIVOJINOVIĆ, Trade of Mount Athos, 106—107; DÖLGER – WIRTH, Regesten I 2 154—155 (n. 1215c).

⁷⁶² ŽIVOJINOVIĆ, Trade of Mount Athos, 110.

Menderes flowing between it and Messogis. The mountainous peninsula of the Carian Chersonesos marks the southernmost limit of the Aegean Sea in its geographical sense (maps 16 – 18).⁷⁶³

The climate of the Straits of Hellespont and Sigeion to the north up to Hieria Akra to the south accords with the typical transitional Mediterranean pattern of warm, dry summers and mild rainy winters. Regional variations were apparently present: the mountains of Troas and Ide formed a physical barrier against the low atmospheric pressure coming from the Black Sea, thus delineating the Mediterranean and continental climatic zones. Along the remainder of the coast, the north-eastern stretch has the highest mean annual precipitation, the central-western part the lowest, and the south-eastern combines the highest average temperature with a mean annual precipitation reaching subtropical conditions.⁷⁶⁴

Pathways of communication

Of the main highways, the principal – known in modern literature as the *Pilgerstraße* – ran north-west to south-east, starting from Chalcedon / Kadiköy and ending at Ancyra / Ankara, having passed through Nicomedia / İzmit and Nicaea / İzmit. From Nicaea, one southern road led to Dorylaion / Eskişehir, and a second to Kyzikos / Aydıncık or Abydos to the west. Dorylaion was an important junction since it connected the above-mentioned cities with Pergamon / Bergama in the west and the strategically located cities of Amorion / Hisarköy,⁷⁶⁵ Akroinon / Afyon Karahisar,⁷⁶⁶ and Ikonion / Konya to the south-east, Philomelion / Akşehir to the south, and Apameia and Laodicea to the west. Ancyra was another important centre – connecting the cities of north-western Asia Minor with Theodosiupolis / Erzurum and Anion / Ani to east, Koloneia / Şebinkarahisar to the south, and Tyana to the south-west. From Tyana, the road continued through Alexandretta to Antioch, and south to Laodicea and Tripolis to Palestine. One last important junction was the city of Caesarea / Kayseri in Cappadocia, which was connected to Sebasteia / Sivas to the north, and Tarsus to the south. In Tarsus, the road that ran along the eastern and south-eastern coast from Pergamon through Smyrna / İzmir, Ephesos, Attaleia / Antalya and Seleukeia also came to an end. Finally, another highway connected north-western Asia Minor with cities of the Black Sea such as Amastris and Amisos, eventually reaching Trebizond. From there, an axis heading south linked the Black Sea with the rest of Asia Minor to the west via Sebasteia, and with Armenia via Theodosiupolis to the east.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶³ BELKE, Bithynien und Hellespont, 106, 108; PHILIPPSON, Das byzantinische Reich, 144—147; Barrington Atlas, maps 56, 61; Google earth pro; Google maps.

⁷⁶⁴ HENDY, Monetary economy, 28—30 with Maps 6 and 7, BELKE, Bithynien und Hellespont, 109—110; HELLENKEMPER – HILD, Lykien und Pamphylien, 92—94.

⁷⁶⁵ BELKE – RESTLE, Galatien und Lykaonien, 122—125.

⁷⁶⁶ BELKE – MERSICH, Phrygien und Pisidien, 177—178; IVISON, Amorium, 33—39.

⁷⁶⁷ AVRAMEA, Επικοινωνίες, 148—152; KODER, Χώρος, 99—101; KISLINGER, Verkehrswege, 76—77.

Specifics on land and sea communications along the Aegean coast

Land communications

The road network of the east coast of the Aegean had its nascence in early antiquity and thereafter evolved continuously, the Roman improvements in the closing decades of the second century BCE being of pivotal importance. During the Byzantine, Ottoman, and even modern periods, the basic layout of the road arteries remained the same, with modern highways following the course of ancient. As is typical of pre-nineteenth-century road networks, the layout was dictated by the relief: the river valleys were of critical importance not only for horizontal (west-east) but also vertical (north-south) transportation, since they facilitated the circumvention of the mountain ranges that acted as natural barriers. Of course, in some cases the mountains had to be traversed using their most accessible passage, as was the case along the Lycian coast.

A concise description of the main road network along the Aegean littoral of Asia Minor will be given by dividing it into circular zones. These were interconnected through certain nodes or central places whence travel in all directions was possible.

The first of these has at its centre Adramyttion / Edremit. From the north-east the axis began from Abydos and split at Ilieon Kome into two routes, one coastal and one inland, which converged again outside Bahçedere leading to Adramyttion. From there, it continued to the east as far as Adrianou Therai / Palaiokastros / Balıkesir, and to the south through Kydonies / Ayvalık / Aivali to Pergamon.⁷⁶⁸

Pergamon forms the node of the second circle: one road turned to the east – south-east to Thyateira / Akhisar – and split again at Hierokaisareia, taking a south-western direction towards the Aegean coast to Mainemene / Menemen, and then north to Kyme / Nemrut Limanı and Elaia / Zeytinadağ, the seaport of Pergamon.

From Mainemene, this road continued down the coast to Smyrna, the node of our third circle. To the east, one could reach Sardeis / Sart, and then turn south passing through the mountains towards Thyraia / Tire and Boukolion / Ali Paşa Çiftlik before turning north again to Smyrna. From there, a western axis headed to the peninsula of Erythraia through Klazomenai / Urla. From Klazomenai, Teos / Siğacık, Lebedos / Kısıklı Burnu and Kolophon / Notion (near modern Değirmendere) were accessible to the south.

From Kolophon and Thyraia or alternatively Boukolion, Ephesos (near modern Selçuk) is our fourth node. A local “ring road” linked Ephesos with Magnesia on the Meander / Tekin and Priene / Güllübahçe Turun, and – taking a northern direction at Sokia / Söke – with Anaia / Kadikalesi, Arvalia and Phygela (in the bay of Bayraklıdere), which were directly connected with Ephesos.

⁷⁶⁸ BELKE, Bithynien und Hellespont, 286—288; KÜLZER, Gulf of Adramyttium, 146—147.

At Ephesos the “circular sectors” come to an end because of the geographical relief. Miletos / Milet, located on a promontory surrounded by the sea, lacked any physical connection with the opposite northern shore. With the gradual sedimentation of the Maeander shifting the shoreline further to the west, the Romans had constructed a road that – beginning from Antiocheia Maiandrou / Başaran – ran parallel with the meandering alluvium up to Miletos. From the northern bank of the Maeander in the important city of Tralleis / Aydin, a road crossed the river to the south, thus intersecting with the parallel southern axis that led to Miletos. Alternatively, it continued further to the south through Mougla / Muğla and Alabanda (near modern Doğanyurt) to the Knidos / Datça peninsula.

From Miletos, a coastal road led to the Alikarnassos / Bodrum peninsula. And from the port of Marmaris at the entrance of the Knidian peninsula, the coastal road followed the littoral according to the diverse and at places abrupt relief, passing through Kaunos / Dalyan, Panormos, Makre / Fethiye, Lebissos / Kozagaci, Sipolo / Ölü Deniz and Kalabatia / Sancaklik – all of which were coastal settlements along the gulf facing Rhodes.⁷⁶⁹

Sea communications

The harbours of the western and southern Anatolian coasts also served important sea routes connecting Constantinople with the eastern Mediterranean: Sea Route B⁷⁷⁰ proceeded from Tenedos southwards via Lesbos, Chios, and Samos. From there, it continued via Naxos, Ios, and Thera to Crete, or southwards to Ikaria, Patmos, and Rhodes, and then turned eastwards to Attaleia. From there (Alanya / Kalon Oros), two additional options were available: Route B1, which followed the south-eastern coasts of Asia Minor towards the ports of Syria and Palestine, or Route B2, heading via Cyprus to Palestine or Egypt.⁷⁷¹

Along the Aegean coast of Asia Minor, the lacy coastline offered numerous havens and coves with drinking-water freely available from permanent or seasonal streams.⁷⁷² Despite these appealing geographical characteristics, the approach to the often rocky coast required the utmost care of crews, as the shipwreck at Serçe Limani makes very clear: in an attempt to avoid a sudden gale, the vessel tried to find refuge in an inlet to the south of the Bozburun peninsula, only to crash on the nearby rocks and sink.⁷⁷³

⁷⁶⁹ HELLENKEMPER – HILD, *Lykien und Pamphylien*, 249–261; FILDHUTH, *Meander Delta*, 57–58.

⁷⁷⁰ KISLINGER, *Verkehrsrouten zur See*, 153. See also above, p. 104

⁷⁷¹ Saewulf (60, 41–51, 76, 595–607 HUYGENS). KISLINGER, *Verkehrsrouten zur See*, 153–154; Idem, *Verkehrswege*, 78; HELLENKEMPER – HILD, *Lykien und Pamphylien*, 283–286, 288–289; BELKE, *Bithynien und Hellespont*, 302–303; HUXLEY, *Portulan*, 295–300; DIMITROUKAS, 474–477.

⁷⁷² KÜLZER, *Harbor cities*, 97–101; IDEM, *Gulf of Adramyttium*, 143–144.

⁷⁷³ van DOORNINCK, *The Voyage*, 3–4; HILD, *Karien*, 88–89.

The other environmental factor of critical importance – though visible only in the longer term – was the accumulating alluvium in the deltas of the great rivers. As a result, the late Roman port of Ephesos was accessible after the seventh century CE only via a canal, while Miletos was partially surrounded by land by around the same period.⁷⁷⁴ The (obvious) response to this challenge was the relocation of ports and landing places, either along the newly created shoreline or on *terra firma* situated at a reasonable distance from the destination place, as was the case with the ports of Ephesos and Miletos.⁷⁷⁵

Another highly relevant point is the interconnectedness of the east mainland coast of the Aegean with its adjacent islands to the west. The latter are a geological extension of the former, creating a unified economic and – for considerable periods – cultural area, despite the political changes across the centuries (or even millennia). On this basis, J. Preiser-Kapeller posited the existence of regional clusters of communication along the eastern Aegean. Each included nodes within a distance of between 80 and 250 km of each other, while the minimum distance between certain islands and the opposite mainland might be extremely narrow (for example, that between Samos and the Mycale peninsula was c. 1.7 kilometres, as the crow flies).⁷⁷⁶ Written sources and material evidence flesh out the picture: Saint Christodoulos had to leave the monastery of the Theotokos tou Stylou on the holy mountain of Latros because of the invading Seljuks. He took himself off to the coastal settlement of Strobilos / Aspat / Çifit Kalesi before taking a ship to the nearby island of Kos. He finally relocated to Patmos, thus completing his journey within this regional cluster. However, when the Turkish fleets approached Patmos, he had to further escape with his fellow brothers to Euripos, outside its notional boundaries.⁷⁷⁷

The monastery of the Nea Moni at Chios offers another example of communication at a regional level, since a substantial part of its real estate was on the opposite peninsula of Erythraia, about sixteen kilometres from the coast. Inevitably, as will be shown below, the monastery's ships frequented the strait between the port of the city of Chios and Linoperama / Çeşme, transporting their estates' products and contributing to the creation of another regional cluster.

⁷⁷⁴ RAGIA, *Κοιλάδα του κάτω Μαιάνδρου*, 173—174, 176.

⁷⁷⁵ KÜLZER, *Jenseits von Ephesos*, 50—57; IDEM, *Reconstructing the past*, 78—81.

⁷⁷⁶ *Life of Willibald IV* (93, 14—15 HOLDER-EGGER). PREISER-KAPELLER, *Maritime mobility*; 127—129; KÜLZER, *Harbor cities*, 100—101.

⁷⁷⁷ VRANOUSE, *Ἐγγράφα Πατμου Α΄*, *22 ff.

Historical development

641 – 741

As might be expected, the Arab threat of the years 641 – 741 reached the east coast of the Aegean from the sea. The littoral of western Asia Minor was outside the invading armies' radius of action. They preferred to launch their annual campaigns against the cities of the Anatolian plateau, trying to reach Bithynia and consequently Constantinople from a south-south-easterly direction. The coasts were left to the emerging Arab navy, which commenced operations soon after the fall of Palestine and Syria. The outcome of the 655 naval battle of Phoenix off the coast of Lycia left the sea open to the Muslim fleet. The islands off the coast – Rhodes, Kos, Samos, Chios, and Lesbos – took the heaviest hit, in all probability because of the limited forces that defended them. On the opposite shore, Smyrna, Ephesos, and Alikarnassos were affected most probably in 672 / 673, at the peak of the Byzantine-Arab conflict.

Until 715 it seems that the region enjoyed a time of relative peace. Extensive administrative reforms were undertaken that led to the establishment of the *apothekai* system and the foundation of the *themata* of *Opsikion*, *Thrakesion*, and *Kibyrrhaiotai*. Between 715 and 718, however, the Aegean coast of Asia Minor and the adjacent islands must have suffered from the presence of Muslim forces that probably occupied strategic strongholds across Sea Route B. Unfortunately, we are missing the details of these events. Material evidence suggests extensive abandonment of the settlements along the coastal road connecting Didyma and Miletus sometime after 668, and Knidos and Alikarnassos were destroyed and abandoned during the same period. The latter was soon replaced as a naval stronghold by nearby Strobilos, where extensive port facilities have been discovered.⁷⁷⁸ With the defeat of the Arabs on land (740) and at sea (747), the east coast of the Aegean entered a period of peace that would last until the Muslim conquest of Crete in 829.

1025 – 1095

The historical development of the west coast of Asia Minor has already been reviewed in conjunction with the Aegean islands and will only be very briefly summarised here.⁷⁷⁹

The reconquest of Crete by the Byzantines in 961 signalled the beginning of a new era of stability across the Aegean. Sporadic raids by the Arab fleets of north Africa and Sicily were rebuffed by the forces of the naval *themata*.

⁷⁷⁸ Constantine Porphyrogennetos, DAI 20 (84, 10—12 MORAVCSIK – JENKINS). RAGIA, Κοιλιάδα του Κάτω Μαιάνδρου, 218—226, 299ff.; LEWIS, Naval power, 81; EICKHOFF, Seekrieg und Seepolitik, 22, 32; PRYOR – JEFFREYS, Age of the δρόμων, 26; AHRWEILER, Byzance et la mer, 22—27.

⁷⁷⁹ See 4.2.1

Critical disruption in communication and trade came around 1081, with the collapse of Asia Minor and the establishment of several Turkish warlords along the east Aegean coast. Sea route B and its branches were compromised, and it would take the Byzantines almost fifteen years to deal with the new threat and secure the route connecting Constantinople to the east. The most powerful ruler was Çaka, the (in)famous Tzachas of Anna Komnene. After capturing Smyrna around 1081, he constructed a fleet and initiated attacks against the neighbouring coastal settlements and islands, with parts of Chios and Lesbos falling into his hands for some time. His most serious blow to the region was the complete destruction of Adramyttion, located in the gulf opposite Lesbos. This persistent emir continued to disturb sea communication routes in the region until the middle of the 1090s, when the Byzantines were able to concentrate their military and diplomatic efforts against him and achieve his downfall.

Further south, the city of Ephesos and its seaport were in the hands of the warlords Tangripermes (Tanripermiş / Tanrivermiş) and Marakes (Marak / Barak). Several other emirs had also conquered the territory along the coast of Lycia and Caria, and it is possible that their naval raids are recorded in the testament of Christodoulos, abbot of the monastery of Saint John the Theologian at Patmos, written in March 1093. Anna Komnene mentions that Tanripermiş fleet's radius of action had reached Rhodes, and it is likely that these raids also caused the flight of the monks from Patmos. Further evidence suggests that the holy mountain of Latros on the southern bank of the Maeander was also abandoned by the monks and anchorites residing there. Christodoulos himself left the region of Miletos in 1079, fleeing to Strobilos and finally to Kos. Several settlements – especially the smaller, unfortified ones – may well also have been evacuated.⁷⁸⁰ On the eve of the First Crusade the entire east coast of the Aegean was under Turkish rule, despite the attempts of Alexios I to launch a recovery campaign. Finally, with the help of the crusading armies the Byzantines were able to regain significant territory along the shore and across its hinterland, securing control through consecutive campaigns up to 1118.⁷⁸¹

Settlement patterns

At the entrance (or exit) of the Dardanelles, Sigeion – located c. three kilometres to the south-west of the cape Sigeias Akra / Kumkale Burnu, the northernmost point of the eastern Aegean shore – was an Athenian colony established in the seventh century BCE to secure the exploitation of the rich forests of Mount Ida. It also offered an additional checkpoint along the route that from the northern ports of the Euxeinos Pontos transported valuable grain to Athens. For the middle Byzantine period, the

⁷⁸⁰ RAGIA, *Κοιλιάδα του Κάτω Μαιάνδρου*, 233–235.

⁷⁸¹ BEIHAMMER, *Emergence*, 315–316, 363–373.

presence of a coastal fortress, along with fine wares and ceramics, are the only testimony to the continuity of the settlement.⁷⁸²

Continuing south, Sermizi / Beşik Burnu / Koca Liman, Alexandreia Troas, and Sminthe / Gülpınar are the most important places as far as Cape Lekton / Baba Burnu. All three share a similar pattern with the late-antique settlements, surviving the transition period at a smaller scale. These ports provided the link between the Aegean and the region of Constantinople, as is attested by the presence of ceramics ranging from late-antique North African types to the Constantinopolitan Zeuxippos ware of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁷⁸³

Assos was the first important settlement along the east coast of the Aegean. A city first mentioned during the Roman imperial period, it suffered extensive damage in a series of earthquakes during the fifth century. It was rebuilt in the late fifth / early sixth century, perhaps under imperial auspices, although the earlier layout was ignored in designing new districts. The ancient agora lost its monumental character, becoming the main commercial district, and an abundance of churches now dominated the city and landscape. In the seventh century Assos acquired an agricultural character, and the larger houses were subdivided into smaller dwellings. The material evidence for the period between the fifth and the seventh century is rich, with ceramics, various tools, and apparel such as belt buckles featuring among the finds. The crucial blow to the early Byzantine city may have been struck by another earthquake, which destroyed the public infrastructure. Coin finds of the late seventh century – the last of them belonging to the reign of Leontios (695 – 698) – help to date this episode to the last three years of the seventh, or early years of the eighth century. The inhabitants moved to a location west of the ruined city or else to its north, behind the ancient acropolis hill where the modern village of Behram is found. The acropolis was fortified sometime during the middle Byzantine period. The city continued its life as a small settlement with an adjacent harbour, now underwater just to the west of the modern one, with the *extra muros* Hagiasma Church (*Ayazmakirche*) functioning as a pilgrimage site of some importance.⁷⁸⁴

Adramyttion – possibly founded by emperor Traian in the second century CE in the vicinity of the yet unidentified ancient city of Thebe – was initially located on the shore near the current village of Ören. At some point in the first half of the sixth century, and probably as part of the relocation

⁷⁸² BELKE, Bithynien und Hellespont, 998—999.

⁷⁸³ BELKE, Bithynien und Hellespont: Sermizi, 994, Alexandreia Troas, 1059—1064, Sminthe, 1008—1009; for the general settlement patterns in the region of southern Troas, see BÖHLENDORF-ARSLAN, Southern Troad, 57—60; EADEM, Walls and countryside, 78—86.

⁷⁸⁴ DARROUZES, *Notitiae episcopatum*, 219, 100 and *passim*. For a comprehensive overview, see BÖHLENDORF-ARSLAN, Assos, 217—225; EADEM, on the transformation of Assos, 81—83; EADEM, on walls and countryside, 86—91; for the early Byzantine pottery, see AYAZ, Early Byzantine pottery, 91—116; for the Hagiasma church, DENNERT, Kirchen in Assos, 153—158.

program of Anastasios I and Justinian I, it was moved to where the modern city of Edremit stands. The city is mentioned in the ecclesiastical lists as a bishopric under Ephesos,⁷⁸⁵ and also by Theophanes: when the troops of the Thema of Opsikion revolted against the central government in 715, they declared as emperor Theodosius, a tax collector active in the region of Adramyttion, who reluctantly accepted the honour. The end of the middle-Byzantine settlement came in 1093 when Tzachas left the city in ruins. It was only in around 1109 that Adramyttion was rebuilt and repopulated, the inhabitants having probably found refuge in the interim on the opposite island of Lesbos.⁷⁸⁶

Adramyttion had no organised infrastructure pertaining to a harbour. Ships possibly anchored along the bay in front of modern Akçay, and goods were then transferred on horseback or by cart to the city only a few kilometres inland. In such circumstances, the existence of wooden landing stages (*skalai*) would have been sufficient for the docking of ships.⁷⁸⁷

Pergamon – a settlement already in existence in early antiquity – became the capital of the Attalid kingdom (282 – 133 BCE). It was embellished with monumental buildings, the most important of which was its library. Numerous agorae, an impressive theatre with a mechanical stage, the Asklepieion, the Heroon and the Pergamon Altar – now at the *Altes Museum* in Berlin – are counted among the city's monuments. Pergamon was divided into an upper city, or Acropolis, and a lower. Located on a hill on the northern bank of the Kaikos River, it extended onto the plain manifesting a grid plan. The city walls were renovated around the middle of the third century CE. As in other cities of the period, public spaces changed their function, a case in point being the colonnaded street that connected the Asklepieion with the settlement *intra muros*: the southern colonnade was closed in with dividing walls that demarcated little shops or taverns. Until the middle of the seventh century, the material evidence – mainly ceramics and coins – suggests that the city enjoyed a certain level of prosperity.⁷⁸⁸

With the appearance of the Arabs, however, the city was refortified on a smaller scale than before. This was primarily around the Acropolis/upper city, including what was left of the antique monumental buildings. The numerous coins of Constans II offer a chronological marker for the construction of the walls, along with numerous buckles that may indicate the presence of a military detachment. These measures proved to be insufficient though, and in 716 Pergamon was conquered on the eve of the Arabs' second siege of Constantinople. Life in the city seems nonetheless to have continued: its bishops were present at all the councils and conventions held in the capital.

⁷⁸⁵ DARROUZES, *Notitiae episcopatum*, 219, 99 and *passim*.

⁷⁸⁶ STAUBER, *Adramytteion*, 42—46, 48, 128—129, 130, 137—139, 145—149.

⁷⁸⁷ KÜLZER, on harbour cities, 103—104; IDEM, *Mount Ida*, 594—595; IDEM, *Gulf of Adramyttium*, 147—150.

⁷⁸⁸ OTTEN, *Pergamon*, 226—228; EMME, *Lower Agora*, 186—192; KLINKOTT, *Wehrmauern von Pergamon*, 853—858.

Archaeological finds – notably coins – make their appearance again in the second half of the eleventh century, when Pergamon was probably refortified on account of the Turkish presence and used as a refuge by the rural population. The renovation of churches, the reuse of ancient substructures such as cisterns, and the presence of burials dated with the help of coin finds to after 1081 would seem to confirm this. Thus, Pergamon continued its long course across the centuries, now placed firmly within the Acropolis district until the time of the Ottoman conquest when the settlement was relocated to the site of present-day Bergama to the plain below.⁷⁸⁹

Elaia was the seaport attached to Pergamon, located on the north-easternmost shore of the gulf of Çandarlı in the vicinity of the small coastal village of Kazıkbağları. The Kaikos poured forth some six kilometres to the west of Elaia, continuing the siltation of Dema bay, though to a much lesser degree thanks to the extensive regulation works. The seaport followed the historical development of Pergamon, and its surrounding region was famous for the cultivation and export of olive oil – hence its name. The port facilities were extensive, with a quay wall that ran in a north-westerly direction ending in a tower dating to the Byzantine period. The port had three separate docks: one for military use, one for commerce, and a third without a stone pier, probably having only a wooden *skala*. An arsenal was presumably also present. The harbour had already begun to silt up in the early Byzantine period. The settlement of Elaia relocated about two kilometres to the north and is attested up to the third quarter of the eighth century.⁷⁹⁰

Smyrna was one of the most important harbours along the east coast of the Aegean. A city with roots going back to early antiquity, it lies at the eastern end of a deep and well-protected gulf. This is thanks to the peninsula of Erythraia which opens out into a T-shape in a north-south direction, creating a natural barrier against all winds and currents. In the late seventh century BCE, the city was located on a promontory with landing docks. The harbour facilities were expanded and enhanced during the Hellenistic period, while the siltation in the northeast of the harbour, caused by the alluvium of Hermos, did not affect the accessibility to Smyrna or other ports across the gulf. The remains of the medieval harbour, which must surely have existed, are still undiscovered.⁷⁹¹

Ephesos – considered one of the crown jewels of the Hellenic cities of Asia Minor, along with Miletos – and a veritable archaeological palimpsest, was established by Ionian colonists from Athens. Carians and Lydians were already settled along what at that time was the coast on the southern side of the estuary of the river Kaystros. The early antique harbour had silted up by the end of the fourth

⁷⁸⁹ DARROUZES, *Notitiae episcopatum*, 219, 115, and *passim*. OTTEN, Pergamon, 228—230; IDEM, *Byzantinisches Pergamon*, 810—812, 816, 819, 824—825.

⁷⁹⁰ DARROUZES, *Notitiae episcopatum*, 219, 98 and *passim*. KÜLZER, *Jenseits von Ephesos*, 58—62.

⁷⁹¹ DARROUZES, *Notitiae episcopatum*, 217, 46. AHRWEILER, *Région de Smyrne*, 34—37; KÜLZER, *Harbor cities*, 104—105; IDEM, *Jenseits von Ephesos*, 63—64.

century BCE, and Lysimachus, King of Thrace, re-established the city in its current location between the northern slope of Mount Koressos (Bülbüdağ) and the eastern edge of Mount Pio (Panayir Dağ). From that time onwards, Ephesos was on a steady ascent as an economic, religious, and cultural centre. The sojourns of Paul the Apostle and John the Evangelist would bring the city to the forefront for the establishment of the new Christian religion, with the third ecumenical council being convened there by Emperor Theodosius II in 431.⁷⁹²

During the sixth century, Ephesos was a flourishing late antique *polis* with important ancient monuments defining its cityscape: the upper and the Tetragonos Agora with the Library of Celsus at its south, the Serapeion, the Theatre, the Olympieion, and the impressive Terrace Houses (*Hanghäuser*). Several Roman aqueducts provided water from inland.⁷⁹³ The majestic temple of Artemis – the Artemision – was already in ruins, and the hill of Saint John the Theologian at its northern side was becoming the new residential core. As for the three ancient harbours, two had already succumbed to the alluvium of the Kaystros, only the Roman continued to operate on a much-reduced scale –connected via a canal to the nearest shore. The Byzantine walls defined the core of the ancient settlement, although the city districts now lying *extra muros* remained inhabited. The most characteristic and well-studied example is the area including the two agorae with their connecting street, called Curetes Street because of the male statues (*kouroi*) that embellished its course, and the adjacent Terrace Houses: workshops and *tabernae* dominated the porticoes that had been subdivided into smaller spaces to better fit the new needs.⁷⁹⁴ As for the Terrace Houses, especially Terrace House 2, the picture is more than clear: in the ruins of an ancient Roman villa two workshops, one for the cutting of marble and the other being a flour-mill complex, were built. The kinetic energy came from two vertical watermills fuelled by a millrace with a downward inclination. The whole design is remarkable for its elaboration and output. The complex operated until the middle of the seventh century, never to be used again.⁷⁹⁵

Early Byzantine Ephesus was integrated into international trade, as the rich ceramic finds attest. Imports and exports continued well into the seventh century and even later, with the significant *panegyris* of Saint John the Theologian. The most important construction project of the sixth century was the basilica of Saint John the Theologian at the foot of Ayasoluk Hill. It was part of the imperial program that covered almost all provinces of the empire, and its equivalent in the Aegean basin can be found in the church of Panagia Ekatonapyliane at Paros.⁷⁹⁶

⁷⁹² LADSTÄTTER, Ephesos, 238; EADEM, Ephesos, 17—27; KÜLZER, Ephesos in Byzantinischer Zeit, 521—523

⁷⁹³ WIPLINGER, Wasserversorgung von Ephesos, 593, 595ff.

⁷⁹⁴ LADSTÄTTER, Ephesos, 37—39; PÜLZ, Stadtbild von Ephesos, 563—564.

⁷⁹⁵ LADSTÄTTER, Ephesos, 40; WEFERS – MANGARTZ, Byzantinische Werkstätte, 713—716, 726.

⁷⁹⁶ LADSTÄTTER, Ephesos, 58—59; EADEM, Ephesos, 239—245; ZAVAGNO, Cities in transition, 102—107.

Several layers indicating periods of destruction in the seventh century have been recognised. Pollen analysis indicates a proliferation of pinewood forests and an increase in extensive pastoral farming at the expense of crop-farming and livestock-breeding. All the above are signs of declining population. It is noteworthy, though, that wine cultivation and production continued to play an important role during the transitional period. Furthermore, drywalls were erected to prevent the landfalls caused by the continual erosion. The most representative examples are those in Curetes Street: these elaborate measures were probably designed to keep the main streets open, allowing the continuation of economic and social life.⁷⁹⁷

After the middle of the tenth century, the city underwent revival, as is attested by material evidence and palynological studies. Population within and outside the walls increased, cultivation of cereals was extended, and churches were renovated. The basilica of Saint John the Theologian on Ayasoluk Hill was fortified and fitted with auxiliary buildings to store provisions for the numerous pilgrims that visited the site. Other religious foundations of long tradition such as the Seven Sleepers cemetery were also renovated and embellished.⁷⁹⁸ The harbour continued to operate until the twelfth century, when it silted up, leading to the abandonment of all relevant facilities and structures including Arcadiane Street, which led from the lower agora to the harbour. Because of these developments, the population had already begun to move to the fortified hill of Ayasoluk. The seaport was now located about eight kilometres to the south-east in the bay of Pamucak, where middle and late Byzantine port-structures have been discovered.⁷⁹⁹ Thus, Ayasoluk and its ports would continue their life under Turkish rule until the end of the nineteenth century, when Ephesos was brought to light again with the first systematic excavations of the Austrian Archaeological Institute.⁸⁰⁰

As far as the ports of Ephesos are concerned, the following observations can be made. During its long history, the city possessed several ports that successively fell victim to the alluvium of the Kaystros. During the late-antique and early middle Byzantine period, the last of these harbours, built between 98 and 138 CE, was connected to the Aegean by means of a canal. Over time, and despite the efforts to keep the canal open, the waterway continued to silt up, allowing access only to boats with a lower draft. By the seventh century, it seems that only small boats could enter the canal and reach the Roman harbour.⁸⁰¹

⁷⁹⁷ LADSTÄTTER, Ephesos, 55—58; EADEM, Ephesus, 245—246; KÜLZER, Ephesos in Byzantinischer Zeit, 524—525; ZAVAGNO, Cities in transition, 107—116.

⁷⁹⁸ KÜLZER, Pilgerwege, 19—22. For religious images on small metal objects, see indicatively PÜLZ, Byzantine finds, 181—200. For the Seven Sleepers cemetery see ZIMMERMANN, Seven sleepers of Ephesos, 257—269.

⁷⁹⁹ LADSTÄTTER, Ephesos, 61—65; KÜLZER, Ephesos in Byzantinischer Zeit, 526; PÜLZ, Stadtbild von Ephesos, 565—568.

⁸⁰⁰ LADSTÄTTER, Ephesos, 11—17, 65; EADEM, Ephesus, 246—248;

⁸⁰¹ DALANAY, Harbour of Ephesos, 119—121; KÜLZER, Jenseits von Ephesos, 51—53.

As a result, new seaports and landing places along the coast were established. They were centred around a hill, now called Kumtepe, located about 400 metres from the shore and with a height of around nine metres. The now inland hill was initially a peninsula surrounded by water on its north and northeast sides.

Proceeding north-to-south, the following ports and anchorages have so far been located. The first port has been identified to the north-east of the hill, thanks to the presence of various remains including riverine fortifications and a bollard.⁸⁰² Further to the south, in modern-day Pamucak, material evidence suggests the presence of a settlement that was connected to the shore via a staircase that had its beginnings next to a basilica.⁸⁰³ Along the rest of the shore as far as Phygela/Pygela Plaji, various anchorages have been identified, though any enduring structures have fallen victim to modern development. Phygela, mentioned by Saint Willibald in 723, was a gathering point for the Byzantine fleet during the campaigns against Crete.⁸⁰⁴

Anaia was the next port of call along the shore. The medieval fortress dominates the landscape even today, with important material evidence being excavated in the area below the hill. Most of the finds so far belong to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as do the walls constructed in the Laskarid era using materials from earlier periods. Some coins of Constantine IX Monomachos indicate economic activity during the eleventh century. The sandy shoreline does not allow for the detection of any permanent harbour installation, which in any case was not a prerequisite: ships could have simply anchored reasonably near the shore, (un)loading their cargo on smaller boats or directly onto the coast depending on their draft.⁸⁰⁵

Miletos – the Millawanda of the royal Hittite chronicles and a settlement dating back to the second millennium BCE – was rebuilt to its final urban plan designed by Hippodamus in 479 BCE: the “Hippodamian system” remains to this day the exemplar for any settlement with its vertical and horizontal streets delineating the various districts and public spaces. Located on a promontory near the mouth of the river Maiandros, the city was embellished with monumental buildings during the ancient Greek and Roman periods, including a theatre and a stadium, a bouleuterion, three agorae and three harbours – the northern serving as a naval station and the two others commercial purposes. Until late antiquity, Miletos was considered one of the cultural pillars of Graeco-Roman civilisation and mother-city of numerous colonies across the Mediterranean. Nature, however, had its own designs, and during

⁸⁰² DALANAY, Harbour of Ephesos, 122—128; KÜLZER, Jenseits von Ephesos, 53—54.

⁸⁰³ DALANAY, Harbour of Ephesos, 128—133; KÜLZER, Jenseits von Ephesos, 53; IDEM, Harbor cities, 106.

⁸⁰⁴ Life of Willibald IV (93, 14—19 (HOLDER-EGGER). KÜLZER, Jenseits von Ephesos, 54—57; IDEM; on? Harbour cities, 106—107.

⁸⁰⁵ DARROUZES, Notitiae episcopatum, 219, 116 and passim. MERCANGÖZ, Anaia, 181—196; KÜLZER, Harbour cities, 105—106.

the late antique period the peninsula was steadily engulfed by the Maeander's alluvium with low-lying areas falling victim to annual floodings. The construction of dams and canals did little to remedy the situation, with parts of the archaeological site occasionally flooding to this day. As a result of the continual siltation, only the "Harbour of the Theatre" remained in use – via a canal that led to a harbour named "Skala Palation" in the thirteenth century.⁸⁰⁶

The middle Byzantine period for Miletus began with the Persian and Arab invasions which led to the construction of a new defensive circuit. This enclosed a much-reduced part of the city and used the ancient theatre as a foundation for the construction of a citadel. A series of earthquakes in the tenth and the eleventh centuries left much of the city in ruins, including its *kastron*, and it seems that no attempt was made to restore any of the public spaces or private dwellings. The lower city was completely abandoned and only the still-impressive ruins were left as a reminder of the old glory of the *polis*, giving it its new name *Palatia* or *Kastron ton Palation* – most probably in the thirteenth century. Before then, all official documents make use of the name "Miletos" without exception. The remaining population concentrated in the upper city at the foot of the ancient theatre/citadel, part of which was rebuilt as a residential district with dwellings following the semi-circular shape of the theatre. The rest of the settlement was a dense jumble of various buildings and squiggly alleys aligned with the slope of the terrain and/or the line of the city walls. Traces of more bulky and regular-shaped buildings may indicate administrative and/or military infrastructure.⁸⁰⁷

Didyma was the seaport of Miletos, located roughly sixteen kilometres to the southwest as the crow flies. The settlement was centred in and around the temple of Apollo Didymaios, a giant construction that never acquired a roof probably because of the technical limitations of the time. Already in antiquity there was a small settlement inside the temple. The latter was barricaded in the third and seventh centuries, and a late fifth/early sixth century basilica was destroyed by an earthquake and later rebuilt. The fortress of the Temple of Apollo was extensively renovated in the early twelfth century after the region was recaptured from the Turks. Outside the temple extensive remains survive, and the region along the Hieria Odos connecting Didyma with Miletos seems to have been densely populated, with (work)shops occupying both sides. After the mid-seventh century, the area was largely abandoned and witnessed a revival in the tenth century and later. The main harbour of Didyma was Panormos, renamed Hieron in the Middle Ages, about four kilometres to the northwest as the crow flies. To the west, south and east of Didyma, furthermore, numerous bays and coves such as the beach

⁸⁰⁶ Life of Willibald IV (93, 22 HOLDER-EGGER). NIEWÖHNER, Miletus, 255—257; RAGIA, Κοιλιάδα του Κάτω Μαιάνδρου, 173—175; HILD, Karien, 37—38, 40.

⁸⁰⁷ NIEWÖHNER, Miletus, 258—263; RAGIA, Κοιλιάδα του Κάτω Μαιάνδρου, 175—181; HILD, Karien, 41—42.

of Altinkum to south, offered havens and landing-places for vessels along with their passengers and merchandise.⁸⁰⁸

On the peninsula of Alikarnassos/Bodrum, the homonymous ancient Greek city located on a gulf in the south, opposite of the island of Cos, was one of the most famous *poleis* of the Graeco-Roman world, with the burial monument of the satrap Mausolus forming one of the ancient world's seven wonders. The city seems to have survived the first decades of the seventh century only to be destroyed by the Arabs in 668, along with Knidos located on the easternmost shore of the opposite Knidian peninsula to the south.⁸⁰⁹

Alikarnassos was soon replaced as a naval base by Strobilos located approximately twelve kilometres to the southeast on the foot of a hill rising just above sea-level. The characteristic conical shape of the hill dominates the scenery, especially when viewed from the sea, hence the name Στρόβιλος (i.e., “pinecone”). The settlement on the eastern foot of the hill likely had direct access to the sea in Byzantine times, with the creek ending in a small bay and creating siltation of some scale. In any case, several vaulted chambers have been excavated, and piers are still visible underwater: both would seem to indicate the presence of organised harbour facilities. The settlement extended in terraces onto the fortified hill, which was crowned with an imposing citadel. The purpose of its construction was the surveillance and protection of the section of the Sea route B that passed through the region. It is significant remarkable that in fine weather the city of Kos and its traffic are clearly visible from the hill, a common feature in neighbouring regions across the Aegean. Strobilos seems to have enjoyed a long period of continuous occupation. It may be presumed on the basis of other examples such as Monemvasia or Kastro Apalirou that with the appearance of the Arab fleets the population withdraw behind the fortified hilltop, making good use of the limited space through the construction of terraces. After the taking-back of Crete from the Arabs in 961, and thus the return of relative security across the Archipelago, the inhabitants of Strobilos probably reoccupied the districts *extra muros*. This period of peace ended in 1079 when the Turks reached the coast, forcing Saint Christodoulos to leave the city for Cos on the opposite shore. The citadel as it stands today is probably the work of the emirs of Menteşe, dating to the first half of the fourteenth century and conceived as a countermeasure to the Hospitaller castle in Bodrum.⁸¹⁰

Across the Alikarnassos peninsula, a series of secondary settlements – all of them coastal and following a development pattern like that of Strobilos – confirm that life continued during the

⁸⁰⁸ DARROUZES, *Notitiae episcopatum*, 220, 175 and *passim*. RAGIA, *Κοιλάδα του Κάτω Μαιάνδρου*, 146—150; PANTELIDIS – REINCHARDT, *Didyma*, 272—278; HILD, *Karien*, 43.

⁸⁰⁹ See above; also DARROUZES, *Notitiae episcopatum*, 224, 367 and *passim*. HILD, *Karien*, 63—64.

⁸¹⁰ FOSS, *Strobilos*, 148—151, 155, 159—164; HILD, *Karien*, 60—61.

transitional period.⁸¹¹ Thanks to Sea route B, the need for frequent stopovers for provisioning and resting by vessels and their passengers was never eliminated, thus sustaining the importance of some late-antique settlements and even creating the need for new.

Knidos – one of the founding cities of the Doric Hexapolis which dominated the south-eastern Aegean from c. 1100 BCE to 560 BCE – reached its peak in the Hellenistic period when it boasted a renowned medical school. It continued its life under Roman and Byzantine rule until destroyed by the Arabs in 668.⁸¹² Nonetheless, the settlement with its bishop found refuge in a location about twenty-five kilometres to the east of Knidos. Similarly, the modern-day village of Hizirşah occupies the location of medieval Stadia, roughly four kilometres as the crow flies from the ancient coastal settlement of Stadia/Eski Datça to its southeast, the port facilities of the latter being already abandoned from the fourth century BCE.⁸¹³

Markiane – possibly modern day Bozburun Kalesi – is referred to as a bishopric in all episcopal lists until the twelfth century. It was founded by Emperor Marcian – hence its name – in the well-protected gulf of Karaağac to the south-east of Rhodes. Its only reference in written sources comes from a hagiographic context: the *Translatio* of the remains of Saint Nicolas of Myra recounts that the sailors from Bari that had abducted the relics made a stop at the port. The incident took place in 1087, yet no further information is given as to the political status quo of Markiane in this period, that is whether the settlement was under Byzantine or Turkish control. Archaeological remains include a defensive circuit, dwellings – probably of the early period – ceramics, a church, and an ashlar-made harbour installation. Numerous landing places across the gulf of Karaağac are also in evidence.⁸¹⁴

Kaunos – known from the tenth century onwards also as Hagia the Lycian Xbide or Kbide – was a member of the Doric Hexapolis, just to the south-west of modern Dalyan. It was built on the estuaries of the river Kalbis, the modern day Dalyan Boğazi – namely, the “Dalyan strait”, today a permanent stream that originates in the nearby alluvial Köyceğiz Lake. As a result of this peculiar hydrography, Kaunos and its harbour faced siltation problems from early on. Additionally, the stagnant waters around the city resulted even in public health issues such as contagious diseases, malaria being the most important.⁸¹⁵ The ancient Greek and Roman settlement was provided with all the necessary public buildings. It underwent the usual pattern of changes during late antiquity, with the domination of private dwellings at the expense of public space, and then became a coastal *polis-kastron* in the

⁸¹¹ FOSS, Strobilos, 169—173; HILD, Karien, 50—51, 55—56

⁸¹² HILD, Karien, 73—75.

⁸¹³ DARROUZES, Notitiae episcopatum, 224, 369 and passim. HILD, Karien, 77—79.

⁸¹⁴ DARROUZES, Notitiae episcopatum, 224, 327 and passim. HELLENKEMPER – HILD, Lykien und Pamphylien, 713—714; HILD, Karien, 92—93.

⁸¹⁵ DARROUZES, Notitiae episcopatum, 224, 323 and 279, 333 and passim.

middle Byzantine period, centred on its fortified acropolis. Material evidence includes a ceramic kiln and churches. The main harbour was located at what is today the Suluklu lake, a heavily sedimented pocket of water that is connected via a canal with a coastal lagoon.⁸¹⁶

Patterns of trade

Economy and commerce along the Aegean coast of Asia Minor: some exceptional features

Introduction

Since the climate and the geomorphology of the west coast of Asia Minor are almost the same as those of the rest of the Aegean basin – and thus offer the same natural resources – the details will not be repeated here. The same goes for the production, use, and distribution of ceramics, which are discussed in detail across the present chapter. Focus will be given to some of the peculiarities stemming from the geography of the coast and its hinterland.

The alluvium and its role

Alluvial soils are remarkably fertile by reason of their composition, which is rich in clay, silt, sand, and gravel. They allow thus the cultivation of a wide range of crops, ranging from cereals to arboriculture. There is also, however, a negative aspect to alluvial valleys: likelihood of flooding meant disaster for farmers because of the damage caused to crops, while the population faced outbreaks of disease, especially malaria, because of the incidence of swamps. The construction of land reclamation works was the only viable remedy, although this required a considerable budget and workforce, while a positive cost-benefit ratio was not always ensured. As a result, only the state and / or great landowners could allocate the necessary funds to initiate such projects. The only alternative was further acquisition of land to compensate for loss(es) caused by natural phenomena.⁸¹⁷

Throughout the Byzantine period, the alluvial plains of western Asia Minor were used primarily for the cultivation of durum and common wheat. The mountain slopes along the valleys were used for viticulture while livestock farming was also present. When citing the inventory for the Byzantine expedition against Crete in 911, Constantine Porphyrogenitus gives the quantity of supplies coming from the *thema Thrakesion*: “20.000 *modioi* of barley, 40.000 *modioi* each of wheat, biscuits, and flour, 30.000 measures of wine, 10.000 animals for slaughter”.⁸¹⁸ Although these numbers were provisions for a large scale military expedition, thus forming an extraordinary compulsory obligation in kind, they

⁸¹⁶ HELLENKEMPER – HILD, *Lykien und Pamphylien*, 615—620; HILD, *Karien*, 93—95.

⁸¹⁷ For the (lower) Maeander valley see RAGIA, *Κοιλάδα του Κάτω Μαιάνδρου*, 348—350, also THONEMANN, *Maeander valley*, 10—12. The conditions were apparently the same for all of the alluvial plains across the east coast, and eventually for almost all the littoral across the Aegean, as has already been seen for the north and west coasts.

⁸¹⁸ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *De Cerimoniis* 44 (307, 140—143 ZUCKERMAN).

certainly give a realistic picture of yearly output in grain, wine and livestock. Furthermore, the requirement of 10.000 measures of flax fibre and 6,000 nails argues for the existence of developed artisanal production.⁸¹⁹

Further to the south-east, the regions of Caria and Lydia, which belonged to the *Thema Kibyrhαιoton*, had to provide 20,000 modioi of barley and 60,000 modioi of hardtack, wheat, and flour in cooperation with the region of the *thema Anatolikon*.⁸²⁰ As a result, we cannot deduce the exact quantities coming from the fringes of the eastern shore of the Aegean. Any further information for this region is lacking, although the otherwise barren Knidian peninsula was known for its wine-production during the Roman period.⁸²¹

A more detailed picture of land exploitation is provided by the well-known “Praktikon of the notary Adam”, drawn up in June 1073.⁸²² The *praktikon* was issued in accordance with a *chrysoboullon* of Michael VII, granting the rights of several *proasteia* belonging to the ἐπίσκεψις τῶν Ἀλωπεκῶν to his cousin, Andronikos Doukas,⁸²³ a man that for some of his contemporaries played a fatal or even treacherous part in the battle of Mantzikert. Alopekai was a locality in the vicinity of Miletos, while an *episkepsis* was a type of imperial domain.⁸²⁴ The ceded property included an οἰκοπροάστιον and four προάστια with all their buildings, supplies, and tenants (πάροικοι). The οἰκοπροάστιον ἡ Βάρις τοῦ Βαρσακουτινοῦ included the provisions stored in its warehouse – divided into the seeds for the next sowing or the next harvest (κατὰσπορά) and the annual stored harvest available at the time of the concession (ἀννόναν ἀπὸ τῆς παραθέσεως). The *kataspōra* included 260 *modioi* of wheat, 150 *modioi* of barley, five *modioi* of split beans and five *modioi* of flax seed. The *annona apo tes paratheseos* included 124 *modioi* of wheat, sixty of barley, and eight of flax seed. Livestock comprised two pairs of buffalo (in all probability water buffalo), and one pair of oxen. Two sets of ploughs with yokes were also counted along with one *modios* of iron-bound copper, probably for the production of ploughs and other tools.⁸²⁵

The rest of the property, however, was in a desolate state: an interesting although grim detail is the reference to the (obviously) deceased labourers of the *oikoproastion*: “Διὰ τῶν δούλων οὐδέν, διὰ τὸ ἀπόθανεῖν τούτους”.⁸²⁶ This rather unfortunate fact might be attributed either to some

⁸¹⁹ Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *De Cerimoniis* 44 (307, 144—145 ZUCKERMAN). RAGIA, *Κοιλιάδα του Κάτω Μαιάνδρου*, 356—358; PÜLZ – KAT, *Byzantinische Kleinfunde*, 697—712.

⁸²⁰ Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *De Cerimoniis* 44 (307, 159—163 ZUCKERMAN). English translation of the above-mentioned excerpts in HALDON; *Theory and practice*, 210.

⁸²¹ RAGIA, *Κοιλιάδα του Κάτω Μαιάνδρου*, 354.

⁸²² NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, *Έγγραφα Πάτμου*, 3—6.

⁸²³ POLEMIS, *Doukai*, 55—59.

⁸²⁴ *Λεξικό βυζαντινής ορολογίας Β΄*, 227—230, lemma ἐπίσκεψις.

⁸²⁵ NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, *Έγγραφα Πάτμου*, 10, 118—122.

⁸²⁶ NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, *Έγγραφα Πάτμου*, 10, 122—123.

extraordinary circumstances (perhaps a pandemic on a local scale?), or more probably to the overall abandonment of the *oikoproastion*: part of it had been left uncultivated and turned into pasture, while elsewhere it had been flooded by the Maeander and given over to wetland.⁸²⁷ Furthermore, a richly decorated domed church, replete with icons and liturgical utensils, and an equally luxurious mansion with domed triclinium, open terrace (ἡλιακὸν), and bath, were also abandoned.⁸²⁸ Despite this discouraging state of affairs, the gross revenues of the domain ceded to Andronikos Doukas still amounted to the relatively high 307 *nomismata*, with a net profit of 300 *nomismata*, and the *paroikoi* and their families in the other four *proasteia* were still alive and healthy together with their domestic animals.⁸²⁹

The “Praktikon of the notary Adam” has been used to advance the hypothesis as to the abandonment of the countryside in the late eleventh century, an assumption based on a very selective reading. However, it is hazardous in the extreme to extrapolate from a single written document giving only a snapshot of the longer term. From the perspective of the events that followed, we can see that Alopekai had come under the control of the Turks, and this lasted until the early twelfth century when it was retaken by the Byzantines. Nevertheless, from then until the late thirteenth century, the region of Miletos was counted among the richest parts of the state and continued to function as the centre of an imperial domain. It seems that the central administration was trying to put underutilised assets back into productivity in the interest of dynastic and political goals.⁸³⁰ In each case, the *praktikon* confirms that the alluvium was both a blessing and a curse for inhabitants living nearby, and this paradox would define the character of the Aegean coast of Asia Minor for centuries to come. However, the balance sheet is largely a positive one, since the fertile soil along with the favourable terrain and mild climate fostered a multifaceted agricultural sector which would reach its peak in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Natural resources of high value along the east coast of the Aegean

In view of their similarity of climate, the crops of the west coast of Asia Minor were typical of the rest of the Aegean basin: cereals, olive trees and oil, grapevines, and various fruits and vegetables had been cultivated since antiquity.⁸³¹ In Lycia, the dense and high-quality cedar forests were of strategic importance after the loss of the eastern provinces to the Arabs, especially Lebanon. The cedar of Lycia

⁸²⁷ NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Έγγραφα Πάτμου, 19, 303, 18, 271.

⁸²⁸ NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Έγγραφα Πάτμου, 10, 102—114.

⁸²⁹ NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Έγγραφα Πάτμου, 10, 123—13, 175. HARVEY, Economic expansion, 68.

⁸³⁰ FILDHUTH, Meander Delta, 65; THONEMANN, Maeander Valley, 259—267, 302—306.

⁸³¹ BELKE, Bithynien und Hellespont, 306—307, 310, 313; HELLENKEMPER – HILD, Lykien und Pamphylien, 156—174; RAGIA, Κοιλιάδα του Κάτω Μαιάνδρου, ΕΑΔΕΜ, Ελαιοκαλλιέργεια και ελαιόδεντρα, 251—254.

was an excellent raw material for the construction of (war)ships, while the pine provided pitch that was used both for caulking and the production of incendiary weapons including “Liquid Fire”. The harbour of Kaunos with its shipyard was an export centre at least until late antiquity.⁸³²

Mount Ide was known from antiquity for its dense forests. Timber collected on its northern slopes was taken to the coast via the river Skamandros as far as the ports of Ilion and Troas. That from the southern slopes was transported to Adramyttion. Pitch for the caulking of ships came either from larch (*Larix*) or a special conifer found on Ide, or from the turpentine tree/τερέβινθος (*Pistacia terebinthus*). Agents used for dyeing and tannin seem to have been extracted from the bark and above all the knobs and carpels of the Walloon oak at least from Byzantine times.⁸³³ Also specific to this area were a special variety of laurel tree with soft leaves and a type of sage called *Aethiopsis* which were used for medicinal purposes. Further to the south, a type of cheese called *oxygalaktinos* by Galen was produced in the region of Pergamos. The coastal plains of Troas were renowned for their horse-breeding in ancient times.⁸³⁴ Purple murex was fished along the coast from Sigeion to cape Lekton.⁸³⁵

Minerals were extracted in the region of Troas in two localities known as Ergasteria/Balya and Argyria/Karaaydin.⁸³⁶ In both locations, argentiferous galena and other ores were extracted from early antiquity until the early modern period. Especially in Argyria, chalcopyrite may also have been extracted with an analogy of 34.6 per cent copper and 30.5 per cent iron. Iron and zinc were mined in various locations across the Troas, and particularly in Ide. Alum was largely extracted in the region of Phokaia, though exploitation on an industrial scale began under Genoese control in the late-thirteenth century.⁸³⁷ Salt was extracted from saline hot springs in Troas, in the vicinity of the ancient city of Tragasai/Tuzla and exported from its port.⁸³⁸ Marbles included the *marmor Troadense*, a granite with a red-violet and/or purple variants. In the early-Byzantine period, its extraction and processing were tax-exempted. It was exported from the port of Troas.⁸³⁹

Artisanal activities: the textile industry of Assos and the Terrace Houses of Ephesos

Weaving tools have been found in Assos. Spinning whorls and hooks, weaving weights and needles feature in considerable numbers, yet their archaeological context and consequently their exact dating remains problematic. Generally, the finds have been dated on the basis of numismatic evidence to

⁸³² HELLENKEMPER – HILD, *Lykien und Pamphylien*, 174—177.

⁸³³ BELKE, *Bithynien und Hellespont*, 306—331.

⁸³⁴ BELKE, *Bithynien und Hellespont*, 316—317.

⁸³⁵ BELKE, *Bithynien und Hellespont*, 320.

⁸³⁶ BELKE, *Bithynien und Hellespont*: Argyria, 416, Ergasteria, 553.

⁸³⁷ BELKE, *Bithynien und Hellespont*, 324—325.

⁸³⁸ BELKE, *Bithynien und Hellespont*, 327, Tragasai, 1045—1046.

⁸³⁹ BELKE, *Bithynien und Hellespont*, 330—331. See also above, p. 159.

between the fifth and late-seventh centuries.⁸⁴⁰ They indicate a rather extensive textile industry which ended abruptly with the devastating earthquake that destroyed what was left of the late-antique settlement. It could be hypothesized that the professionals may have continued their activities in the new location of the city, but this is pure speculation.

Of especial interest is “Terrace House 2” (*Hanghaus 2*) in Ephesos. It was an industrial complex with eight waterwheel races, each connected to a workshop. The wheels rotated through a sophisticated system of canals supplied by an aqueduct. From the kinetic energy produced, a variety of machines such as mills, and a stone-saw were able to operate. Several construction phases have been discerned, and at least two mills were used in each case. On the basis of coin finds, the last construction phase of “Terrace House 2” seems to have been occupied into the first half of the seventh century.⁸⁴¹

One of the waterwheels was providing power to an advanced water-driven stone saw used to produce slabs. A practical experiment that included the construction of the hydraulic saw has confirmed its advanced conception, design, and operation. It seems to have been able to function with only one worker and allowed a maximum output of c. 330 m² of sawn slabs per year. Constructed in the late sixth/early seventh century, it represented the last phase of *Hanghaus 2* and must have been abandoned with the rest of the complex by the middle of the seventh century.⁸⁴²

The islands and the mainland: (monastic) trade and communication across the eastern Aegean in the eleventh century

This section will examine contact and interaction between the eastern coast of the Aegean and its neighbouring islands. As examples, two major monastic complexes located on two of these islands will be used: Nea Moni on the island of Chios in the north and St. John’s on Patmos in the south serve as case studies for the development of economic activities, and also of local and regional sea communication and trade routes and their subsequent disruption due to political events in the closing decades of the eleventh century.

Both monasteries share some significant characteristics, such as their location among the islands of the eastern Aegean and the generous support they received from emperors in the form of imperial *chrysoboulla*. Their main difference relates to the chronological context of their establishment. Nea Moni was founded by the imperial family in times of stability and prosperity, whilst

⁸⁴⁰ FAHLDECK, *Textilgerät aus Assos*, 117—119, 124 with a detailed description of the finds in 124—130.

⁸⁴¹ For a detailed analysis of the “Mill cascade” of Ephesos, see WEFERS, *Mühlenkaskade*, 207—209; dating of the facility, 101—115; description of the water supply system, 117—137; reconstruction and practical experiments 138—152; and the complex of *Hanghaus 2* in relation with the historical evolution of the city, 185—192.

⁸⁴² For an analysis of the hydraulic stone saw, see MANGARTZ, *Steinsäge*, 105—106; detailed description of the archaeological remains 8—32; reconstruction, and practical experiment 33—51; dating of the facility and the cutting machine, 53—58.

Saint John's arose during turbulent times through the action of a monk from southwestern Asia Minor, forced to leave the region because of the Turkish raids. The geographical allocation of the monasteries' real property is indicative of the time and circumstances of their establishment: the lands of the Nea Moni were situated mainly in western Asia Minor, and those of Saint John's on the islands adjacent to Patmos.

Nea Moni was founded shortly before 1042, with the initial support of the empresses Zoe and Theodora and later of Constantine IX Monomachos. From the *chrysoboulla* issued between 1044 – 1080 we know that the monastery owned a series of landed estates in different locations. The most important were in the region of Kalothekia and Eucheia, on the peninsula of Erythraia opposite Chios, about sixteen kilometres from the port of Perama (modern Çeşme).⁸⁴³ Another chrysobull stipulated that the monastery would receive one thousand *modioi* of grain for its needs annually. The grain was produced on two estates, Bessai and Helos, located at the littoral of western Asia Minor and indicating the close economic ties of the two regions.⁸⁴⁴ Additionally, the monastery owned a house in Constantinople (ἀνωγεοκάτωγον οἴκημα), used by the monks during their visits to the capital.⁸⁴⁵

With respect to its ships, a chrysobull issued in the year 1079 by Nikephoros III Botaneiates refers to an ἐξκουσσεῖα πλείων (sic) without further details.⁸⁴⁶ Another *chrysoboullon* from the year 1259 informs us that the monastery owned an unknown number of tax-exempted vessels, referred to by the term σανδάλια.⁸⁴⁷ The destinations of the small fleet certainly included the ports of Asia Minor. The distance between Chora, the capital of Chios, and Krene is about fifteen kilometres, and between Chios and Smyrna around 122 km. Constantinople is approximately 531 km away from Chios.

Unfortunately, our information about Nea Moni's own ships is fragmentary. To get a more complete picture we need to head south to the island of Patmos. There the monk Christodoulos founded the monastery of Saint John the Theologian in 1088, with the sanction of the emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081 – 1118).⁸⁴⁸

The monastic estates at the time of foundation consisted of two προάστεια on the islands of Leros and Leipsoi, both south-southeast of Patmos. Five years later in his testament (1093), Christodoulos left the monastery four ships of various types and tonnage: a) a κουτρούβιν, b) a πλατίδιον δικάταρτον, c) a πλατίδιον μικρόν and d) an ἐξελαστικόν.⁸⁴⁹

⁸⁴³ JGR I, 615—616, 634—635. DÖLGER-WIRTH, Regesten I 2, n. 862.

⁸⁴⁴ JGR I, 637, 639—640. DÖLGER-WIRTH, Regesten I 2, nos. 913, 914, 949.

⁸⁴⁵ JGR I, 631—632. DÖLGER-WIRTH, Regesten I 2, nos. 878, 879, 887.

⁸⁴⁶ JGR I, 643. DÖLGER-WIRTH, Regesten I 2, n. 1043a.

⁸⁴⁷ DÖLGER, Regesten III 1204 – 1282, n. 32—33; KANELAKES, Χιακά ανάλεκτα, 572.

⁸⁴⁸ DÖLGER-WIRTH, Regesten I 2, nos. 1139, 1147.

⁸⁴⁹ MM VI, 82; NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Πλοία της Πάτμου, 94. Eadem. Έγγραφα Πάτμου, *48.

First, we should attempt to categorize the various types of vessels. The terminology used for commercial ships by Byzantine sources is confusing. All in all, the words *πλατίδιον* (a cargo ship), *σανδάλιον* etc. refer to small ships of different kinds and are often used to describe fishing flotillas.⁸⁵⁰ From this we can assume that the *πλατίδιο δικάταρτο* was also a small ship, but with two masts and of larger capacity than the “standard” type.⁸⁵¹ *Κοντρούβιον* means “container” or “vessel”, and presumably this type of ship was suitable for the transport of liquids or had the shape of a container. Finally, the *ἐξελαστικόν* or *ἐξέλαστρον* was a fast boat.⁸⁵² This was probably the tax-free ship as the term “καὶ τῶν ἀφέσεων” suggests.⁸⁵³ With a capacity of around five hundred *modioi* (8.5 m³), we can estimate its dimensions on the basis of a document from the end of the twelfth century. There, a ship of 4.92 m in length and 2.81 m in width, and with a draught of 0.82 metres is mentioned.⁸⁵⁴ Its volume was 517 *modioi*, and we may reasonably deduce that the *ἐξελαστικόν* of the end of the eleventh century was of approximately the same dimensions.

It should be noted that the *ἐξελαστικόν* was only partially exempted from taxation. Whilst it was relieved of a series of secondary taxes and obligations, it had to pay the three main taxes: the *ἀντίναυλον*, the *κομμέρκιον*, and the *δεκατεία*.⁸⁵⁵ The *ἀντίναυλον* was a tax on commercial vessels according to their capacity. Most likely, too, it included the sailors or passengers of the ship.⁸⁵⁶ The *κομμέρκιον* was the standard duty either on the movements of goods or on their sale within imperial territory.⁸⁵⁷ Finally, the *δεκατεία* was imposed on supplies consisting of edible and drinkable goods.⁸⁵⁸

It is obvious that the ships of Chios and Patmos were useful for a number of activities such as communications with their landed property and administrative centres, and also in terms of trading different commodities. What kind of commodities might have been carried by their ships. We might take into account the natural resources available locally, as well as the production capabilities of the monasteries and their own demands. The island of Chios had the potential for diverse types of cultivation and animal-breeding, likely allowing Nea Moni not only to cover its needs but also to export some of its products as well. In contrast, in around 1088 Patmos is described as an island with rocky terrain and minimal water reserves, to such an extent that its limited soil fertility required intensive

⁸⁵⁰ AHRWEILER, Mer 409—410; MAKRIS, Spätbyzantinische Schifffahrt, 174.

⁸⁵¹ DIMITROUKAS, Reisen und Verkehr, 414.

⁸⁵² Or a fast battleship, Theophanes (398, 18 DE BOOR). See also Lemma *ἐξέλαστρον* in LBG; DIMITROUKAS, Reisen und Verkehr, 415.

⁸⁵³ VRANOUSE, Έγγραφα Πάτμου, *48, 72, 1—15 (n. 7). DÖLGER-WIRTH, Regesten I 2, n. 1150;

KARAGIANNPOULOS, Λεξικό βυζαντινής ορολογίας Α', 152—153.

⁸⁵⁴ DÖLGER, Regesten I 2, n. 1641. NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Έγγραφα Πάτμου, 122, 15—20 (n. 59).

⁸⁵⁵ VRANOUSE, Έγγραφα Πάτμου, 73, 20—26 (n. 7), 75. NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, Πλοία της Πάτμου, 96—97.

⁸⁵⁶ KARAGIANNPOULOS, Λεξικό βυζαντινής ορολογίας Α', 127.

⁸⁵⁷ OIKONOMIDES, Role of the state, 988.

⁸⁵⁸ KATSONE – GREGORIOU-IOANNIDOU, Λεξικό βυζαντινής ορολογίας Β', 44—45.

labour to make it suitable for farming.⁸⁵⁹ According to the *praktika*, the neighbouring islands of Leros and Leipsoi seem to have been in a better state.⁸⁶⁰ Writing to his brotherhood in a letter of between 1088 and 1093, Christodoulos refers to cheese and salted pork.⁸⁶¹ A reasonable assumption might be that within a relatively short period the monks had been able to improve the agricultural production of Patmos through intensive labour. Adding to these two products the provisions usual for a monastery and taking into consideration the tax exemption of the *δεκατεία*, we can create a catalogue of imported and exported wares that would have included cereals, wine, olive oil, fish, wax, books, and – though attested only in later centuries – mastic from Chios, a highly esteemed product.⁸⁶²

The methods of commercial exploitation are evident from our sources. The monks could use their ships directly, as in the case of the *πλατίδιον μικρόν*, which was sent to Crete “in service (of the monastery)” (*πρὸς ὑπηρεσίαν*).⁸⁶³ A monastery could also cede its ships for a specific period to an individual (or individuals), usually called *ναύκληρος*. They could also be entrusted with working capital to engage in trade activities. The latter may be documented in the reference to two people, *Ἰωάννου τοῦ Παγκᾶ* and *Βασιλείου Εὐριπιώτου τοῦ Μω[ρο]ῖωάννου*, each of whom was entrusted with the *κουτρούβιν*, and two hundred *νομίσματα χιᾶτα* and the *πλατίδιον δικάταρτον* with forty-two *ὑπέρπυρα* respectively.⁸⁶⁴ The ceding of the ships may be explained and contextualised by contemporary events. As the Turkish raids in the region of the eastern Aegean had forced the monks to abandon Patmos and to take refuge at Euripos, it is possible that Christodoulos wished to keep his ships on the move to cover the financial needs of the brotherhood whilst in exile.

Other details in the source material refer to limitations of movement imposed on ships. In the above-mentioned letter, Christodoulos’ phrase “*καὶ πωλείτωσαν πρὸς τὰ Στενά*” might refer to the customs in the harbour town of Abydos that were established during the early Byzantine period and reformed under Justinian I.⁸⁶⁵ For our period, the lead seals of several *kommerkiarioi* confirm the importance of this toll station marking the fiscal boundary of Constantinople.⁸⁶⁶ Furthermore, in the “*Typikon of Monomachos*”, drafted in 1045, we are informed that – among other limitations – the ships of the monasteries of Mount Athos were restricted from travelling up to Thessaloniki and its surrounding area, and also up to the Thracian port of Ainos.⁸⁶⁷ It is possible that similar restrictions

⁸⁵⁹ NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, *Ἐγγραφα Πάτμου*, 39 (n. 51).

⁸⁶⁰ NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, *Ἐγγραφα Πάτμου*, 54–56 (n. 52).

⁸⁶¹ VRANOUSE, *Ἐγγραφα Πάτμου*, *48.

⁸⁶² NYSTAZOPOULOU-PELEKIDOU, *Πλοία της Πάτμου*, 110. DÖLGER, *Regesten III* 1204 – 1282, n. 32–33.

⁸⁶³ VRANOUSE, *Ἐγγραφα Πάτμου*, *48; DÖLGER-WIRTH, *Regesten I* 2, n. 1170.

⁸⁶⁴ VRANOUSE, *Ἐγγραφα Πάτμου*, *48.

⁸⁶⁵ AHRWEILER, *Fonctionnaires*, 239–246; OIKONOMIDES, *Economic region*, 227–228.

⁸⁶⁶ Indicatively see NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, *Seals III*, 78 (n. 40. 13), 79 (n. 40. 17); GEROLYMATOU, *Αγορές και έμποροι*, 55–56.

⁸⁶⁷ PAPACHRYSSANTHOU, *Actes du Prôtaton*, 227, 65–67 (n. 8, II). DÖLGER-WIRTH, *Regesten I* 2, nos. 874, 876a,

applied also to the ships of Nea Moni. However, the use of “τὰ Στενά” and not the term “το Στενόν” could also imply the Straits of the Bosphorus too. Christodoulos orders in his letter that one of the monks should come to Constantinople and escort him back to the ship. This detail implies a relatively short distance from the capital. It is possible that the ship would be anchoring for trading purposes in one of the small ports around the capital on the European coasts of the Bosphorus.⁸⁶⁸

As for the other three ships, the first two were leased for the use of two private citizens and the third was sent from Patmos to Crete (c. 241 km by open sea) on behalf of the monastery. Finally, it is self-evident that there would have been communications with the islands of Leipsoi (fifty km away) and Leros (c. thirty km), since the monastery’s landed wealth was located on these islands.

The political events that led to the disruption of trade and communications along the eastern Aegean have already been presented. The maritime hinterland of both monasteries collapsed within a few years and, ultimately, the monks of Patmos were obliged to abandon their island.⁸⁶⁹ The fate of the brotherhood of Nea Moni on Chios is unknown, and the first part of the archive of Nea Moni comes to a halt in May 1080, thus being of no help.⁸⁷⁰ In any case, Sea route B and its local branches were disrupted for almost 20 years before the Byzantines could regain control of the area. We may plausibly assume that during this period the trading activities of the monasteries were disrupted, and their ships had difficulty obtaining safe passage in the Aegean.

To conclude, therefore: it has been shown that the granting of state privileges was a key factor in allowing monasteries to initiate commercial activities, though – on the debit side – these privileges came with specific prohibitions that aimed to control such endeavours. Various means of commercial exploitation were adopted by the monasteries, and undoubtedly a situation of so-called “financial risk” existed, which was certainly reduced in times of peace but in the midst of hostilities could lead to severe losses. Patmos was abandoned by its abbot and monks for some years and reoccupied only after the successful neutralisation of the Turkish raids by the Byzantines. The reestablishment of Byzantine power was the key factor permitting the restarting and further development of economic activities by the monasteries and the recovery of the entire region in general.

879.

⁸⁶⁸ KÜLZER, *Ossthrakien* (Europe), 208.

⁸⁶⁹ MM V, 81; *Lives of Christodoulos I* 58 (163, 1—5 POLEMIS – ANTONOPOULOU). THONEMANN, *Maeander valley*, 283—287.

⁸⁷⁰ JGR I, appendix XXII (644—645).

The role of the state

Monetary circulation

Coin finds are limited and fragmentary for both our periods. The last mintages are those of Constans II, found in Sardeis⁸⁷¹, Didyma,⁸⁷² and Ephesos all of Constantinopolitan provenance. In Adramyttion, an anonymous *folles* of 970 – 1092 has been discovered.⁸⁷³ This scarcity of finds confirms the picture of disruption after 641, and likely also after the 1070s.⁸⁷⁴ It should again be remembered that difficulty in discovering coins does not necessarily imply an absence of monetary transactions of whatever scale. The *panegyris* of Saint John the Theologian in Ephesos offers the most characteristic example. When in 795 Emperor Constantine VI visited the city to pay his honours to the saint, he remitted the *kommerkion* of the fair, which seemingly amounted to one hundred pounds of gold. It seems that the Ephesos *panegyris* was of importance at least at a regional and probably at an interregional level until the middle of the eleventh century. The commercial transactions that took place could not have been facilitated in any other way than via the use of coin, in a context of stability across the Aegean after 741 boosting commerce. This period came to an end with the Arab conquest of Crete. When the island was again taken by the Byzantines, a revival took place only to be disturbed by the appearance of the Turks on the Asian shore.

Written evidence suggests that – after a first wave of pillaging and destruction in the countryside – the Turks entered the major urban centres of the Aegean littoral under terms, and in many cases as mercenaries of the various contenders of the Byzantine throne. Tzachas is the best documented example: it seems that he entered Smyrna without the use of military force, and soon convinced (or coerced) the local shipbuilders into constructing a fleet on his behalf. The destruction of Adramyttion by the emir's forces was in all probability a demonstration of power to subdue the region to the north of his core territories. In this context, after a short disruption economic activity continued as before, and the existing Byzantine coins were a totally acceptable medium of transaction for the self-made emirs along the littoral. With the gradual Byzantine recovery after 1096, the mint of Constantinople certainly poured the new *hyperpyron* and its denominations across the region, although most of the finds come from the reign of Manuel I and, after 1204, with the establishment of the state of Nicaea.⁸⁷⁵

⁸⁷¹ MORRISSON – POPOVIĆ – IVANIŠEVIĆ, *Trésors monétaires*, 365, n. 294, 378—379, nos. 309—310.

⁸⁷² PANTELIDIS – REINCHARDT, *Didyma*, 269, fn. 36.

⁸⁷³ YAĞIZ, *Adramytteion*, 358.

⁸⁷⁴ MORRISSON, *Coins*, 78—81.

⁸⁷⁵ MITSIOU, *Wirtschaft und Ideologie*, 150—155; GIARENES, *Θεόδωρος Λάσκαρις*, 208—209

Seals

For the years between 641 and 741, the littoral of Asia Minor came under the broad jurisdiction of the *kommerkiarioi*. The provinces of western Asia Minor formed joint areas of jurisdiction together with provinces of the interior.⁸⁷⁶ For example, Asia occasionally formed an administrative entity either with Caria and Lycia or with Rhodes and Chersonesos (i.e., the Knidos peninsula), as already mentioned above. In 721/722, Anastasios – *hypatos* and *basilikos balnitor* – became a *genikos kommerkiarios* of the *apotheke of Asia, Caria, of all the islands (τῶν νήσων ὅλων) and of the Hellespont*.⁸⁷⁷ In 690/691 Georgios, *skribon*, became *genikos kommerkiarios* of the *apotheke of Asia, Chios, and Lesbos*.⁸⁷⁸ *Hellespont and Lydia* formed another pair of late-Roman provinces under a *kommerkiarios* in 727/728.⁸⁷⁹ Lycia was also combined with Pamphylia and the littoral of Isauria (719/720),⁸⁸⁰ or with Pisidia (722/723),⁸⁸¹ to cover the needs of the military forces stationed across the south-eastern Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean.

Before the beginning of the ninth century, the *basilika kommerkia* had disappeared from the Aegean coast of Asia – or at least were not so important as to justify the right of their officials to secure their documents and / or merchandise with seals made of lead. A lead seal of an *horeiarios* of Smyrna survives from the eleventh century, indicating that the city and its vicinity supplied Constantinople with cereals.⁸⁸² This is further supported by written evidence from the ninth century, where the existence of coordinated convoys from Ephesos/Phygela to the capital, carrying various products from imperial and church estates located across the region, is attested.⁸⁸³

As far as the *panegyris* of Ephesos is concerned, it continued to play an interregional role enhanced by the importance of the city as a pilgrimage site, though no further information on the taxation of the fair has survived.⁸⁸⁴ In the chrysobull of 1082, Ephesos – known at this time to the Italian merchants as “Theologo” – and Phokaia are mentioned. In these two ports the Venetians were granted the right to do business without paying the *kommerkion*. Nonetheless, the merchants of the

⁸⁷⁶ The most recent catalogues can be found in RAGIA, *Apothekai of Asia Minor*, 227—236, and MONTINARO, *Commerciaires byzantines*, 443—535.

⁸⁷⁷ RAGIA, *Apothekai of Asia Minor*, 234; ZV I 1, 306, n. 226; BRANDES, 548, n. 186; MONTINARO, *Commerciaires byzantines*, 506, n. 149,

⁸⁷⁸ RAGIA, *Apothekai of Asia Minor*, 230; ZV I 1, 249, n. 168; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 529; n. 92; MONTINARO, *Commerciaires byzantines*, 466, n. 58

⁸⁷⁹ RAGIA, *Apothekai of Asia Minor*, 235; ZV I 1, 316, n. 236; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 551, n. 199; MONTINARO, *Commerciaires byzantines*, 513—514, n. 162 ; CHEYNET – MORRISSON – SEIBT, *Collection Seyrig*, 103, n. 139

⁸⁸⁰ RAGIA, *Apothekai of Asia Minor*, 234; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 547, n. 178; MONTINARO, *Commerciaires byzantines*, 502, n. 143

⁸⁸¹ RAGIA, *Apothekai of Asia Minor*, 234; BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 547, n. 180; MONTINARO, *Commerciaires byzantines*, 509, n. 153; ZV I 1, 225a and b; DOSeals II, 69.2a and b

⁸⁸² CHEYNET, *Hôrreiaroi*, 15—16.

⁸⁸³ *Vita des Gregorios Dekapolites*, 82, 10—14.

⁸⁸⁴ *Vita S. Lazari in monte Galesio*, GEROLYMATOY, *Αγορές*, 129—131

Republic were not active across western Asia Minor until the end of the twelfth century at the earliest.⁸⁸⁵ When the *chrysoboullon* was released in 1082, the political situation along the coast presented a somewhat unstable context for the conduct of any kind of transaction. When stability returned gradually in the closing years of the eleventh century or early decades of the twelfth, the crown and the church showed great consistency in re-establishing their rights over the lush plains and valleys of the littoral and interior to recover revenues that had been lost for about twenty years. With most of the products being staples – that is, bulk commodities of strategic importance for the supply of Constantinople – the Byzantine state had no intention of leaving their transportation in foreign hands, even if these were the “loyal subjects and allies” of Venice. Here, a pattern like that of commodities coming from the Black Sea can be traced, by which western merchants were virtually blocked from being active in the region of the *Euxeinos Pontos*. In any case, it seems clear that interregional trade was in the hands of Byzantine merchants until 1204, when tectonic geopolitical changes redefined the economic and consequently commercial map of the entire Aegean basin.

Trade and communication: from the “Dark Ages” to the “short” eleventh century

The ports and emporia along eastern Bithynia must have been abandoned by the end of the seventh century, some surviving as coastal villages with *skalai* and anchorages that served the passing ships. In fact, Adramyttion remained the only settlement of some size at the easternmost end of the homonymous gulf. Further to the south, Elaia – seaport of Pergamon and Smyrna, and a city with a harbour of enduring importance – seems to have exerted a stable presence across the middle- Byzantine period.

With the ports of Ephesos rendered virtually redundant by the eighth century because of sedimentation coming from the Kaystros, a series of ports and anchorages emerged along the newly created shoreline. The most important were Kumtepe, Pamucak, and Phygela – the latter gradually gaining in importance up to the late Middle Ages. The much-cited passage in the Chronography of Theophanes, according to which the emperor Constantine VI “remitted the customs dues of the fair” of Saint John the Theologian, indicates regular commercial activity across the region in the year 795 which must have begun some decades before. Hence, the period of discontinuity for commercial activities in the city cannot have lasted more than a century.

Further to the south, Anaia and Didyma – the seaport of Miletos – retained their importance at least until the late-thirteenth century, though at a reduced scale.

⁸⁸⁵ GEROLYMATOY, *Αγορές*, 131–133.

Alikarnassos was destroyed by the Arabs in 668 along with Knidos, but the latter was soon replaced by Strobilos as a naval base and commercial harbour. Thanks to its strategic position, Strobilos maintained a pivotal role along Sea route B, and it is mentioned by Saint Willibald in 723 and by the pilgrim Saewulf in 1103 / 1104. The Jews had a significant presence in the city, as is observed in the *chrysoboullon* of 1082. In the twelfth century – with Jewish-owned vessels having a total capacity of thirty thousand *modioi* – emperor Manuel I granted them tax-exemptions across the empire. Furthermore, Jewish control over the trade activities of Strobilos is further confirmed by the fact that, despite the privileges granted to them in 1082, the Venetians gave Rhodes, which lay opposite, a more prominent role in their own commercial networks.⁸⁸⁶ Moreover, some of the secondary ports and havens dotting the Alikarnassos peninsula were important as havens, the small bay of Serçe Liman being the most well-known (and indeed “famous”) from early antiquity. Finally, Markiane and Kaunos completed the chain of harbours across the Aegean shore of Asia Minor, being the first (or last) stations for those that travelled across the Mediterranean.

Despite their mention as settlements where the Venetians had the right to trade under certain privileges, the coastal cities of Asia Minor were more probably used as stopping points along Sea route B by ships coming from Palestine and Syria rather than as handling places for trans-Mediterranean trade. It has been suggested that the islands opposite the coast offered more favourable conditions for commerce, since their main harbours were not threatened by sedimentation and because of their specialised products – mastic in the case of Chios and wine in the case of Samos.⁸⁸⁷ Again, these conditions developed fully in the twelfth century, yet their beginning must be traced back to the eleventh century, with the temporary Seljuk occupation of the mainland regions affecting them only in the short term.

⁸⁸⁶ Life of Willibald IV (HOLDER-EGGER), 93, 20; Saewulf (76, 598—601 HUYGENS). FOSS, Strobilos, 147, 149—152, 164—168; RAGIA, Κοιλιάδα του Κάτω Μαιάνδρου, 374—378; LILIE, Handel und Politik, 168

⁸⁸⁷ GEROLYMATOU, Αγορές, 133.

3.2.4 The west coast of the Aegean

Geography and geopolitics

Introduction

The region that extends between the Tempe valley in the north and the island complex of Kythera and Antikythera in the south is the next sub-region of the Aegean under examination (maps 19 – 24).⁸⁸⁸ Considered the region at the heart of Hellenic civilisation, it stands out for its rich and diverse terrain, with numerous peninsulas, promontories and bays along the shore, and a fragmented hinterland characterised by steep mountains separated by fertile plateaus and river valleys. Many of the coastal and inland plains that dominate the landscape today were, until the middle of the nineteenth century, extensive swamps and lakes that could only partially be cultivated when their water-level was falling. Because of the spread of malaria among the population, these water basins became the target of massive drainage projects – sometimes since the Mycenaean period- the most characteristic case being this of Lake Kopais in Boeotia. The islands adjacent to the mainland are Spetses, Hydra, Aegina, Salamina, and Euboea. The small group of islands including Kythera and Antikythera, located between the north-west of Crete and south-east of the Peloponnese, was of strategic importance since it controlled the western approaches away from and towards the Aegean, connecting it with the Adriatic and the western Mediterranean.

From Mount Olympus to the Isthmus of Corinth

Olympus, the mythical abode of the ancient Greek gods, is separated from Mount Kissavos in the south by the steep Tempe Valley, crossed by the great river of Thessaly, Peneios. The Peneios and its tributaries spring from the mountain range of Pindos in the west, functioning essentially as the “water reservoir” of the Greek peninsula. The mountain range that extends from the Tempe continues right to the south, forming the Pelion Mountain and the homonymous peninsula which creates the Pagasetikos Gulf. Further to the south, the mountains of Othrys and Oite dominate the landscape, with the fertile valley of the Spercheios River stretching between them. Boeotia is characterised by an extensive plain – the valley created by the river Boeotic Kephisos. South of Thebes, the plain of the river Asopos extends to the west from the Gulf of Corinth up to the southern Gulf of Euboea in the east.⁸⁸⁹ Attica, divided into the two sub-regions of Athens and Mesogeia, is a fertile flat land with Cape Sounion at its southernmost point. At the core of Attica sits the Athens basin, occupying the triangle of land

⁸⁸⁸ For what follows see KODER – HILD, *Hellas und Thessalien*, 42—48; PHILIPPSON, *Das byzantinische Reich*, 125—128; TALBERT, *Atlas*, 55, 57—58.

⁸⁸⁹ VIONIS, *Boeotia*, 132—134, with the hypothesis that Asopos might have been navigable up to Thebes.

between the mountains of Parnetha and Pentele to the north, Hymettus to the east, and Pateras to the west. Its seaport is Piraeus at the southern end of the basin on the coast of the Saronic Gulf, where the Attic river Kephisos has its estuaries. The geographical limit of Attica in the west is the Isthmus of Corinth.

The eastern Peloponnese

The Peloponnese is a peninsula that is separated from mainland Greece by the gulf of Corinth. Its diverse relief and its encirclement by sea – the Aegean to the east, the Mediterranean to the south, and the Adriatic to the west – has created different climatic zones that have affected the natural environment and consequently the development of the human presence across the millennia, as is also in the case for mainland Greece. Here, I will present the eastern coast and its hinterland.

From Corinth, the small peninsula of Epidauros protrudes in a south-easterly direction creating the gulf of Argolis.⁸⁹⁰ Numerous islands, geological extensions of the mainland, form a wreath around the Epidauros peninsula. Moving along the coast, the steep shores of Arcadia and Laconia created by the Parnonas mountain range dominate the terrain, with numerous bays and coves creating a lacy coastline. Monemvasia, built on a rock that connects to the opposite shore via a strip of land, dominates the gulf of Epidauros-Limera. Reaching cape Maleas and turning to the west, the small islet of Elaphonesos and the island of Kythera form a strait. The notional line that connects cape Maleas with Kythera, Antikythera, and the west of Crete forms the limit of the Aegean Sea to the west.

Along this coastline only the River Inachos has a permanent flow, crossing the plain of Argolis. We might add the great river of Laconia, the Eurotas, which flows across the Laconian plain and empties into the Laconic Gulf to the south. Numerous streams with seasonal flow end on the eastern Peloponnesian shore.

The climate of the eastern Aegean coast is typical of the Mediterranean, with hot dry summers and mild rainy winters, with regular snowfall and frost on the mountainous areas, excepting local variation especially in terms of annual precipitation.

Historical development

The years 641 – 741

At least from the beginning of the seventh century, the Slavs dominated the regions of central Greece (*Stereia Hellas*), Thessaly, and the Peloponnese, forcing the native inhabitants to seek refuge in the coastal regions and on islands. Reflected in the distribution of Slavic place names, the Slavs maintained

⁸⁹⁰ For the region of southern Argolid, an extensive field-survey has been published, JAMESON – RUNNELS – van ANDEL, *Southern Argolid*, 13ff.

control of inland areas which were for a long time detached from Byzantine authority. They settled on the plains and coasts of Thessaly and central Greece, where the Slavic Belegezetai tribe is attested as having supplied the besieged inhabitants of Thessalonike with grain. It seems, however, that coastal regions such as Attica remained under direct imperial control, as is indicated by the movement and wintering of the army under Emperor Constans II in 662 / 663 in Athens.⁸⁹¹

Regarding the Peloponnese, the Slavs were established throughout the peninsula, but mainly in its western and central parts. The newcomers seem to have taken advantage of the demographic collapse of the region and settled in the abandoned countryside, while the remaining Greek-speaking population found refuge in the fortified cities of the east coast like Monemvasia, or wherever their surroundings offered protection. A degree of coexistence developed slowly between the two groups, and this is encapsulated in the archaeological evidence.⁸⁹²

The reestablishment of direct Byzantine authority over the southern zone of the Balkans can be traced sporadically, but with considerable security from the end of the seventh century. The military command (and later *thema*) of Hellas is attested in the sources for the first time in 695. The next testimony occurs in 725 / 726, when the fleets of the *Helladikoi* and the *Kyklades Nesoi* rebelled against Leo III. After crowning a certain Kosmas⁸⁹³ emperor, they moved against Constantinople but were defeated by the central fleet, which made good use of “Liquid fire”, thus swiftly quelling the revolt. If nothing else, this event reveals the existence of a naval force whose objective was to patrol the coasts and islands of the central Aegean to prevent Arab naval raids. Furthermore, two seals and the treasure known as the “Velestino Hoard” – both belonging to prominent Slav leaders who were granted court titles – indicate that the Slavs of the regions of Thessaly and Sterea Hellas had come under imperial influence.⁸⁹⁴

With the above-mentioned evidence in mind, we can say that the borders of the military command and later *thema of Hellas* presumably included the coastal regions of Thessaly, central Greece, and Euboea, and perhaps the eastern part of the Peloponnese.⁸⁹⁵

⁸⁹¹ *Miracula* I 179, 254 (175, 4—5, 214, 9—19 LEMERLE); *Liber Pontificalis* LXXVIII, II (343, 6 DUCHESNE); KODER, *Slavische Siedlungsgebiete*, 321—322, 325—326; KODER – HILD, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 56; AVRAMEA, *Βυζαντινή Θεσσαλία*, 120—121; KISLINGER, *Regionalgeschichte*, 32—34.

⁸⁹² *Chronicle of Monembasia*, 10, 45—58; *Life of Willibald IV* (93, 12—13 HOLDER-EGGER). McCORMICK, *Origins*, 131; KISLINGER, *Regionalgeschichte* 92—100; KODER, *Slavische Siedlungsgebiete*, 321, 326; LAMPROPOULOU – ANAGNOSTAKES – KONTE – PANOPOULOU, *Ερμηνεία των αρχαιολογικών τεκμηρίων της Πελοποννήσου*, 220—221.

⁸⁹³ *PmbZ*, n. 4093 Kosmas.

⁸⁹⁴ Theophanes (405, 14—24 DE BOOR); Nikephoros 60 (128, 8—130, 14 MANGO). KODER, *Aigaion Pelagos*, 78—79; KODER – HILD, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 57—58; ZUCKERMAN, *Learning from the enemy*, 124; BRUBAKER – HALDON, *Byzantium in the iconoclast era*, 733, 739—740; HALDON, *the Seventh century*, 88; SEIBT, *Slawenarchonten in Griechenland*, 28; IDEM, *Weitere Beobachtungen*, 460—462; CURTA – SZMONIEWSKI, *Velestino hoard*, 197—201, 211—215 and *passim*.

⁸⁹⁵ KODER – HILD, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 57; KISLINGER, *Regionalgeschichte*, 34.

The eleventh century

The establishment of peace and security after 1018 allowed Thessaly, central Greece, and the Peloponnese to be fully incorporated into the economic structure and trading network of the empire. Towns such as Demetrias, Corinth, Athens, Thebes, Lakedaimon, and Monemvasia witnessed continuous growth, despite the short disruption of the Norman war. Material evidence in the form of lead seals, coin finds, public and private structures, and ecclesiastical monuments including monasteries such as Daphni and Hosios Loukas combine with the written sources to offer insights into a prosperous society. Indeed, during the critical period of the later eleventh century, the regions of Thessaly, central Greece, and the Peloponnese remained the only territories of the empire where local administration was functional, ensuring the relatively systematic collection of taxes and the recruitment of troops.⁸⁹⁶

Recent scholarship has suggested that the central government was not interested in keeping a close eye on the southern Balkans. It preferred to work through the local elites, the most prominent members of which received honorary titles from the emperor. As long as public order and taxation were secured by the officials sent from the capital, the local communities were free to regulate their affairs as they wished.⁸⁹⁷ This status quo could be threatened by a sudden increase in taxation, which usually led to general resentment and even open revolt. The work of Kekaumenos,⁸⁹⁸ a retired military officer who spent his last years on his estates in Thessaly in the 1070s, gives an acute description of provincial society and politics.⁸⁹⁹ It seems that Demetrias was temporarily taken by the rebel forces of Peter Deljan in 1040 – 1041, only to be regained by the imperial army soon thereafter.⁹⁰⁰ During the spring and summer of 1066, an uprising centred on Trikala and Larissa and provoked by excessive tax increases, quickly faded out.⁹⁰¹ About forty years later in the autumn of 1083, the advance of the Normans under Robert Guiscard went up in smoke in front of the capital Thessaly. With the death of Guiscard at Kephallenia in the summer of 1085, the invaders were swift in evacuating their bases in Greece.⁹⁰²

⁸⁹⁶ HARVEY, *Economic expansion*, 213–217; GEROLYMATOU, *Αγορές και εμπόριο*, 152ff; KODER – HILD, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 126–129; 141–142; 144–145; 205–206; 269–271; AVRAMEA, *Βυζαντινή Θεσσαλία*, 31–35; 136–141; 183–184; LAIOU, *Regional networks*, 137–145; SCHMINCK, *Osios Lukas*, 377–380; CURTA, *Southeastern Europe*, 277–279; ANGOLD, *Political history*, 130–131.

⁸⁹⁷ Kekaumenos (248, 9–252, 14 LITAVRIN). SVORONOS, *Cadaster of Thebes*, 11–19, 67–68; NEVILLE, *Authority*, 39–48; 119ff.

⁸⁹⁸ <http://pbw2016.kdl.kcl.ac.uk/person/Anonymus/274/>.

⁸⁹⁹ NEVILLE, *Authority*, 136ff.; 174–176; ANGOLD, *Political history*, 91–92, 97–99; GOUNARIDES, *Εξουσία*, 271–274; CURTA, *Southeastern Europe*, 279–281.

⁹⁰⁰ Kekaumenos 31 (188, 26–190, 17 LITAVRIN).

⁹⁰¹ Kekaumenos 74 (268, 17–280, 24).

⁹⁰² KODER – HILD, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 63–64, 198; SOUSTAL – KODER, *Nikopolis und Kephallenia*, 57, 176. 234; KISLINGER, *Vertauschte Notizen*, 138–139; STEPHENSON, *Balkan frontier*, 171–174; CURTA, *Southeastern Europe*, 273–275.

As far as naval activities in the region of the western and central Aegean are concerned, until c. 1080 the *themata* of *Kyklades Nesoi*, *Hellas*, *Peloponnesos*, and *Crete* provided the small fleets that patrolled the coastal waters, while the main provincial fleet remained that of the *thema Kibyrriaion*. The west coasts of the Aegean were not afflicted by the misfortunes that hit the eastern shore at the end of the eleventh century. Kekaumenos alone mentions in his *Strategikon* the sack of Demetrias sometime during the 1030s or 1040s, seemingly by a small Arab detachment of twenty-five men though any supplementary information is lacking. During the last decade of the eleventh century, the thematic fleets of the *Kyklades Nesoi*, *Hellas*, and *Peloponnesos* passed to the authority of the *megas doux*, while in Crete a *doux* / *katepano* was appointed.⁹⁰³

Pathways of communication

Introduction

The complex relief along the coast and hinterland of Thessaly, Hellas, and the Peloponnese to a large extent influenced communication routes and the construction of roads. As with other regions under examination, the modern highways follow the routes established from antiquity, the most characteristic case being the coastal road that connects Athens with Thessalonike. Interestingly, written sources from the tenth century onwards – mainly *Lives* of holy men – contain rich information as to the itineraries of their protagonists and other individuals, especially at the regional and local level. Despite their inherent problems as historical sources, these *Vitae* provide valuable information on many aspects of everyday life. I will begin a description of communication pathways first in relation to Thessaly and Hellas, and then look at the Peloponnese. A discussion of some characteristic examples from the lives of local saints will follow.

Thessaly and Hellas

By reason of its location at the centre of the Hellenic peninsula and its geographical relief with the extensive landlocked plain, Thessaly served as a crossroads. Larissa formed the central node of all (inter)regional and local roads.⁹⁰⁴ The main artery connecting Thessalonike with Athens passed through the capital of Thessaly. From Larissa, it was possible to cross the Sarantaporon pass to the north and reach the fortress of Servia in west Macedonia. Following the riverbed of Peneios to the west

⁹⁰³ Kekaumenos 33 (200, 13—202, 16 LITAVRIN). KISLINGER, *Ruhm der Rhomania*, 44; CHEYNET, *Stratège*, 190—191; ARHWEILER, *Byzance et la mer*, 132—133; 159—163; MALAMUT, *Iles*, 317—319; KODER, *Aigaion Pelagos*, 80—81; HILD – HELLENKEMPER, *Lykien und Pamphylien*, 125; MALAMUT, *Iles*, 323—325; TSOUGARAKIS, *Byzantine Crete*, 77—78; 180—185; OIKONOMIDES, *administrative evolution*, 147—149; GREGORIOU-IOANNIDOU, *Παρακμή*, 72.

⁹⁰⁴ AVRAMEA, *Βυζαντινή Θεσσαλία*, 110—117; KARAGIORGOU, *Late antique Thessaly*, 16—19.

of Larissa, a road led to the city of Trikala, offering passage to Epirus in the west and to western Macedonia in the north (that is, to the cities of Arta and Kastoria respectively). North of Trikala, the road continued via the city of Stagoi / Kalambaka. There, a western branch climbed the slopes of Pindos, and through the precipitous mountain pass of Zygos / Katara (altitude 1690 m) led on to Metsovo and Ioannina.⁹⁰⁵ To the east of Larissa, a number of secondary roads provided access to the city's Aegean seaports.⁹⁰⁶ To the south, the Athens-Thessalonike road traversed the Thessalian plain, reaching its end – via Pharsalus / Pharsala and Domokos – at Zetounion / Lamia. A second southern axis connected Larissa with Demetrias / Volos, and from there continued southwards and parallel to the coast, passing through Phthiotidai Thebai / Nea Anchialos, Almyros, and Pteleos, before terminating also in Lamia. This ancient city formed Hellas' main communication node. To its west, Neai Patrai/Ypate secured the passage which led to the mountains of central Greece, and from there onwards to Aetolia and Akarnania to the southwest.⁹⁰⁷ To the south of Lamia, the road split into two at the pass of Thermopylae: one that followed the coast of Phthiotis and Boeotia before turning southwest onto the Boeotian plain, and another that traversed the interior – passing first through Lebadeia / Livadeia, where a road continued west through Delphi to Naupaktos, and then on through Thebes / Theva. This glorious ancient polis stood at a crossroads, from which an eastern axis led to Euripos / Chalkida and the island of Euboea, while to the south several roads crossed the mountains of northern Attica ending in the Athenian basin.⁹⁰⁸ From Athens, a westward road led to the Isthmus of Corinth and the Peloponnese, having taken in the steep coastal passage of Skyronidai Petrai / Plagion Kakon / Kakia Skala, hanging 500 m above the sea. Additionally, from Athens another road led south to Peiraeus, while the inland of Attica, the Mesogeia, was still served by the ancient Greek network of routes. Its main artery traversed the Mesogeia in a southerly direction, ending up at Akroterion Kolonai / cape Sounion with the Temple of Poseidon at its top.⁹⁰⁹

Euboea and the adjacent islands

On the island of Euboea, the starting point for all roads was Euripos. A road to the north stretched across the interior, passing through the settlement of Mandoudion and likely continuing up to the northern shores – taking in Oreos and going as far as Aidepsos. Its course was dictated by geography, since the abrupt coastline along the northern Euboea Gulf did not permit the construction of a paved

⁹⁰⁵ KODER – HILD, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 90—92, AVRAMEA, *Βυζαντινή Θεσσαλία*, 74ff.

⁹⁰⁶ KODER – HILD, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 93—94.

⁹⁰⁷ KODER – HILD, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 94—95.

⁹⁰⁸ KODER – HILD, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 95—98, AVRAMEA, *Βυζαντινή Θεσσαλία*, 98—103.

⁹⁰⁹ KODER – HILD, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 98—99.

road in the context of the technology of the time. Even today, the asphalt highway connecting Chalkida with Aidepsos is a notorious route.

From Euripos, an axis running south followed the coastline of central Euboea, thus avoiding the mass of the Dirphe Mountain. It likely terminated at the port of Kyme, halfway along the east coast. It provided a most welcome alternative for seafarers since it avoided the most dangerous milestone of Sea route A: the (in)famous Ακρωτήριο Ξυλοφάγος (*Xylophagos*, namely “the one that eats the ships away”) / Akroterion Kaphereus / Cavo D’oro (probably stemming from the Italian *Cavo duro*, meaning “difficult crossing”), where even modern vessels struggle as they cross the strait between the cape and the island of Andros. A branch of this southern axis probably ended at Karystos, the important coastal settlement of southern Euboea.

On the islands adjacent to the mainland – the Voreies Sporades and the islands of the Saronic Gulf – cobbled roads that allowed at least for the movement of pack animals must have existed, while in all of the above-mentioned regions a network of pathways supplemented the larger roads.⁹¹⁰

The Peloponnese

From Corinth, where the road from Athens came to an end, three axes began their course. The western followed the generally even coastline and ended at Patras. The southern took a south-eastern direction via Argos. There it split into two branches: one following the shore before turning westwards to traverse the foothills of the Arcadic mountains up to the basin of Tripolis. From there, a southern road led to Laconia by way of Sparta, ending at the Laconic Gulf. The other branch continued along the steep coastline of the eastern Peloponnese to Monemvasia.⁹¹¹

Near Lakedaimon, the monastic church of *Νέα Γέφυρα* (i.e., New Bridge) was founded in 1027 to protect a recently erected bridge over the River Eurotas. The short and rudimentary testament written by the monk Nikodemos, the patron of the project, provided for the maintenance of both his small monastery and the bridge.⁹¹² No other details are given but it can be reasonably assumed that the costs of maintaining the bridge would have been covered by the budget of the religious foundation. It might be of no coincidence that the monastery came under imperial protection and was to be “inspected by and cared for by the judge and strategos, who govern the theme”, and that the bishop of Lakedaimon and his clergy were not “allowed to exercise any authority in this church, not even to set foot in it”.⁹¹³ We can only speculate here, but surely a bridge of whatever size was deemed an element of

⁹¹⁰ KODER – HILD, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 99–100.

⁹¹¹ AVRAMEA, *Επικοινωνίες*, 146; JAMESON – RUNNELS – van ANDEL, *Southern Argolid*, 48–53.

⁹¹² FEISSEL – PHILIPPIDIS-BRAAT, *Inscriptions* 43 (301, 1–302, 45).

⁹¹³ FEISSEL – PHILIPPIDIS-BRAAT, *Inscriptions* 43 (301, 16–22). *Foundation Documents I*, Nea Gephyra, 324.

infrastructure of critical importance, and this in itself might explain the jurisdiction of the *krites* and the *strategos* bestowed upon the monastery and, de facto, the bridge. The strict prohibition with regard to local clergy might indicate an intervention from the secular authorities to keep passage under state control, meaning among other things that fees relating to the use of the bridge could be imposed and collected by state authorities at any given moment.⁹¹⁴

Communications by sea

Sea Route A was the main route that passed along the shores of Greece. As with any other route of the pre-modern period, it consisted of several stopping points that were used for the resupply of ships and goods for trade. From north to south, the island complex of Diadromoi / Voreies Sporades offered a series of anchorages, notably Skiathos. For accessing the Pagasetic Gulf, the route was via the ports of Phteleon/Pteleos, Almyros, Phthiotidai Thebai and Demetrias, the latter being directly connected with Larisa. From there, the route along the Northern and Southern Gulf of Euboea was the obvious path, since a series of ports and havens on both Euboea and mainland Greece could be used.⁹¹⁵ Euripos was the region's harbour par excellence, thanks to its extended mooring facilities and strong fortification. Its only drawback across the centuries was the peculiar movement of the strong currents coursing through the strait: even today smaller motorboats must be extremely careful when crossing it. Other ports and havens along the Gulf include Anthedon and Sykaminon in Boeotia, Raphena, Raphtes / Porto Raphte in north-eastern Attica, and Piraeus in the Saronic Gulf. The Saronic Gulf with its numerous islands was itself perfect for medieval seafaring, with Salamis and Aegina the most important stopovers.⁹¹⁶

The Peloponnese

Corinth was the maritime centre par excellence and the most important communication node in the region. To its west and north – that is, southwestern mainland Greece – the ports of Galaxidi, Itea, Antikyra, and Kaparellion were stop-overs along the “trunk route” that connected Rome with Constantinople. Continuing to the south along the Peloponnesian coast, Palaia Epidauros was the first haven encountered, then – circumnavigating the Argolid peninsula – Methana, Hermione, the adjacent islands of Hydra and Spetses, and finally Nauplion within the gulf of Argolis.⁹¹⁷ From Nauplion to

⁹¹⁴ Alternatively, the strict language of the text against the local religious authorities might have stemmed from personal dislike.

⁹¹⁵ AVRAMEA, Βυζαντινή Θεσσαλία, 103—110; GINALIS, Byzantine ports, 92ff.

⁹¹⁶ KODER – HILD, Hellas und Thessalia, 101—104; DIMITROUKAS, Reisen und Verkehr, 458—460; GINALIS, Harbour of Anthedon, 77, 104—107.

⁹¹⁷ JAMESON – RUNNELS – van ANDEL, Southern Argolid, 53—56; LEONTSINI – MANOLESSOU – PANOPOULOU, Corinthia and Argolis, 153—161.

Monemvasia, the steep eastern coast was sparse in anchorages: just Paralia Tyrou, Kyparission, and Hierax / Limenas Ieraka. Monemvasia dominated the Gulf of Epidauros Limera, which was the last suntrap before the dangerous passage around cape Maleas. The Laconic Gulf with Helos and Gytheion concluded the western harbours of the Aegean Sea. Nonetheless, another option was to traverse the south-western Aegean from Monemvasia using Kythera and Antikythera as stations before gaining the west of Crete.⁹¹⁸

The mobility of Holy Men and their flock

The mapping of primary and secondary roads can be complemented by the testimony of the various *Vitae*. These describe the lives of several saints that lived in the regions of Thessaly and Hellas from the ninth to the twelfth century. Notwithstanding the usual caveat around such sources, they offer useful insights into many aspects of provincial life, including the mobility of their protagonists across the region. Common patterns include the arrival of the holy men usually from Constantinople, their pilgrimages to Rome, the Holy Land, and even as far as Santiago de Compostela in Galicia. Another typicality is their (tending-towards) permanent settlement at a specific location, in which they received their fellowmen, performed miracles, or established monastic communities. In most cases, they moved within a specific radius from their seat, usually a few tens of kilometres. Others were more energetic in travelling across an entire region such as the Peloponnese.

Nicholas the Younger⁹¹⁹ (tenth century) and his fellow martyrs – commissioned officers – arrived at Larisa, probably from Constantinople (c. 800 km). They decided to retire to Mount Ternavos, present-day Tyrnavos, located about 17 km to the north-west.⁹²⁰ After the capture and martyrdom of his comrades at the hands of a barbaric army, Nicholas sped in the opposite direction, southwest of Larissa on the mountain of Bounaina (c. 23 km). There he was discovered by the barbarians and similarly martyred.⁹²¹ His intact body was later discovered by the governor of Thessalonike (c. 200 km away), who was himself seeking treatment from leprosy. After his miraculous cure, the governor founded a monastery on the location where the modern priory stands.⁹²² On the whole, the radius of Nicolas' action was rather limited (c. 23 km), centred pronouncedly on Larisa after his arrival from the imperial capital.

⁹¹⁸ AVRAMEA, *Επικοινωνίες*, 166—167; McCORMICK, *Origins*, 503—504; KISLINGER, *Verkehrsrouten zur See*, 151—152; DIMITROUKAS, *Reisen und Verkehr*, 453—458.

⁹¹⁹ PmbZ, n. 25964 Nikolaos.

⁹²⁰ Martyrdom of Nicholas the Younger 2—4 (6—13 KALDELLIS – POLEMIS).

⁹²¹ Martyrdom of Nicholas the Younger 5—8 (14—23 KALDELLIS – POLEMIS).

⁹²² Martyrdom of Nicholas the Younger 11—14 (26—35 KALDELLIS – POLEMIS).

Peter, bishop of Argos⁹²³ (851 – c. 921 / 922) was born in Constantinople, a scion of a wealthy and deeply religious family. When his older brother Paul was appointed Bishop of Corinth (c. 1.200 km by land), Peter followed his brother, living as a monk in a monastery outside the city. When the Bishop of Argos passed away – under pressure from his brother – Peter became the new bishop (Corinth to Argos is c. 50 km). He devoted himself to his flock for the rest of his life, likely restricting himself into moving in a radius of only a few kilometres around Argos up to Nauplion (c. 12 km). It is noteworthy that immediately after his passing, the faithful of both cities quarrelled over the possession of his relics.⁹²⁴

Saint Theokletos of Lakedaimon⁹²⁵ (ninth century) has left a material footprint in the form of an inscription on a church near the village of Kastor(e)ion, about 20 km to the northwest of present-day Sparta. Sometime during his life, the ascetic was appointed bishop of Lakedaimon, where he tried to bring the “powerful” of the city onto the righteous path. Because of this – or more plausibly on account of his support of Ignatius against Photius – he was expelled for a short time from his see only to return some years later.⁹²⁶

Saint Theodore of Kythera⁹²⁷ (870 or 890 – 922) also had an interesting itinerary. He was born in Korone and at a young age came to Nauplion – about 170 km away – where he completed his education. After some time, he undertook a pilgrimage to Rome, probably departing from Nauplion. Four years later, he returned to the Peloponnese and became an ascetic in a church at Monemvasia. Later, he decided to move to Kythera, 55 km or so away, where he passed away eleven months later as a result of his harsh, reclusive way of life.⁹²⁸

Saint Nikon “Metanoieite”⁹²⁹ (c. 930 – 1000), following his catechism activities in Crete – recently liberated from the Arabs – made his way to the Peloponnese.⁹³⁰ He took a ship to Athens from Damalas, near ancient Troizen in Argolid – a journey of about 60 km – having stopped off at Salamis for water replenishment.⁹³¹ From there, he travelled to Euripos – travelling probably on foot for around 75 km – continuing his preaching and heading to Thebes, approximately a further 37 km.⁹³² He then returned to the Peloponnese, stopping at Corinth (a journey of about 90 km) and then travelling on to Argos (roughly 50 km) and Nauplion (about 12 km).⁹³³ From there he went to Sparta, Mani, and then

⁹²³ PmbZ, n. 26428 Petros (von Argos).

⁹²⁴ Life of Peter, bishop of Argos, 5—6, 9, 14 (130—133, 140—145, 154—155 KALDELLIS – POLEMIS).

⁹²⁵ PmbZ, n. 28035 Theokletos.

⁹²⁶ Life and miracles of Theokletos 10—12 (196—206 KALDELLIS – POLEMIS).

⁹²⁷ PmbZ, n. 27627 Theodoros.

⁹²⁸ Life of Theodore of Kythera 2, 3, 7—5 (262—266, 272—282 KALDELLIS – POLEMIS).

⁹²⁹ PmbZ, n. 26155 Nikon “Metanoieite”.

⁹³⁰ Life of Nikon 21 (86, 1—53 SULLIVAN).

⁹³¹ Life of Nikon 23 (92, 1—37 SULLIVAN).

⁹³² Life of Nikon 24—28 (94, 1—96, 21, 100, 4—102, 11 SULLIVAN).

⁹³³ Life of Nikon 29—31 (104, 1—108, 4 SULLIVAN).

Kalamata – around 105 km, 80 km, and 90 km respectively. After spending some time venturing across the western Peloponnese preaching and performing miracles, he returned to Sparta (Arkadia/Kyparissia – Sparta, which was a return journey of about 110 km in distance.⁹³⁴ He remained active across the Peloponnese and Laconia for the rest of his life.

Saint Luke of Steiris (Steirion)⁹³⁵ (896 / 897 – 953) was born in a village called Bathys, currently located under an aluminium production plant. After the passing of his father, Luke decided to pursue a monastic life. His first stop was Athens, about 100 km away, but he was soon obliged to return home.⁹³⁶ He subsequently secluded himself on a coastal mountain called Ioannitza (c. 70 km from Bathys).⁹³⁷ There he received people from the wider region, laymen and clerics alike. Because of the Bulgarian incursions under Tsar Symeon, the saint and his fellow countrymen left for Corinth by means of the Corinthian gulf (c. 65 km).⁹³⁸ After a time in the Peloponnese, he moved back to Mount Ioannitza. From there, he moved to the nearby island of Kalamion, and thence because of the Magyar raids to the islet of Hagia Marina (Ioannitza – Hagia Marina c. 15 km).⁹³⁹ He finally came to Steirion – about 20 km from the bay of Antikyra – where he founded his monastery of Hosios Loukas which exists to the present day, passing away seven years later. He organised a monastic community and the construction of the first *katholikon*, with financial support from the *strategos* of Hellas.⁹⁴⁰

Finally, Saint Meletios the Younger⁹⁴¹ (c. 1035 – c. 1105) after spending some time in Constantinople went to Thessalonike and from there to Thebes, which was about 420 km away.⁹⁴² Following a long pilgrimage to Rome, the Holy Land, and Santiago de Compostela, he returned to Thebes before moving to Mount Kithaironas – approximately 30 km distance – where he founded his monastery.⁹⁴³ People came to visit him from the Peloponnese: Corinth was 80 km or so, Monemvasia around 280 km by land and 200 km by ship up to Piraeus and from there on foot, and they even came from Constantinople, which was a substantial 1100 km by land.⁹⁴⁴

⁹³⁴ Life of Nikon 31 (108, 4—12 SULLIVAN).

⁹³⁵ PmbZ, n. 24762 Lukas der Jüngere.

⁹³⁶ Life of Luke of Steirion 15—22 (165—169 SOPHIANOS).

⁹³⁷ Life of Luke of Steirion 23 (169—170 SOPHIANOS).

⁹³⁸ Life of Luke of Steirion 41—43 (182—183 SOPHIANOS).

⁹³⁹ Life of Luke of Steirion 47, 59, 61, (185, 194, 195 SOPHIANOS).

⁹⁴⁰ Life of Luke of Steirion 66—67 (197 SOPHIANOS).

⁹⁴¹ ODB II, lemma: Meletios the Younger, 1333—1334.

⁹⁴² Lives of Meletios A 3—6, (38, 86—46, 20 POLEMIS), B 5 (164, 1—166, 45 POLEMIS).

⁹⁴³ Lives of Meletios A 15, (82, 1—84, 31 POLEMIS), B 8—9 (172, 1—176, 23 POLEMIS).

⁹⁴⁴ Lives of Meletios A 20—25, 27 and passim, (102, 1—124, 61, 126, 1—130, 54 POLEMIS), B 16—23, 30 (194, 1—226, 83, 248, 1—252, 35 POLEMIS).

Settlement patterns

Thessaly and Hellas

Larisa had been the central urban settlement of Thessaly since the fourth century BCE. After a disastrous raid by the Ostrogoths its walls were rebuilt by Justinian I. Between 641 and 741, the city remained in Byzantine hands, serving as a bulwark against the Slav population established in the wider region. In 986, it fell into the hands of the Bulgarians under Tsar Samuel, who transferred its population along with the relics of its patron saint Achilleios to the region of the Prespes lakes. For the rest of the tenth and during the eleventh century, the city served mainly as a military base, especially during the Norman wars. Because of the destruction inflicted by uncontrollable modern development, only a few ruins survive within the historical centre of today's city. It can only be assumed that the two antique agorae continued in operation during the Byzantine period, and that workshops such as potteries and tanneries were situated along the Peneios river.⁹⁴⁵

Demetrias, in the south of modern-day Volos, was the successor of the ancient city of Pagasai-Demetrias, founded by the Macedonian king Demetrios Poliorketes around 294 BCE. Located on a promontory on the southern side of the gulf of Volos, it underwent many phases of expansion and contraction. In the sixth century, the city was a well-protected fortress, connected with the neighbouring fortification of Iolkos – today named Παλαιά / Palaia (i.e., “the old one”) – to its north. There have been discovered traces from a probably ephemeral Slavic settlement in the area of the “Basilica of Damokratia”.⁹⁴⁶ It was also a harbor city and a trading post. Recent field-surveys conducted along the shoreline to the north and the south of the Demetrias peninsula have revealed the continuous existence of *skalai* and other installations used by ships.⁹⁴⁷ The years 641 – 741 indubitably witnessed a considerable contraction in the volume of trade, yet after the eradication of the Arab presence on Crete in 961 growth was continuous.⁹⁴⁸ The rich agricultural production of the hinterland supplied the city not only with the necessities but also with a significant surplus destined for export. Kekaumenos refers to Demetrias in the middle of the eleventh century as “a secure coastal city” with intensive trade taking place inside and outside the walls.⁹⁴⁹ It must have been these favourable preconditions that drove the Venetians to include the city in the chrysobull of 1082 with the intention

⁹⁴⁵ KODER – HILD, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 198—199; AVRAMEA, *Βυζαντινή Θεσσαλία*, 124—132; KARAGIORGOU, *Late antique Thessaly*, 32 ff., 42—43.

⁹⁴⁶ KARAGIORGOU, *Late antique Thessaly*, 62—71.

⁹⁴⁷ GINALIS, *Byzantine ports*, 163—168.

⁹⁴⁸ GINALIS, *Byzantine ports*, 176—178.

⁹⁴⁹ It is noteworthy that the writer describes an impromptu trade-fair outside the city with merchandise obtained from piratical activities, including the sale of captives as slaves, Kekaumenos 31, 33 (188, 26—28, 200, 17—202, 8 LITAVRIN).

of establishing a trading post.⁹⁵⁰ As a confirmation of intensive commercial activity, a hoard of 250 copper coins of Alexios I has been discovered in the region of Palaia suggesting an intensive small-scale trade.⁹⁵¹

Further to the south of Demetrias, Phthiotidai or Thessalian Thebes – today Nea Anchialos – was another ancient polis with a peculiar history. While still a flourishing city, it was intentionally destroyed by King Philip V of Macedonia in 217 BCE, to the benefit of the city of Demetrias. After this, the inhabitants gradually moved out to Pyrassos – until that time harbour of Phthiotic Thebes, which itself finally acquired the name of the ill-fated settlement, perhaps sometime during the third century CE. The revitalised city – now embellished with a considerable number of basilicas – was refortified under Justinian I. The period from the mid-sixth century onwards struck a blow that resulted in considerable stagnation. The trend began to reverse after the middle of the seventh century, when a *modus vivendi* with the neighbouring Belegezetai Slavs allowed Thessalian Thebes to regain its role as a centre of export for the agricultural surplus of its hinterland. As far as the material evidence is concerned, a complex with many building phases – dating from the Hellenistic period up to the sixth century and probably later – contains among other things a pottery workshop, a storeroom with numerous *pithoi*, and a cookhouse. The harbour had been in almost continuous use since antiquity, offering excellent protection against the prevailing winds, while the shoreline extending both to the north and the south of Phthiotic Thebes could be used for the mooring of vessels. Several LR amphorae, including the globular variation of the Aegean type, indicate trading activity for the period 641 – 741. After the ninth century, the city disappears from the record, partly because of the rise of other Thessalian settlements and partly because of the Arab raids from the emirate of Crete that seriously disturbed trade and communication in the Aegean.⁹⁵²

Almyros is another coastal settlement, or more precisely a group of settlements under one name. Its antique predecessor was Halos, which included a main settlement with an adjacent seaport, both located on the southwest of the gulf of Sourpe. The gulf has a long beach suitable for mooring, so large scale harbour infrastructures may not have been necessary. The only critical disadvantage was the siltation arising from the several small rivers flowing into it. In any case, the ancient city had a short and ill-fated life before disappearing during the early Byzantine period, as the neighbouring Thessalian Thebes gained in prominence. When Phthiotic Thebes went down to history in the early

⁹⁵⁰ POZZA – RAVEGNANI, Trattati, 40. GINALIS, Byzantine ports, 168–169, KODER – HILD, Hellas und Thessalia, 144–145; AVRAMEA, Βυζαντινή Θεσσαλία, 136–141.

⁹⁵¹ KARAGIORGOU, Late antique Thessaly, 70 with fn. 125.

⁹⁵² KARAGIORGOU, Thessalian Thebes, 156–167; EADEM, Late antique Thessaly, 59–60; GINALIS, Byzantine ports, 180–185, 191–193; KODER – HILD, Hellas und Thessalia; 271–272; AVRAMEA, Βυζαντινή Θεσσαλία, 150–156.

ninth century, it was succeeded by the new settlement of Almyros that had by now succeeded ancient Halos.

In the eleventh century, Almyros was already established as an interregional centre. The middle Byzantine city was not a single nucleated settlement: it was called *Δύο Αλμυροί* (i.e., the “Two Almyroi”), both located on the shore with some distance between them and thus taking full advantage of the long and accessible coast. The shoreline between the Two Almyroi is about 8.5 km in distance. It is generally safe from most of the winds and currents, offers easy mooring without the need of complex artificial harbour facilities, and features an easily accessible agricultural and pastoral hinterland. This last feature allowed for the development of large estates which entered both religious and secular hands, some of them attested after the thirteenth century in monastic charters and documents and surviving to this day in the form of place names (for example, “Μετόχι” in the neighbouring bay of Νηέζ).⁹⁵³ Combined with the abundant supply of drinking water from the numerous streams and rivers, which as waterways before the nineteenth century offered direct access to the hinterland, these guaranteed the rapid development of Almyros.

Unfortunately, neither textual nor material evidence have provided any information on the city and its harbour. Archaeological excavation is obstructed by the modern use of large tracts of land in the region, including a military airport, a metalworking facility, and a flour factory. Nevertheless, a basic sketch can be drawn: it seems that Almyros was functioning as a *skala* or most probably many *skalai* along the coast, using simple wooden piers for the anchoring of ships and the (un)loading of commodities and people. The central port was in the gulf of Sourpe and featured a rather long, single quay, most probably made of ashlar, which extended to a breakwater protecting the harbour from the northern winds. Thanks to this, Almyros remained an important trade node in the twelfth century and attracted the attention of Italian merchants who secured privileged access to the port by imperial *chrysoboulla*.⁹⁵⁴

Euripos was the settlement that sometime between the sixth/seventh and ninth centuries succeeded the ancient Greek city of Chalkis. Both were located on a promontory that protrudes into the channel separating Euboea from the mainland. The relocation likely took place in the years of Justinian I or Herakleios, since both emperors implemented a policy of establishment, relocation, or (re)fortification of various settlements across the empire. The well-constructed walls of the city have been dated to the early- or mid-ninth century, with a phase of repairs in the twelfth. Euripos had two ports, one northern and one southern, the latter being the larger one, with continuous use until the early

⁹⁵³ STEFEC, Regesten, nos. 85 (51), 99 (62—63), 131 (73—74).

⁹⁵⁴ Benjamin of Tudela, 11. GINALIS, Byzantine ports, 194—202, 213—216; KODER – HILD, Hellas und Thessalia, 170—171; AVRAMEA, Βυζαντινή Θεσσαλία, 166—174; LAIOU, Regional networks, 138.

twentieth century. The smaller northern port received vessels from the northern Aegean, while the southern served the southern Aegean. Commodities and people were then transferred across the city to be loaded onto other ships if necessary and continue their voyage. The existence of the two ports confirms that the extremely narrow strait of Euripos with its extraordinarily strong and peculiar movement of currents was considered a dangerous one to pass.

The earliest urban structures are also dated after 800, the eleventh and twelfth centuries signalling a second building phase. Various types of buildings have been excavated along with pipe installations. Outside the walls has been discovered a bath that was in use between the ninth and eleventh centuries. A flourishing local society is also evident from a series of high-quality sculptures of religious and secular origin. It seems too that the local road network was maintained or even expanded according to an inscription of the tenth century. The importance of Euripos for (inter)regional and international trade is confirmed by the rich ceramic findings. Glazed White Ware II from Constantinople, polychrome, unglazed incised, and fine orange-red burnished ware – probably of local or regional production – cover the period between the ninth and the early twelfth centuries. The city was included in the chrysobull issued for the merchants of Venice in 1082.⁹⁵⁵

Other important settlements in Euboea were Karystos, located in a protected gulf in the south, and Oreoi on the northern coast of the island. In Karystos, the Castel Rosso / Kokkinokastro (i.e., “Red castle” because of the colour of the local rock from which it was constructed), located about 5 km to the north of the main settlement, was a Frankish establishment, although a Byzantine stronghold on the hilltop was present from the 1030s. Unfortunately, further material evidence in both locations is entirely lacking.⁹⁵⁶

Thebes,⁹⁵⁷ the city shrouded in ancient myths that provided the material for the writing of numerous tragedies, this *polis* with its powerful walls and “Seven gates” was inhabited on a continuous basis from prehistoric times. Centred on the hill of Kadmeia and surrounded by numerous rivers, streams, and wellsprings, it became one of the most renowned cities of antiquity. Thanks to the walls of Kadmeia, it survived the troubles of the early Byzantine period, but the Slav invasions after the 580s, along with the (re)appearance of the early medieval plague and overall economic decline, led to a shrinkage of the inhabited area. The discovery of a single coin of Constans II may indicate some form of continuity during the years 641 – 741. Furthermore, at the end of the eighth century the city was in constant communication with Constantinople.⁹⁵⁸ From the ninth century onwards – excepting

⁹⁵⁵ KONTOGIANNIS, Euripos, 29—35; KODER – HILD, Hellas und Thessalia, 156—157; KODER, Negroponte, 85—86, 92—93; SKARTSE – VAXEVANES, Κεραμική Χαλκίδας, 595—598.

⁹⁵⁶ KODER – HILD, Hellas und Thessalia, 183—184; KODER, Negroponte, 118—125.

⁹⁵⁷ KODER – HILD, Hellas und Thessalia, 269—271.

⁹⁵⁸ KOILAKOU, Thebes, 181—183.

small intervals – economic development was continuous. With the beginning of the eleventh century, the city had become a well-established provincial centre featuring a wealthy middle and upper class, as the Cadaster of Thebes and the *Typikon* of the Confraternity of the *Theotokos Naupaktitessa* attest.⁹⁵⁹ The local aristocracy also sponsored the construction and embellishment of numerous churches and monasteries, including the mosaics of the *katholikon* of Hosios Loukas.

Our knowledge of Byzantine Thebes comes mainly from the rich material evidence documented from vigorous rescue excavations. The abundant water reserves of the region were rich in calcium and magnesium and thus perfectly suited to the washing of silk. They were directed to the city through a rather sophisticated water-supply network that led to smaller vats for domestic use, and sometimes rather voluminous reservoirs for industrial use, mainly in connection with the silk industry and tanneries. The number of these water tanks was considerable, demonstrating that the city made the most of the most important natural resource on earth, water. On the other hand, many of the industrial reservoirs also had drainpipes that led to the nearest rivers and streams, in all likelihood thus creating environmental pollution at some level. It seems that at the end of the twelfth century the needs of the city reached a critical point and the metropolitan bishop, Ioannes Kaloktenes, constructed an aqueduct to supply water to the city's central cistern in Kadmeia.⁹⁶⁰ The wealth of Thebes stemmed from agriculture and industry, both favoured by geography: the plain of Boeotia was suitable for agriculture and stockbreeding, although the most important focus was the cultivation of the mulberry tree, concentrated in the locality called *Μωρεόκαμπος* (i.e., “flatland of mulberries”).⁹⁶¹ Benefitting from the abundant water supply, the silk industry reached its peak in the twelfth century, though this development had certainly begun in the eleventh.

Athens,⁹⁶² the ancient Greek city with the glorious past, house to the most influential philosophical schools of the then known world and dotted with diachronic monuments, the Acropolis complex being the most famous until today, suffered a serious first blow to its urban fabric with the invasion of the Heruli in 267 CE. The city was extensively looted, and many public buildings seriously damaged, some beyond repair. The Valerianic wall that was erected between 253 and 260, only a few years before the Herulian destruction, proved ineffectual – perhaps because of the inability to man it properly. When the invaders left, a new *enceinte* – the post-Herulian wall – was constructed with a much smaller perimeter that would define the limits of the settlement until the fifteenth century. This

⁹⁵⁹ SVORONOS, Cadaster of Thebes, 11—19; NESBITT – WIITA, Confraternity, 364—373. NEVILLE, Provincial society, 171—172, 173—174; LOUVE-KIZE, Θήβα, 375—376.

⁹⁶⁰ KOILAKOU, Thebes, 186; EADEM, Βιοτεχνικές εγκαταστάσεις, 223—227; LOUVE-KIZE, Θήβα, 378—383.

⁹⁶¹ Topographical information for the wider region of Boeotia can be found in the Cadaster of Thebes, SVORONOS, Cadaster of Thebes, 11—16 and 33ff. together? with the identification of the localities mentioned in the text.

⁹⁶² KODER – HILD, Hellas und Thessalia, 126—129.

fortification encompassed the core of the ancient city: namely, the (Roman) Agora, the library of Hadrian, the Stoa of Attalus, the Theatre of Dionysus, and the Odeon of Herod Atticus. The Acropolis kept its literal function as the last point of defence, housing the Parthenon and the church of *Panagia Atheniotissa* (i.e., “the Virgin Mary of Athens”), in other words the Christian successor of the Temple of Athena. The fortifications were again repaired and enhanced with the addition of towers during the reign of Justinian I, but from this point on until the thirteenth century no mention is made of the maintenance of defences.⁹⁶³ In any case, the written and material evidence for the years 641 – 741 is thin: it is limited to the famous stay of Constans II during the winter of 662 / 663 and the archaeological traces this left, and some graffiti on the columns of the *Propylaea* in the Acropolis.⁹⁶⁴

From the ninth century onwards, the development of Athens and Attica was recognisably steady.⁹⁶⁵ The houses that have so far been excavated belonged to the middle and lower classes of the city, offering interesting insights. On the ground floor were located storage *pithoi* for wine and oil. Again, the most plentiful and well-preserved material evidence confirming economic development after the middle of the tenth century are the churches and monasteries surviving to this day.⁹⁶⁶ Saint John the Baptist Mankoutes, though not today extant, has been dated to the year 871, thanks to a surviving dedicatory inscription. Saint Thomas Vrysakiou – situated within the limits of the *kastron* – has four building phases including two of the seventh/eighth and ninth/tenth centuries. Under the Ottoman Fethiye, remains of an eighth-to-ninth century church are also present.⁹⁶⁷ Around the year 1000 and after, the founding of monasteries seemed to boom, and most of the churches surviving to this day were *katholika* of monasteries.⁹⁶⁸ At the apex of these religious foundations in Athens and the wider Attica region was the large monastic complex at Daphni, on the axis of the ancient Hieria Odos about 10 km west of Athens.⁹⁶⁹ The scale of the monument – with its rich mosaics, numerous utility buildings and defensive circuit wall – makes it one of the three “imperial” monuments of the eleventh century along with the monastery of Hosios Loukas in Phocis and the Nea Mone at Chios.⁹⁷⁰

⁹⁶³ BOURAS, Byzantine Athens, 7ff.; IDEM, Athens, 169—171; KONTOGEORGOPOULOU, Βυζαντινή Αττική, 108—109.

⁹⁶⁴ BOURAS, Byzantine Athens, 3; IDEM, Athens, 171—172; KONTOGEORGOPOULOU, Βυζαντινή Αττική, 151—152.

⁹⁶⁵ The Praktikon of Athens, probably a tax document, offers topographical information for Athens, its suburbs and the wider Attica region, GRANSTREM – MEDVEDEV – PAPACHRYSSANTHOU, Praktikon d’Athènes 18—28 and 30—41.

⁹⁶⁶ KONTOGEORGOPOULOU, Βυζαντινή Αττική, 121—122, 125—126, 137—139; BOURAS, Athens, 175—176.

⁹⁶⁷ KONTOGEORGOPOULOU, Βυζαντινή Αττική, 157, 162; BOURAS, Byzantine Athens, 137—139, 209—210, 219—220.

⁹⁶⁸ KONTOGEORGOPOULOU, Βυζαντινή Αττική, 155—162; BOURAS, Byzantine Athens, 127ff.,

⁹⁶⁹ Hieria Odos was the “Sacred Road” that led from ancient Eleusis to the sacred gate in the Kerameikos, the ancient Athenian cemetery.

⁹⁷⁰ KONTOGEORGOPOULOU, Βυζαντινή Αττική, 173—175; KODER – HILD, Hellas und Thessalia, 141—142; BOURAS, Daphni complex, 1—15.

Piraeus was the harbour of Athens, retaining the same name since antiquity. The fortified medieval settlement was probably located on the promontory – now hill – of Kastella (ancient Lophos Mounichias). The three ancient ports – Zea to the southwest, Limen Mounichias (Mikrolimano) to the east, and Kantharos to the northwest – were probably active during the Byzantine period. Piraeus kept its importance as a port over the centuries, and in the chrysobull of 1082 the Venetians received privileged access to it, although it is noteworthy that the document refers specifically to Athens and not its port. Due to dense construction-work after World War II no material evidence has survived.⁹⁷¹

As far as the periphery of Athens is concerned, the large late antique *villae rusticae* dominated the landscape until some point at the end of the sixth century. For the seventh and eighth centuries a scattering of material evidence suggests a continuation at a lesser scale in some locations across Attica. After the middle of the tenth century, a revitalisation of the agrarian economy is testified, especially across the fertile region of the Mesogeia.⁹⁷²

The Peloponnese

Corinth⁹⁷³ was the first major city-port when entering the Peloponnese. The comparative advantage of the city was its geographical position. Founded next to a narrow neck of land that connected the Peloponnese with the mainland Greek peninsula, Corinth had had two harbours since antiquity: Lechaion on the gulf of Corinth in the west, and Kenchreai on the Saronic gulf oriented towards the east. As a result, the city occupied a nodal position on the main crossroads for maritime trade in the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean.⁹⁷⁴

An important centre since antiquity, it was the metropolis of cities such as Syracuse, reaching the peak of its power in the archaic period. Lucius Mummius razed the city to the ground in 146 BCE, and Julius Caesar re-established it as a Roman colony. During the imperial period it regained its significance, becoming the seat of the proconsul of Achaia. Paul the Apostle preached in Corinth, the church of which became the metropolitan see of the province of Greece. The city, the Acrocorinth, and the harbour of Lechaion were protected by a wall during antiquity.⁹⁷⁵ Corinth continued to evolve until the sixth century: the impressive 180-meter basilica at Lechaion with its rich decoration probably an imperial gift to the city, and the imported ceramics along with the continuous use of churches and

⁹⁷¹ POZZA – RAVEGNANI, *Trattati*, 40. KONTOGEORGOPOULOU, *Βυζαντινή Αττική*, 206; KODER – HILD, *Hellas und Thessalia*, 233; PAPADIMITRIOU, *Piraeus the harbour?*, 179–181 with rich photographic material on 181–195.

⁹⁷² KONTOGEORGOPOULOU, *Βυζαντινή Αττική*, 132–137.

⁹⁷³ AVRAMEA, *Πελοπόννησος*, 339–346.

⁹⁷⁴ *Life of Willibald IV* (93, 14–15 HOLDER-EGGER). ATHANASOULIS, *Corinth*, 195.

⁹⁷⁵ For the defences of the city see CARPENTER – BON, *Defenses*, 128ff.

houses, all bear testimony to this evolution. The Graeco-Roman past was present throughout the Middle Ages, since the Byzantine city occupied part of the ancient one.⁹⁷⁶

During the Byzantine period, Corinth functioned according to a unique, polycentric model, with the *chora* and its *emporion* surrounded by satellite settlements: the citadel of the Acrocorinth, the two harbours, and the Hexamilion-wall with its castle across the Isthmus. Probably during the reign of Justinian I, the city was refortified within a smaller perimeter than its ancient *enceinte*. Hexamilion was also rebuilt with the addition of multiple quadrilateral towers. The Acrocorinth was constantly being renovated, with visible phases of reconstruction dating up to the nineteenth century.⁹⁷⁷

The city retained its urban character, although it gradually lost its monumental features the disastrous earthquake of 551 contributing to this development. However, Corinth did not escape the general decline and shrinkage that was the norm for urban centres across the empire, with a cemetery encroaching the *forum* from the end of the sixth and into the seventh century. Habitation continued sparsely across the city, the Acrocorinth and the two ports, Lechaion and Kenchreai. Part of the population – probably those living outside the *enceinte* – went to Aegina, according to the Chronicle of Monemvasia. Nonetheless, Corinth's importance was indisputable, and sometime between 687 and 695 the city became the capital of the *strategida* and later *thema* of Hellas.⁹⁷⁸ New hamlets developed inside and outside the walls, whilst building activity was concerned with the hasty repair and reuse of older structures. Continuous habitation is primarily documented through pottery, architectural sculpture, and small finds such as coins, buckles, and minor objects, some of them discovered within a plethora of graves. In any case, the connection between Corinth and Constantinople for the years 641 – 741 is confirmed by the White Ware imported from the capital.⁹⁷⁹

From the second quarter of the ninth century, urban development began to recover, especially after the Byzantine reconquest of Crete in 961. Commerce recovered quickly and contacts with Constantinople, the Adriatic, and the Aegean were revitalised. In the eleventh century, high-quality glazed pottery for personal use was widely circulating. Corinth became the central hub where local products were collected and traded, the main exports of the city and its periphery being silk, pottery, and agricultural products such as olives, oil, wine, and raisins. Along with economic growth came more general development, the city becoming a local centre of intellectual life, since in the tenth century Saint Luke of Steirion attended the lessons offered in the towns' διδασκαλεῖον, a type of

⁹⁷⁶ ATHANASOULIS, Corinth, 192, 195, 196, 199.

⁹⁷⁸ KISLINGER, Regionalgeschichte, 201—202.

⁹⁷⁹ ATHANASOULIS, Corinth, 195—200; SANDERS, Κόρινθος, 398—399; KISLINGER, Regionalgeschichte, 80—86. For the minor objects see DAVIDSON, 4—6 and *passim*, though the dating and, more importantly, the context of the finds has been revised: see, for example, AVRAMEA, Πελοπόννησος, 179—183, 192—193, 206—207.

elementary school.⁹⁸⁰ The urban fabric began to encroach on the Roman agora in the eleventh century. With the beginning of the twelfth, a new phase of expansion started, and in the closing years of the century Niketas Choniates refers to Corinth as an “ἐμπόριον”, perhaps indicating that an open-air market was active outside the walls.⁹⁸¹

The urban centre of ancient and medieval Corinth developed on a gently sloping plateau on the northern side of the Acrocorinth hill, towards the Corinthian Gulf. The locality offered abundant springs and fertile soil, while the subsoil provided high quality porous stone for building material and clay to produce pottery.⁹⁸² A limited number of residential buildings have been excavated, typically of two stories. Larger houses developed around an enclosed courtyard. The plan of an excavated quarter makes clear that the urban fabric, aside from shops opening onto the street, was organised into large cells with an enclosed courtyard at their core. Acrocorinth was surrounded by an impressive and well-constructed fortification and probably formed the seat of the administration. Remains of buildings, the use of the fountain of Ano Peirene, pottery and numerous architectural elements, all indicate the presence of residential quarters and churches within the citadel. Furthermore, a large number of churches in the lower city, the Acrocorinth, and across the region of present-day Korinthia – some surviving to this day – demonstrate significant prosperity. For Corinth itself, rough estimates of population have given a number between 2000 and 3000 for the ninth century, and 15.000 and 20.000 for the end of the twelfth, with most of the increase taking place in the late eleventh/early twelfth century.⁹⁸³

The Homeric city of Argos⁹⁸⁴ was dominated by the castle of Larisa, in the west of the city and on top of a hill – a dominant feature of both the topography and the defences of the city since prehistoric times. The castle had a two-wall enclosure but no information concerning the nature of the habitation within its limits has survived.⁹⁸⁵ The seventh century was still a period of prosperity, as is indicated by the number of imported ceramics. These came from across the Mediterranean and the Aegean, and chiefly from Africa and Asia Minor. Imported Prokonnesian marbles have also been discovered. The local ceramic production was of rich variety, including those of “Slavic” style. In contrast, construction activity ended abruptly during the same period.⁹⁸⁶

⁹⁸⁰ Life of Luke of Steirion, 42 (182—183 SOPHIANOS).

⁹⁸¹ ATHANASOULIS, Corinth, 200—201; SANDERS, Κόρινθος, 402—403.

⁹⁸² ATHANASOULIS, Corinth, 192, 195; SANDERS, Κόρινθος, 397.

⁹⁸³ ATHANASOULIS, Corinth, 203—206; SANDERS, Κόρινθος, 403—406.

⁹⁸⁴ AVRAMEA, Πελοπόννησος, 354—356; KONTE, Ιστορική γεωγραφία Αργολίδας, 175—181

⁹⁸⁵ ABADIE-REYNAL, Argos, 217—218.

⁹⁸⁶ ABADIE-REYNAL, Argos, 213—215; AVRAMEA, Πελοπόννησος, 171—178; KISLINGER, Regionalgeschichte, 74—77.

After the ninth century, the city continued to develop within its ancient boundaries. A bath belonging to an ecclesiastical complex has also been excavated. Findings for the years 1025 – 1095 include ceramics in an impressive quantity and variety, indicating vibrant local pottery production primarily from the end of the twelfth century. The port of Argos Nauplion⁹⁸⁷ developed from a small settlement into a notable naval and commercial centre in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The wealth of the region and its inhabitants is attested by the presence of a significant group of twelfth-century churches that survive across the wider territory of Argolis.⁹⁸⁸

Ἄκρα Μινώα is mentioned by Pausanias as a landing place with port facilities. Later, Strabo designated Minoa as a φρούριον. It was replaced by Μονεμβασία / Monemvasia, probably between 550 and 580 as part of the wider building and relocation programme of Justinian I. Lakedaimon⁹⁸⁹ – ancient Sparta – offered insufficient protection against the invaders of the sixth century, and furthermore depended on the port of Gytheion for communication via sea. With its official constitution as a city, Monemvasia probably received the first of a series of privileges. During the years 641 – 741, it was an important harbour along the trunk route that connected Italy with Byzantium.⁹⁹⁰

With the expulsion of the Arabs from Crete in 961, Monemvasia began to a period of continuous development. Soon the city expanded outside its fortified limits, and a series of satellite ports along the gulf of Epidauros-Limera secured a smooth route for trade. Monemvasia itself had two ports, one northern and one southern: the first being the main port located on a deep basin with ancient remains and light wooden piers built on piles. The southern port was sheltered from the prevailing northern winds, but shallower and it seems not to have had wharves of any type, with the loading and unloading of the vessels being done with small boats. Today, the area of the ports located on rock is covered with remains of buildings, foundations, traces of walls and buttresses. It may be assumed that the extensive infrastructure included stores, a customs house, military quarters, and other facilities. Despite these amenities, however, long-term anchorage was not possible, and for longer stays and other services such as repairs and even the construction of new vessels, Monemvasia was supported by several neighbouring ports such as Ierakas.⁹⁹¹

The grid of the lower city can be discerned even today as having three parallel and many vertical roads. The main axis – and still today functioning as such – was the Agora, during Venetian rule called the *Foros* (Turkish name: *Pazari*) and featuring (work)shops on both sides. The central

⁹⁸⁷ KONTE, Ιστορική γεωγραφία Αργολίδας, 193—195.

⁹⁸⁸ VASSILIOU, Argos, 219—221; AVRAMEA, Πελοπόννησος, 358; YANGAKI, Εφυαλωμένη κεραμική, 21, 38—39, 73—74; GEROLYMATOU, Αγορές και εμπόριο, 169.

⁹⁸⁹ AVRAMEA, Πελοπόννησος, 378—379.

⁹⁹⁰ KALLIGAS, Monemvasia, 1—7; KALLIGA, Βυζαντινή Μονεμβασία, 55ff.; KISLINGER, Regionalgeschichte, 32—33; AVRAMEA, Πελοπόννησος, 383—384.

⁹⁹¹ KALLIGAS, Monemvasia, 17—20, 106; KALLIGA, Μονεμβασία, 711—713.

square in front of the metropolitan church dominates the urban fabric to this today. The upper city was fortified with an Acropolis. Numerous buildings and cisterns survive along with the church of Panagia Odegetria.⁹⁹²

During the Byzantine period, the city had under its jurisdiction a *χώρα*. Its limits started from Astros in the north, passed over Mount Parnon in a south-westerly direction, and then followed the western slopes of Parnon southwards, extending onto the plain of Helos and Eurotas as far as the Laconic Gulf. Tsakonia and the whole plain of Helos were encompassed by this territory. The geological formation of Mount Parnon led to a coastline dotted with numerous coves and ports. To the north the most important were Kyparission, Ierakas, and Porto San Nicolo; to the south Vatika, and to the west Archangelos and Plytra. These were complemented by a series of smaller ports and landing places.⁹⁹³

A network of roads connecting Monemvasia with its hinterland survived in the form of cobbled roads until the 1970s. It connected the inland settlements of the Monemvasia region that are mentioned in the *chrysoboulla* of the fourteenth century.⁹⁹⁴ Some of these settlements are attested in sources as early as the ninth century, and most survive under the same name into the present. The privileges reveal a densely populated region, extensively cultivated and with many towns, villages and smaller installations, rich monasteries and chapels, watermills, ship-building activity and various handicrafts.⁹⁹⁵

Natural resources and their exploitation

The rich and diverse natural resources across the west Aegean coast and its hinterland allowed for the development of a multifaceted pre-modern economy with agriculture its primary component. A wide variety of trees and plants that are still harvested produced edibles, raw materials, or both: among these, beech, chestnut, plane trees, fir, walnut, apple, and fig. The introduction from the Arab world and cultivation of various citrous trees including lemon and (bitter) orange occurred probably at some point during the eleventh century, though their extent is difficult to estimate. The presence of this rich flora also allowed for the development of apiculture, but the two products par excellence were olive oil and wine, whose export on an almost industrial scale after the eleventh century was boosted thanks to the Venetian merchants. The hilly lowlands with their fertile soil permitted the raising of livestock, with sheep and goat predominating, and the farming mainly of barley and secondarily of wheat. The plain

⁹⁹² KALLIGAS, Monemvasia, 110ff., 136—138; KALLIGA, Μονεμβασία, 692—696.

⁹⁹³ KALLIGAS, Monemvasia, 156—158; KALLIGA, Μονεμβασία, 696—697, 711—712; AVRAMEA, Πελοπόννησος, 384—386.

⁹⁹⁴ MM V, 163—164.

⁹⁹⁵ KALLIGAS, Monemvasia, 159—161; KALLIGA, Βυζαντινή Μονεμβασία, 96—102.

of Thessaly was more suitable for large-scale production of wheat and fodder for the raising of equines – a tradition of the region since antiquity. Other fauna included deer, wild boar, various fowls, and bovines.

Ores and minerals had contributed to the economic vitality of Thessaly, Hellas, and the Peloponnese since ancient times.⁹⁹⁶ The systematic extraction and processing of minerals such as iron and nickel began only in the nineteenth century, although some activity must have been underway during the medieval period to meet basic needs for various tools and weaponry. Marble was the other main product, with the green marble of Thessaly (*Θεσσαλή λίθος* / *Verde antico*) being the regional product par excellence. It was used in Constantinople (for example, for the church of Saint Sergius and Bacchus, the monastic complex of Stoudios, various wings of the Great Palace, the Hagia Sophia, and for the imperial sarcophagi), and across the provinces – the most characteristic eleventh-century building being the *katholikon* of Hosios Loukas.⁹⁹⁷ Another highly appreciated rock was exported from the southern Peloponnese: the andesite of Krokees (*Κροκεάτης λίθος* / *Porfido verde antico*), found in abundance in the inland of Laconia. It was also used to decorate the Hagia Sophia, as mentioned by Procopius.⁹⁹⁸ The soil of the eastern coast of the Aegean (along with the Aegean islands) also offered high quality clay for the production not only of ceramics but also various types of *κουρασάνι*, the “Byzantine concrete” that bound together the structural components of buildings of many descriptions.

The most famous ore of the region was silver and its by-products, with the largest reserve located in the region of Laurion, Attica. Already in the Roman imperial period, the deposit had become depleted, and only the *σκωρία* – the waste coming from processing – and the *εκβολάδες* – the bulky mounds of residue created from extraction of the minerals – dominated the landscape. The processing facilities continued to operate at a minimal level until the sixth century, exploiting the *skoriai* and *ekbolades* – the silver of which was used to embellish Hagia Sophia. It seems that in later centuries a rather clear picture as to the rich minerals of Attica remained intact, as the writings of the polymath Michael Psellos demonstrate.⁹⁹⁹ However, further exploitation is not mentioned for many centuries, and would only occur once more from the closing decades of the nineteenth century until the late 1980s. Today, cavernous trenches, as well as the older and newer processing facilities and other

⁹⁹⁶ For a catalogue of the locations of ores and minerals during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries see PAPASTEPHANAKE, *Φλέβα της γης*, 301—307. Many of the deposits listed had been known and/or exploited since antiquity.

⁹⁹⁷ KARAGIORGOU, *Late antique Thessaly*, 175ff., especially 183.

⁹⁹⁸ AVRAMEA, *Πελοπόννησος*, 285—286.

⁹⁹⁹ Michael Psellos, *Philosophica minora*, 118, 86—88.

infrastructure in the Laurion archaeological park, stand as a stark reminder of the mineral wealth that helped make ancient Athens a great power.¹⁰⁰⁰

Thessaly and Hellas

The export of cereals during the years 641 – 741 is recorded for Thessaly in the *Miracles* of Saint Demetrios when the Belegezetai Slavs, settled “in the regions of Thebes and Demetrias”, sold wheat and legumes to an expedition sent from the hunger-stricken Thessalonians.¹⁰⁰¹ For the eleventh century the writings of Kekaumenos offer a glimpse of how agricultural production was organised. The principle of self-sufficiency (*αὐτάρκεια*) predominated, though a variety of crops and animals must have been a *desideratum* for all rural households regardless of economic and / or social status. It was this that allowed for the provision of security in times of bad harvest or animal disease. Wheat and wine stand out as products of the earth along with “trees and reeds of every kind”.¹⁰⁰² Traction animals such as bovines, along with pigs, sheep and other animals, were also essential for the sustenance of the household and for trade.¹⁰⁰³

After the beginning of the sixth century the Agora in Athens acquired an agricultural character. The antique buildings were left to decay and became looted for building material. The remains of water mills, kilns, and olive presses give a clear indication of a transformed economy. Bronze *folleis* from the mint of Syracuse dating to between 668 and 750 have been found in the Agora and demonstrate the continued importance of the city and its harbour, Piraeus, as a port of call along the “trunk route” connecting Constantinople with the west. When the city was put under a revised administrative structure sometime after the 680s, the presence of a permanent army along with officials sent from the capital combined with the local elites to fuel the economy in a way that the numismatic evidence suggests. Whatever the precise truth of the general picture, the existence of at least one noble family, that of the Sarantapechoi – emerging in the city in the closing decades of the eighth century – would indicate a certain level of prosperity.¹⁰⁰⁴

After the ninth century, a complex industrial network developed along the Agora somewhat organically, continuing the previous pattern and now extending between the post-Herulian wall and the remains of the Valerianic. Lime and ceramic kilns, water mills, soap factories, and tanneries were all active. The trade in marble was revived after the tenth century, both in terms of extraction and

¹⁰⁰⁰ KONTOGEOURGOPOULOU, Βυζαντινή Αττική, 32—25; PAPASTEPHANAKE, Φλέβα της γης, 66, 211—213; 226—228.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Miracula* I 254 (214, 9—13, 218, 1—3 LEMERLE). KARAGIORGOU, Late antique Thessaly, 161—162.

¹⁰⁰² Kekaumenos 35 (204, 206, 5 LITAVRIN). HARVEY, Οικονομική ανάπτυξη, 199—201.

¹⁰⁰³ KARAGIORGOU, Late antique Thessaly, 167—168.

¹⁰⁰⁴ ZAVAGNO, *Cities in transition*, 51—57; FRANTZ, *Late antiquity*, 117—122; KONTOGEOURGOPOULOU, Βυζαντινή Αττική, 119—121; BOURAS, Athens, 171—173.

utilization of existing stock, with sculpture witnessing a rebirth for the first time since the sixth century.¹⁰⁰⁵

Silk, oil, wine, and ceramics: some case studies of production and trade along the west Aegean coast
Sericulture and the production of silk fabrics

After the gradual introduction of sericulture sometime during the sixth century, the first region outside Constantinople to achieve prominence for extensive activity was the northwest region of the Peloponnese. We are informed that Danielis – a rich widow from the region of Patras and the first patron of the emperor-to-be Basil I – on visiting her friend carried among other gifts “richly variegated Sidonian fabrics that are now called *sendais*”.¹⁰⁰⁶ It has been suggested that *σενδέες* (plural: *σενδαῖς*) was the Byzantine imitation or closely resembled the Arabic *sendal*, itself deriving from the Persian *sundus*. Though further details are lacking, it is plausible that the *sendes* brought by Danielis was of local Peloponnesian production. In any case, in the medieval period the name used for Peloponnesos, “Μορέας”, clearly derives from medieval Greek *μορέα*, (ancient Greek: *σγκαμινέα*, Latin: *Morus nigra*, modern Greek: *μουριά*), meaning mulberry tree.¹⁰⁰⁷ For the same period, another source possibly confirms that silk textiles were being produced in the Peloponnese in a systematic way. In his *DAI*, Emperor Constantine VII mentions “purple fishers” (*κογχυλευταί*) as a category of professionals that were freed from supplying horses to the military.¹⁰⁰⁸ In any case, specific regions in the Peloponnese must have participated at some stage in the supply chain of silk production, even if it was still concentrated in Constantinople during the tenth century.

At the beginning of the eleventh century, and with the ongoing “decentralization” of silk manufacturing, the professionals active across the Peloponnese must have acquired sufficient knowledge to create their own high-quality silks. It is possible that they transferred their craft to the north, first to Corinth and then to Thebes, the latter rising to prominence from the middle of the eleventh century to reach its peak in the twelfth. From material evidence dating from the first quarter of the twelfth century onwards, we know that the high-quality silk clothes of Thebes included samite, blue samite, and red samite dyed with *prinokokkion* / *kermes*. Possible surviving examples include the fabrics owned by King Philip V of France (c. 1293 – 1322) and the coronation mantle of King Roger II of Sicily (1095 – 1154), now in the *Kaiserliche Schatzkammer* in Vienna. The production of silk

¹⁰⁰⁵ KONTOGEOURGOPOULOU, Βυζαντινή Αττική, 126 with fn. 986; BOURAS, Byzantine Athens, 115—124.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Vita Basilii imperatoris 74 (256, 31—33 SEVCENKO – DE BOOR). GEROLYMATOU, Αγορές και εμπόριο, 169—170.

¹⁰⁰⁷ SIMEONOV, Obst in Byzanz, 60—61.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, DAI 52 (256, 10—11 MORAVCSIK – JENKINS). JACOBY, Silk in western Byzantium, 454—460.

garments has been discussed in detail in recent scholarship to various effect, but there are essentially two main hypotheses. According to the first, which I will name “the autarky thesis”, the entire production process was centred on Thebes and its periphery, which amounts to a radius of forty kilometres at maximum. The silk was produced, woven, washed, and dyed in Thebes with purple derived from the murex fished along the north-eastern shores of the Corinthian gulf. According to the second – which I call “the segmentation theory” with reference to the production of silk and the initial weaving of the fabric in Thebes – the bolts were sent to Athens. There they were washed with locally manufactured soap (perhaps with olive oil as one of its ingredients?), and then dyed purple by the *κογχυλάριοι*. Their quarter was located outside the city walls because of the odorous nature of their profession.¹⁰⁰⁹ The purple used in the dying was extracted from the *murex brandaris* seashell fished by the *konchyleutai* along the coasts of Attica. The onward journey was through the two harbours of Corinth (or the two ports of Euripos in the case of the first theory), whence the finished silken clothes were exported to the east – mainly to Constantinople – and to the west, mainly to the royal courts and the wealthiest of the western European states. Both theories involve a rather sophisticated division of labour within and between the cities and their professional classes. Furthermore, the inclusion of Euripos, Thebes, Athens, and Corinth in the Venice chrysobull of 1082 indicates two things: first, that the merchants of the city were well-informed concerning the potential of these four cities, probably via their Amalfitan colleagues whose commercial networks they had inherited. Second, it signalled their permanent establishment across these settlements and must have considerably boosted the export of silk cloth across the Mediterranean.¹⁰¹⁰

Olive cultivation and the oil trade

This review of trade along the western coast of the Aegean provides the opportunity to elaborate further on the matter of olive-cultivation and trade in Byzantium during the two periods under examination.

Thessaly, Hellas, and especially Peloponnese were not considered oil-cultivating areas of importance until the end of the sixth century.¹⁰¹¹ In the late-Roman / early-Byzantine economic and trade system of the eastern Mediterranean – in which vast provinces specialised in the production and export of certain products – the regions with the largest output of olive oil were Palestine, Syria,

¹⁰⁰⁹ GRANSTREM – MEDVEDEV – PAPACHRYSSANTHOU, *Praktikon d’Athènes*, 35, 4—7.

¹⁰¹⁰ Benjamin of Tudela, 10. JACOBY, *Silk in western Byzantium*, 462—464, 468, 470—471; KONTOGEORGOPOULOU, *Βυζαντινή Αττική*, 123—125; BOURAS, *Byzantine Athens*, 115—124; IDEM, *Athens*, 173—175; ANGOLD, *Political history*, 280—281; LAIOU, *Regional networks*, 139—140; GEROLYMATOU, *Αγορές και εμπόριο*, 158—167; KOILAKOU, *Βιοτεχνικές εγκαταστάσεις*, 221—223; MUTHESIUS, *Παραγωγή μεταξωτών*, 250—256, 264—269; ROSEN, *Silk industry of Boeotia*, 32—40.

¹⁰¹¹ KARAGIORGOU, *Late-antique Thessaly*, 163—164.

Isauria, Cilicia, and Pamphylia.¹⁰¹² Arguably, production at some scale to cover local needs must have taken place across the Hellenic peninsula, and indeed Pausanias mentions the *Σικυνώνιον ἔλαιον* that was produced within the territory of the *polis* of Σικυνών, a few kilometres to the north-west of Corinth. It was of particularly high quality and thus used in perfume-making.¹⁰¹³ Furthermore, across the small volcanic peninsula of Methana in the north-west of the Peloponnese, 47 oil presses and mills have been located thus far, although their precise dating is difficult and extends from the Hellenistic up to the late Byzantine period. Further written and material evidence suggests that Korinthia, Argolis, Attica, and the islands of the Saronic gulf – especially Salamis – were indeed producing oil in considerable volumes.¹⁰¹⁴ However, this did not match the industrial-scale exports of the eastern provinces of the late Roman state, estimated at some million litres per annum.

The tectonic geopolitical changes of the early-seventh century deprived middle Byzantium of its most oil-productive regions. It seems that during the following centuries olive oil became a luxury product for most consumers in cities, and at the end of the ninth/beginning of the tenth century this was the case even for the imperial palace and the church of Hagia Sophia. As a result, Basil I granted the cathedral an extensive olive grove to cover its daily needs. Of course, there is no need for exaggeration: the olive tree continued to be cultivated and oil to be produced across the Aegean, though primarily for on-site and (supra)local consumption.¹⁰¹⁵ Albeit slowly, farmers adapted to the new circumstances, and by the end of the tenth century the poorly watered Mani peninsula was designated ἔλαιοφόρος by Constantine VII.¹⁰¹⁶

It would make sense to extend this characterisation to the whole of Laconia, as the written and material evidence suggests.¹⁰¹⁷ The *Life* and *Testament* of Saint Nikon Metanoieite provide interesting insights into olive cultivation and oil production in and around Lakedaimon for a period covering the closing decades of the tenth up to the middle of the eleventh century. In one of the posthumous miracles of the saint, a description of the oil press at the monastery that he had founded complements the material evidence: “There the fruits of the olive trees were customarily crushed and with tools and stone weights oil squeezed out.”¹⁰¹⁸ Indeed, a series of oil presses excavated within the limits of medieval Lakedaimon survived, with all the equipment necessary for the pressing and squeezing of the olive fruit and compression of the olive mass.¹⁰¹⁹ In his *Testament*, the saint provided for the

¹⁰¹² DEMESTICHA, Εμπορικοί δρόμοι, 154—155.

¹⁰¹³ ANAGNOSTAKES, Ελιά και λάδι στην Πελοπόννησο, 226.

¹⁰¹⁴ ANAGNOSTAKES, Ελιά και λάδι στην Πελοπόννησο, 229.

¹⁰¹⁵ ANAGNOSTAKES, Ελιά και λάδι στην Πελοπόννησο, 232—235

¹⁰¹⁶ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, DAI 50 (71—78 MORAVCSIK – JENKINS).

¹⁰¹⁷ MEXIA, Ελαιοκομία, 213—218; GEROLYMATOU, Αγορές και εμπόριο, 167—169.

¹⁰¹⁸ Life of Nikon 67 (228, 10—12 SULLIVAN).

¹⁰¹⁹ MEXIA, Ελαιοκομία, 206—211.

maintenance of his monastery from the revenues of churches he had built in two villages: that is, “... not only the yield of the vineyards and small farms and olive trees, but also the yield of fruit-bearing and non-fruit-bearing trees.”¹⁰²⁰ Oil and wine (along with honey to produce wax) were the most necessary supplies for a religious foundation and Nikon ensured a seamless supply for his.

The strengthening of commercial networks during the eleventh century increased demand for olive oil even outside Byzantium, the Kievan Rus being the chief consumers.¹⁰²¹ Olive cultivation expanded further, and the arrival of the Venetians in the Aegean commercial area gave the final boost that turned the littoral of Thessaly, Hellas, and the Peloponnese into the main production and export regions of olive oil.¹⁰²²

What kind of container was used to transport and distribute this oil? Research on this is still in progress and only provisional observations can be made here. During the late-antique/early Byzantine period the principal vessel was the LRA 1 amphora, produced *en masse* in Cilicia, Syria, and Palestine. In the same period, LRA 2 was produced across the Aegean and circulated also along the fortresses of the lower Danube and around the Black Sea.¹⁰²³ Over the seventh century, and with the considerable shrinking of trade across the eastern Mediterranean, a new type of amphora made its appearance: the Byzantine Globular Amphora (BGA), which – thanks to its globular or ovoid shape – better fitted the new economic reality and most importantly the new smaller ships that carried it. The “eternal” question as to whether LRA 2 or BGA was used exclusively for the transportation of oil or wine can be partially answered. Chemical analyses have shown that the same amphora was used to transport both products. The overall economic condition of the Aegean basin between the seventh and the ninth centuries would have dictated that the most cost-effective, in other words most profitable, means of transport was chosen. As a result, the reuse of an amphora initially produced for the transport of wine by filling it with olive oil (or vice versa) would have been a very common option.¹⁰²⁴

After the tenth century, the use of leather bags and wooden barrels to transport wine probably left the ceramic amphorae as vessels used exclusively for olives and olive oil. The Günsenin IV amphora has been designated as the main candidate for the periodic transportation of these products up to the sixteenth century.¹⁰²⁵ The last stage in the evolution of olive-oil containers is the λαγύνιον

¹⁰²⁰ LAMPSIDES, Νίκων ο Μετανοείτε, 255, 131—135; Foundation Documents I, Nikon Metanoieite, 319, ANAGNOSTAKES, Ελιά και λάδι στην Πελοπόννησο, 239—240.

¹⁰²¹ On the Kievan Rus and their consumption of olive oil and wine see above.

¹⁰²² GRANSTREM – MEDVEDEV – PAPACHRYSSANTHOU, Praktikon d’Athènes, table 10—14 and references across the text of olive trees (“ἐλαῖαι”) 30—38. ARMSTRONG, Merchants of Venice, 314—317; JACOBY, Food and wine for Constantinople, 129—130; IDEM, Venetian expansion, 378—380.

¹⁰²³ POULOU-PAPADEMETRIOU, Μεταφορικά αγγεία, 206—209; YANKAKE, Αμπορείς, 170—172, 174—175; DEMESTICHA, Εμπορικοί δρόμοι, 158—159.

¹⁰²⁴ POULOU-PAPADEMETRIOU, Μεταφορικά αγγεία, 210—211; YANKAKE, Αμπορείς, 176—182.

¹⁰²⁵ POULOU-PAPADEMETRIOU, Μεταφορικά αγγεία, 213—215; VROOM, Pottery in the Aegean, 99—101.

(modern Greek λαγήνι), a ceramic vessel of either elongated or globular shape that appears in written and material evidence from the tenth/eleventh centuries. Today it is manufactured as a traditional decorative element occasionally featuring in folklore celebrations. Thus, the ceramic amphorae of antiquity and the Middle Ages survive as distant reminders of the patterns of trade and communication across the Aegean and the Black Sea during the Byzantine era.¹⁰²⁶

Patterns of trade in (eastern) Laconia: Lakedaimon and Monemvasia

As far as wine cultivation, production, and trading are concerned, Monemvasia and its territory were the producers *par excellence* on the eastern Peloponnesian coast. Facts and figures on wine production of some detail and credibility are available only after the fourteenth century. The *chrysoboulla* and *argyroboulla* of the Palaiologan rulers refer to wine as one of the main products transported by the Monemvasiote merchants. A report drawn up in 1828 in the closing days of the Greek revolution reveals a rather gloomy picture yet mentions the production of 32.000 barrels “according to a register from the time of the Venetians” around the end of the fifteenth century. 32.000 barrels equate to c. sixteen million litres of wine, which presupposes corresponds to vineyards of c. 640 km² in area. If we are to trust these figures – dating to around the end of the fifteenth century, an era of insecurity across the Venetian territories of the Peloponnese – it could be supposed that an even higher output would have been yielded by the relatively stable conditions of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The most suitable soil for wine cultivation was a strip of land beginning at Ζάραξ – Ιέραξ – Ιέρακας / Ierakas to the north and extending as far as the coastal settlement of Hagios Phokas to the south (c. 10 km as the crow flies). Winepresses and ripening vaults are still visible across the region, with wine-agriculture-related micro-toponymy supplementing the evidence. The Italian name of Ierakas, *Porto del(l)e Bot(t)e* (i.e., “Port of the barrels”), clearly indicates that it was probably this port with its excellent location that served as the main exit-point for the olive oil and wine exported from Laconia.¹⁰²⁷

Numerous settlements within the territory of Monemvasia were likely oriented towards a specialised production, with toponymy offering rich evidence. Although the surviving information comes from a *chrysoboullon* of the year 1301 / 1302, to a certain degree it reflects developments that had their roots in the eleventh century.¹⁰²⁸ In the area of Πρινίκος / Prinikos, *πρινοκόκκι(ον)* / *prinokokki(on)* / *kermes* was extracted, while in Ελιά / Elia and Συκιά / Sykia the cultivation of olive and fig trees predominated respectively. The region of the villages Περιβόλια / Perivolia (i.e.,

¹⁰²⁶ POULOU-PAPADEMETRIOU, *Μεταφορικά αγγεία*, 216; MPAKIRTZES, *Τσουκαλολάγνη*, 89—94.

¹⁰²⁷ KALLIGA, *Μονεμβασία*, 705—707. SKANKOS, *Αμπελοκαλλιέργεια στη Λακωνία*, 228—229; SKANKOU, *Ληνοί*, 309—319. Examples of micro-toponymy relating to the production of wine include the names Πάνω Αμπέλι (i.e., “Upper Vineyard”), Πέρα Αμπέλι (i.e., “Farther Vineyard”), and so on.

¹⁰²⁸ MM V, 163—164. KALLIGAS, *Monemvasia*, 163.

“Gardens” / “Orchards”) and Λειμώνες / Leimones (i.e., “meadows”) has to this day abundant waters and is dotted with the remains of watermills. Κυπαρίσσι(ον) / Kyparissi(on) (i.e., “cypress”) is a coastal settlement on a steep gulf with sandy beaches and small coves that allowed the anchorage of numerous vessels. The name of the village may well indicate its use as an export centre for the timber of Mount Parnon. In the hinterland of the Laconian coast, the name of the village of Κουπιά / Koupia (i.e., “oars”) may predicate the local construction of oars.¹⁰²⁹ One of the summits of mount Parnon bears the name Κατάρτια / Katartia (i.e., “masts”), suggesting the use of the rich cypress and timber forests for shipbuilding.¹⁰³⁰ Topographical details such as lakes, timberlands, and vineyards are recorded in detail. Infrastructure included (water)mills, towers, castles, and homesteads. In another chrysobull issued in 1317, a list of supplies brought by the merchants of Monemvasia to Constantinople included wine, salted dishes -probably fish and / or pork-, pelts, leathers, pieces of cloth, flaxseed, woollen clothes (or materials), “four-legged animals”, and other goods.¹⁰³¹

The central region of Laconia was also a wine-producing area, although – as the *Life* of Saint Nikon Metanoieite implies – of lower quality.¹⁰³² An interesting suggestion has been made, according to which this difference in quality was the long-term result of the Slavic settlement, since the newcomers preferred beer to wine.¹⁰³³ In any case, Nikon stipulated in his *Testament* that the state authorities would safeguard his church in exchange for “five measures of wine and one basket of apples”, a rather interesting combination of provisions.¹⁰³⁴

Ceramic production and circulation

The last, though in no case least, case study relates to the production and circulation of ceramics of the glazed type, the majority of which were tableware. Unlike amphorae that had a purely utilitarian character, tableware carried with them an aesthetic value as objects in their own right: when used on social occasions they demonstrated the owner’s wealth and sense of style. It is noteworthy that the glazed ceramics of the tenth to twelfth centuries include a rather large number that feature holes for metal clamps used to mend broken parts together. This indicates the need to extend the lifespan of the vessel, most probably because of their costliness.¹⁰³⁵

¹⁰²⁹ However, Κουπιά could also be a corruption of Κιούπια / Kioupia (i.e., “crock”, “pot”). In this case, a connection with the production of ceramic products is possible.

¹⁰³⁰ Although the toponym could have had a purely figurative meaning: the summit of the mountain with its dense forests of tall trees gives the impression of a mast when observed from the sea. Further localities include Καστανιά / Kastania (i.e., “chestnut tree”), Βελανιδιά / Velanidia (i.e., “oak tree”) and so on.

¹⁰³¹ MM V, 166. KALLIGA, Μονεμβασία, 707—708; SKANKOS, Αμπελοκαλλιέργεια στη Λακωνία, 230ff.

¹⁰³² Life of Nikon 36—37 (126, 24—8 SULLIVAN). SKANKOS, Αμπελοκαλλιέργεια στη Λακωνία, 224—225.

¹⁰³³ SKANKOS, Αμπελοκαλλιέργεια στη Λακωνία, 226—227.

¹⁰³⁴ LAMPSIDES, Νίκων ο Μετανοείτε, 254, 102—105. SKANKOS, Αμπελοκαλλιέργεια στη Λακωνία, 226.

¹⁰³⁵ PAPANIKOLA-BAKIRTZI, Glazed ceramics, 215—216.

Glazed White Ware I made its appearance in Constantinople at some point in the seventh century and had a continuous presence until the middle of the thirteenth. They present a variety of shapes, mainly corresponding to vessels that served as containers for food and drink. The three main types were cups for drinking, plates, and semi-circular bowls for serving dry or liquid food, and warming dishes used for keeping sauces hot at table.¹⁰³⁶ This variety in form and specialised function would indicate a sophisticated way of life that had become established in Constantinople, while also gaining in prominence across the provincial urban centres from the middle of the ninth century. The most dominant type of decoration associated with the new GWW II clearly imitates the ornamentation of metal utensils with considerable success, thus strengthening the impression that this type of ceramics was used as a cheap substitute for the rather expensive silver equivalent. The disappearance of the latter during the seventh century can be correlated with the general dearth of silver that led eventually to the virtual non-existence of Byzantium's silver coinage. The Constantinopolitan GWW types I and II are easy to identify because of their characteristic milky or chalky coloured clay. They were exported from the workshops of the capital across the empire. In terms of Thessaly, Hellas, and the Peloponnese, they made their first appearance in Corinth in the latter part of the eighth century, although they disappeared a little later, probably because of the raids after the Arab conquest of Crete. They resurface during the second half of the tenth century, and it seems that imports reached their peak between 1050 and 1075.¹⁰³⁷

In the meantime, though, Corinthian workshops had already begun to copy the Constantinopolitan GWW, managing to produce their own cheaper vessels. At the end of the eleventh century, they perfected their approach, introducing an innovation that matched the milky colour of the clay of the original by coating the bare clay of local origin with a milky slip beneath the glaze. Thus, the appearance of these new Dark-on-Light Slip-Painted Ware perfectly imitated and thus was able to compete with the Polychrome GWW of the capital. The local workshops also developed a style of *sgraffito* decoration that successfully imitated metalware counterparts. Thus, within a short period of time, Corinth-produced GWW had displaced that imported from Constantinople, even achieving export to a wider region.¹⁰³⁸ Soon enough, production spread to cities such as Lakedaimon, Athens, Euripos, and Thebes, making Hellas and the Peloponnese significant manufacturers of high-quality

¹⁰³⁶ MPAKIRTZES, Τσουκαλολάγνηνα, 55—56, 63—65.

¹⁰³⁷ PAPANIKOLA-BAKIRTZI, Glazed ceramics, 197—198; VROOM, Pottery in the Aegean, 62—63, 74—77; MPAKIRTZES, Τσουκαλολάγνηνα, 57—60, 61.

¹⁰³⁸ PAPANIKOLA-BAKIRTZI, Glazed ceramics, 198—200; LAIOU, Regional networks, 140—144.

tableware. The twelfth and early thirteenth centuries witnessed the peak of production and distribution of these fine ceramics, which had now established their own market niche.¹⁰³⁹

The role of the state

Monetary production and circulation and seals 641 – 741

For Athens, all the reigns between 641 and 741 are represented by at least a single find, indicating the broad continuity of coinage circulation and use. The stay of Constans II in the city during the winter of 662 / 663 has left the most coin finds for the years 641 – 741 with 234 gold *solidi*.¹⁰⁴⁰ Worth noting are the fifty-one *solidi* of Leo III found in Paiania/Liopesi in the region of the Attic Mesogeia.¹⁰⁴¹ They may likely be connected with the reorganisation of taxation during the reign of this emperor and the imposition of the *kapnikon* tax collected in cash. Otherwise, the existence of this rather considerable number of *solidi* in an agricultural locality of no strategic importance would be rather peculiar.

Corinth and its region give a similar picture to Athens and Attica: a little less than 130 coins of Constans II testify to the passage of the emperor and his army *en route* to Italy. The reigns up to 750 are represented by a few *nomismata* all found in the lower city.¹⁰⁴² At Kenchreai some coins roughly dating to the seventh century and a *folles* of Constans II have been excavated.¹⁰⁴³ Even such slight evidence indicates the continuity of an albeit reduced economic life.

It is evident from these and other finds across the islands of the Saronic Gulf and the gulf of Argolis¹⁰⁴⁴ that (economic) life continued at least until the second half of the seventh century, concentrated along the coastal regions of Attica and the eastern Peloponnese. Ongoing movement along the “trunk route” between Italy and Byzantium must have played a crucial role in this development, combined with the diligence of the central government in maintaining the sea lane’s functionality and relative security.

The sigillographic evidence bears testament to this policy: a series of lead seals belonging to officials of the central government have been found, mainly across the larger and smaller islands that dot the coastline.¹⁰⁴⁵ The first *kommerkiarioi* made their appearance in 698 / 699 and the *basilika*

¹⁰³⁹ PAPANIKOLA-BAKIRTZI, Glazed ceramics, 200—205; VROOM, Pottery in the Aegean, 80—93; MPAKIRTZES, Τσουκαλολάγηνα, 60.

¹⁰⁴⁰ NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, Κυκλοφορία, 62, n. 293; MORRISSON – POPOVIC – IVANISEVIC, Trésors, 227—228, n. 133; for the finds up to 1959 see, THOMPSON, Coins, 71—72, annotations, 107—108.

¹⁰⁴¹ NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, Κυκλοφορία, 66, n. 330.

¹⁰⁴² AVRAMEA, Πελοπόννησος, 150—151; MORRISSON – POPOVIC – IVANISEVIC, Trésors, 242, n. 147.

¹⁰⁴³ Along with seventh-century coins of uncertain date, AVRAMEA, Πελοπόννησος, 152; for the finds up to 1929, see EDWARDS, 11—12, 131—133; updated catalogue up to 1995 SANDERS, Byzantine Corinth, 387.

¹⁰⁴⁴ For example, the island of Salamina with three *folles* MORRISSON – POPOVIC – IVANISEVIC, Trésors, 273, n. 184 and Acronauplia with two *folles* GALANE-KRIKOU, Ακροναυπλία, 206.

¹⁰⁴⁵ For a catalogue of the known finds up to 2017, see KOLTSIDA-MAKRE, Σφραγιστική μαρτυρία, 164—168.

kommerkia around 730.¹⁰⁴⁶ As always, their responsibility was the collection, storage, and distribution of various materials to the local army and naval forces, and the taxation of whatever trade was active across their area of jurisdiction.

Monetary production and circulation 1025 – 1095

In the triangle between Euripos,¹⁰⁴⁷ Thebes, Athens and Corinth, the number of coins – especially copper – that were used for everyday transactions confirm the increasing level of economic activity across the region. Already during the first half of the tenth century, monetisation was strengthened after the end of the Bulgarian wars in 1018 and the restoration of peace across the southern Balkans. The *tetartera* and *half-tetartera* of the post-1092 reform up to c. 1190 are to be found in abundance in Thessaly, Hellas, and the Peloponnese in the form of hoards.¹⁰⁴⁸

In Thebes, the remonetisation of the economy began to leave a trace during the first half of the tenth century. The finds are solely anonymous *folleis* of the late tenth and eleventh centuries. The post-1092 coins excavated so far are all copper *tetartera*, limited to seven pieces for the reign of Alexios I.¹⁰⁴⁹

In Athens, the findings covering the years 1025 – 1095 are more numerous, soaring steadily as the period ends: Basil II and Constantine VIII's reigns have 571 pieces, Nikephoros III's 1036 and Alexios I's 1267. In general, the volume of coins discovered indicates vibrant economic activity.¹⁰⁵⁰

For Corinth,¹⁰⁵¹ the finds from 1025 – 1095 include gold, silver, and copper mintages although pre-reform gold *nomismata* and silver *miliaresia* are rare.¹⁰⁵² Pre-reform *folleis* are ample, indicating that everyday transactions were the norm.¹⁰⁵³ After 1092, the gold *hyperpyra* and *electron trachea* are rare, though one *hyperpyron* of Alexios I has been found as part of the contents of a traveller's purse

¹⁰⁴⁶ RAGIA, *Apothekai of the Balkans*, 110–112, BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 603, nos. 144, 210, 225, 232.

¹⁰⁴⁷ NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, *Κυκλοφορία*, 76, n. 425; TOURATSOGLU – NIKOLAOU, *Σύνταγμα “Θησαυρών”*, 82–83, n. 62.

¹⁰⁴⁸ For a catalogue of finds up to 2019 see TOURATSOGLU – NIKOLAOU, *Σύνταγμα “Θησαυρών”*, 99–103, nos. 650–684. For Thessaly, a general overview until 2004 can be found in NIKOLAOU, *Νομισματική Κυκλοφορία II*, 578–581 with fn. 41, 46 and 47; PENNA – TOURATSOGLU, “Θησαυρός” *Μελιβοίας*, 365–367, 374, 377–378; NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, *Κυκλοφορία*, 78, n. 441.

¹⁰⁴⁹ NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, *Κυκλοφορία*, 71, n. 375, 73, n. 390, 74, nos. 399, 404, 405, 75, nos. 412, 415–418, 76, nos. 423–424, 77, n. 430. Post 1092 coins, 99, n. 652. For n. 404 see also, TOURATSOGLU – NIKOLAOU, *Σύνταγμα “Θησαυρών”*, 80, n. 55.

¹⁰⁵⁰ For the finds up to 1959, see THOMPSON, *Coins*, 73–74, with a considerable number of the anonymous *folleis* being overstruck and some identified as “barbarous imitations”: see annotations 109–116, and FRANTZ, on late antiquity, 123. For other minor discoveries across Attica, see NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, *Κυκλοφορία*, 75, n. 413 also TOURATSOGLU – NIKOLAOU, *Σύνταγμα “Θησαυρών”*, 81, n. 59.

¹⁰⁵¹ For an overview, see PENNA, *Νομισματική κυκλοφορία*, 407–413.

¹⁰⁵² NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, *Κυκλοφορία*, 69, n. 357, 1; TOURATSOGLU – NIKOLAOU, *Σύνταγμα “Θησαυρών”*, 81, n. 57.

¹⁰⁵³ NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, *Κυκλοφορία*, 72, nos. 379–386, 401–403, 421.

that also included Frankish denars dated c. 1098.¹⁰⁵⁴ Copper *tetartera* and *half-tetartera* of the post-1092 years have been found in large numbers.¹⁰⁵⁵ At Kenchreai, a small treasure of five *miliaresia* of Basil II might either have belonged to a traveller's lost purse or been earnings from a commercial transaction.¹⁰⁵⁶

Argos¹⁰⁵⁷, Nauplion,¹⁰⁵⁸ and Sparta¹⁰⁵⁹ have also bequeathed their treasures, mainly anonymous *folleis* of the eleventh century.

Seals 1025 – 1095

Regarding the *kommerkiarioi* of the eleventh century, no lead seals have come down to us. *Hellas* and the Peloponnese (along with *Kephallenia*) came under the focus of these officials only after the recommencement of war between the Bulgarian kingdom and Byzantium after 894. Its effect was virtually to disrupt the use of the *Via Egnatia*, especially its western part from Dyrrachion and Apollonia up to the approaches of Thessalonike. The sea and land routes were then redirected southwards via the Ionian Sea, with Kephallenia, Naupaktos and Patras serving as the main points of entry for those travelling from the west. As a result, *kommerkiarioi* were appointed to these regions and provided with lead seals because of their pivotal role in the management of trade and taxation of merchandise.¹⁰⁶⁰ With the gradual stabilisation of the region fully complete by 1018, the *kommerkiarioi* stationed across the region of *Hellas* and Peloponnese had become of no importance since the *Via Egnatia* was now fully reopened. They had generally been moved to the lower Danube frontier to regulate trade with the northern nomads. If any of their colleagues remained in the southern Balkans, their function was now not deemed important enough to permit the use of a lead seal; instead, wax seals could be used to secure taxed merchandise or documents.

Connecting the dots: patterns of communication and trade along the northwest coast of the Aegean

The years 641 – 741 delineate the transition from the economic realities of (late) antiquity to those of a new era. The shrinkage and in some cases extinction of the *poleis*, the decline of large, landed estates with their extensive *villae rusticae* and their adjacent facilities, and finally the systematic enemy

¹⁰⁵⁴ NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, Κυκλοφορία, 77, n. 433; PENNA, Νομισματική κυκλοφορία, 410–41.

¹⁰⁵⁵ NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, Κυκλοφορία, 99–110, nos. 653–657.

¹⁰⁵⁶ NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, Κυκλοφορία, 70, n. 361.

¹⁰⁵⁷ NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, Κυκλοφορία, 74, n. 408, 76, n. 422.

¹⁰⁵⁸ GALANE-KRIKOU, Ακροναυπλία, 206–208, 218–219. BAKER – TSEKES, Coins in the Argolid, 242

¹⁰⁵⁹ NIKOLAOU – TOURATSOGLU, Κυκλοφορία, 76, n. 420, 101, n. 665.

¹⁰⁶⁰ For the seals of the *kommerkiarioi* of the region during the ninth and tenth century see NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, DOSeals II, passim.

activity within imperial territory, all significantly altered the character of the urban and rural economies.¹⁰⁶¹

The *poleis* that survived in the form of heavily fortified *kastra* could now rely on the countryside nearby for their supply in staples, while upcycling existing building materials.¹⁰⁶² Maritime communications by now played a crucial role in providing regular connection with the outside world. Thessalonike is the best documented case in helping us to track the above-mentioned developments. It should be emphasised again that generalising from a single example can be hazardous in the extreme. However, with Thessalonike as an exemplar, the survival and transformation of cities such as Athens and Corinth can be better understood, always taking into consideration local conditions and circumstances. At the same time, a more careful examination of the evidence suggests that the relocation program initiated by the central government at the end of the fifth century continued unaffected into the seventh: this was the case with Monemvasia. As a result, the rural population followed the urban in settling in the immediate and more distant vicinity of the newly established *kastra*. Monemvasia serves again as an example because of the settlements that developed along the eastern Laconian coast within the city's territory.

The role of the Slavic settlement along the north and west coast of the Aegean should neither be overemphasised nor disregarded in its significance. From a purely economic point of view, these newcomers – despite the initial destruction and desolation caused by their raids, destruction that after all cannot be confirmed – settled in the countryside, cultivating the land and raising stock. Within a few decades, not only had they established a *modus vivendi* with the imperial government and the indigenous population, but they were involved in full commercial activities even at an interregional level. Again, the desperate Thessalonians that exchanged their personal belongings for wheat and legumes from the Belegezetai Slavs of Thessaly offer characteristic testimony: if one divests the hagiographic narrative of hyperbole, what remains is a purely commercial transaction between a seller and a buyer, with ethnicity playing no role at all.

By 741 the region of the southern Aegean had already made great progress in adapting to the new political, social, and economic conditions. The balance sheet must have been positive, as is well indicated by the written evidence: when in 754 / 755 Emperor Constantine V decided to strengthen the population of the capital, he settled families from the “islands, Hellas, and the southern parts”. Ten years later, in 765 / 766 the same emperor restored the aqueduct of Valens, bringing among other artisans “from Hellas and the islands, 500 clay-workers, and from Thrace itself, 5.000 labourers and

¹⁰⁶¹ For a general overview, see ARMSTRONG, Eleventh century, 136—140. For a case study in Boeotia, see VIONIS, Settlements in Byzantine Greece, 138—147.

¹⁰⁶² VIONIS, Settlements in Byzantine Greece, 148—159.

200 brickmakers”.¹⁰⁶³ The transfer of population and especially of a skilled workforce would not have been possible if the above-mentioned regions had not experienced a period of demographic and economic growth for at least the previous thirty years.

The period between approximately the third quarter of the eighth and the middle of the tenth century form a bridge between the circumstances of 741 and 1018. The general revival of the western provinces met with serious setbacks caused chiefly by foreign actors, namely the Bulgarians in the north and the Arabs in the centre and the south. For an extended period, the Byzantine-Bulgarian conflict disrupted land communications along the main and secondary routes of the southern Balkans, while the conquest of Crete (c. 824) and Syracuse (878) by the Arabs turned the sea routes across the Aegean and the Adriatic into a constant battlefield, with communications and trade experiencing sustained difficulty. In fact, state and society in Byzantium again adapted to the new conditions, and so did communications and trade by shifting the sea and land routes to the west of the “Helladic” provinces of the empire. Judging from the economic boom of the late-tenth century, it may be concluded that this adjustment proved successful – the sacking of Thessalonike by the Arabs in 904 being the only dark spot. With the reconquest of Crete in 961, the economic forces that were already developing – albeit at modest pace – manifested their full potential. The Peloponnese is the best documented example, where the written and material evidence suggests a gradual recovery from the end of the ninth century leading to the economic leap from the second half of the tenth century.¹⁰⁶⁴

The years 1018 – 1095 offered a sustained phase of economic growth that culminated in the “golden” twelfth century, despite periodic interruptions such as the Petcheneg and Norman wars. Abandoned quarters within and outside *kastra* were repopulated and reconstructed, and new villages and hamlets appeared across the countryside,¹⁰⁶⁵ the use of coin becoming the norm even for the smallest transaction.¹⁰⁶⁶ The arrival of Italian merchants opened the horizons up to export trade, with silks, olive oil, wine, and ceramics leading the race. Cities such as Thebes and Monemvasia were central *nuclei* for agricultural hinterlands, each with settlements providing foodstuff and raw materials. Sophisticated methods of production, especially of silk, have been suggested on the grounds of both written and material evidence, which – though coming from the twelfth century – could very plausibly indicate developments already under way from the closing decades of the eleventh.¹⁰⁶⁷ Interconnection between the south and the north reached a new peak. It seems that for the time being central Greece and the Peloponnese were exporting more to the nearest and most distant north than the north was

¹⁰⁶³ Theophanes 429, 22—25, 440, 21—22 (DE BOOR). Theophanes Confessor, 593, 608.

¹⁰⁶⁴ PENNA, Κοινωνία και οικονομία, 40—47.

¹⁰⁶⁵ VIONIS, Settlements in Byzantine Greece, 160—170; ARMSTRONG, Eleventh century, 140—142.

¹⁰⁶⁶ GEROLYMATOU, Νόμισμα και κυκλοφορία, 186—192

¹⁰⁶⁷ ARMSTRONG, Eleventh century, 143—146.

sending to them. At least, this is implied in the *Timarion*, with the presence of cloths from Thebes and Corinth, from the gargantuan cellars of the Rus aristocracy filled with olive oil and wine, and indeed confirmed by the presence of “Helladic” Günsenin types II and III of amphorae as far away as Sweden.¹⁰⁶⁸

At the end of the twelfth century, the north and west littoral of the Aegean had reached their medieval and perhaps pre-modern economic peak. It will remain an open question as to whether they ever achieved the figures of late antiquity in terms of agricultural and manufacturing output and trading volume.¹⁰⁶⁹ My own view is that in certain products such as silks, olive oil, wine and ceramics there was indeed an output greater than that of late antiquity, especially in Thessaly, central Greece and the Peloponnese. Macedonia and Thrace might also have reached similar levels in cereal cultivation and animal husbandry, owing to their Balkan hinterland and their relative proximity to Constantinople. Thessalonike was the indisputable commercial centre of the region. Again, this is nothing more than an educated guess and I touch on this matter only to emphasize the prospect of future research.

3.2.5 Regional conclusions

The *Ágäis* has been an area of crucial geopolitical importance since antiquity. As the region that separates and concurrently interconnects Europe with Asia it has been the epicentre of some of the greatest civilisations and most powerful states in global history: the ancient Greeks, the Romans, the Byzantines, and the Ottomans all had at the core of their territories the Aegean area, acknowledging its strategic geographical location.

It was inevitable that this sea, with the straits of the Dardanelles and of the Bosphorus to its north-west giving access to the Black Sea, would become one of the main arteries of trade, be that local, (inter)regional, or international. After an almost continuous development and expansion from the first century CE onwards under the *Pax Romana*, the appearance of the Slavs, Bulgarians, and Arabs can be considered the first turning point with long lasting effects. The Muslim conquest of Egypt, Palestine, and Syria disrupted the unified area of the eastern Mediterranean, thus affecting the sections of both Sea Routes A and B that lay outside the Aegean. The Slav and Bulgarian settlements across the region of the lower Danube breached the Roman *limes* of the Balkans, reaching to the northern and western shores of the Aegean. These events came as a culmination of earlier developments which had their origin already in the late fifth century. These included the rearrangement of civic functions within the late antique *poleis*, the increasing role of governmental intervention in

¹⁰⁶⁸ VROOM, Pottery in the Aegean, 97—99.

¹⁰⁶⁹ ARMSTRONG, Eleventh century, 146—156.

trade (primarily through the *annona civica*), environmental factors with the beginning of the early medieval “ice age”, and the appearance of the early medieval plague. It is still a matter of debate as to which of these factors was the one (if indeed there was only one) that triggered the rest, and the question will not concern us further. Suffice it to say that the above-mentioned events combined with the Arab presence to drastically alter trade and communication in terms of size and volume, though never eliminating them.

Already by the middle of the eighth century, Byzantine trade in the Aegean had adapted to the new conditions. The land routes were abandoned, serving only local needs both in the Balkans and in Asia Minor. Sea was now the connecting element of the remaining territories, especially in the north and west since the land routes were compromised by the Bulgarians and the Slavs. It was only with great difficulty and intensive military action that the Byzantines were able to reopen the segment of the Via Egnatia between Constantinople and Thessaloniki and the lower segments of the Basilike Odos up to Philipoupolis. However, their use as trade routes at this early point is highly unlikely since the relations between Byzantium, the Bulgarian state, and the numerous Slavic groups remained fragile. Along the Asian coast and for the eastern Aegean islands, the Arab raids and – in particular – the preparatory operations for both sieges of Constantinople caused serious interruption, with the destruction of cities such as Rhodes and Alikarnassos. The rest of the Aegean islands, especially the Cyclades, escaped these difficulties because of their geographical position: since the then-established sea routes did not pass their way, they were not the main target of the enemy forces. The fact that before the end of the seventh century they were included in the administrative system of the *apothekai/basilika kommerkia* – involving some peculiar combinations such as the islands of the “southern arc” – along with the re-evaluation and discovery of new material evidence allows us to speak with more security of adaptability and continuity rather than disruption and collapse.

The years of Crete’s Arab domination (c. 824 – 961) caused extensive disruption along the sea routes passing through the Aegean, especially after the fall of Syracuse to the Arabs in 878 which compromised the “trunk route” from Rome to Constantinople. Both Italians and Byzantine merchants had to find alternative pathways for communication and trade and, indeed, the ports of western Greece and especially those along the Corinthian gulf, such as Naupaktos, Patras, and Corinth, became new landing points. From there, people on the move and the things they carried could combine land and sea to reach the Aegean littoral. This adaptability proved of critical importance since it allowed trade to continue at a significant scale and volume despite the difficulties. Even the western part of the much-troubled Via Egnatia saw a temporary revival, yet this would come to an end with the deterioration of Byzantine-Bulgarian relations after the end of the ninth century. The plundering of Thessalonike by the Arabs in 904 was a temporary setback that did not affect the overall positive balance. In any case,

the reconquest of Crete by the Byzantines in 961 signalled the return of much-desired stability across the Aegean Sea – except for the northern coast which was to enter this new era after the year 1000.

Up until the appearance of the Seljuks in Asia Minor, the Aegean region saw a demographic and economic revival that accelerated steadily to reach its peak during the twelfth century. In the Balkans, the Petcheneg and Norman wars proved to be inhibitors of minor importance. Economic expansion continued at a steady pace, with the commercial privileges given to the Venetians in 1082 opening new markets for the agricultural and artisan products of the Helladic provinces. Thessalonike to the north, Thebes and Corinth to the south were the major centres of production and consumption, while a series of coastal and inland settlements such as Almyros benefited from mercantile activity. The same can be said for the islands of the western and central Aegean, along with Crete. There, imperial patronage that has survived to this day in the form of monasteries with extensive movable and immovable wealth boosted the local micro-economies even on islands such as Amorgos or Thera. Unfortunately, no evidence has survived concerning all these activities for the smaller islands. However, the number of churches dating to the eleventh and twelfth centuries such as those in Andros or Naxos point to the existence of local communities with sufficient wealth to support the construction of smaller though technically and aesthetically elaborate religious buildings.

The course of events was different in the region of the eastern Aegean. With the total collapse of Asia Minor after the battle of Mantzikert, the Turks reached as far as the coast. Several emirs established themselves across the littoral and began to raid the neighbouring islands, Tzachas being the most decisive and dangerous in the long run. Land and sea communications were disrupted for about fifteen years, and the economy suffered on a larger scale compared to the rest of the Aegean. Even imperial patronage could not remedy the situation in the short term, and the brotherhood of the newly founded monastery at Patmos had to flee in retreat and seek protection as far to the west as Euboea. The defeat of Tzachas and the subsequent appearance of the crusaders allowed the Byzantines to re-establish their presence across the littoral of Asia Minor, and state and church were rather meticulous in reasserting their authority over their lost properties. The *praktikon* of notary Adam gives a snapshot of what could be described as economic stagnation in the closing years of the 1070s – though once again we should beware the risk of extrapolating too generally from this.

The activity of the Venetians in the handling places conceded to them in 1082 completes the picture. The merchants of the Republic did not capitalise on their privileges along the Asian coast during this period, because of the still precarious political situation. Furthermore, the agricultural produce of regions such as Miletos was of major importance for the supply of Constantinople through the distribution mechanisms of state and church, at least to some extent, and the Byzantine authorities did not allow the involvement of foreign merchants in the supply chain of the capital. In contrast, the

Hellenic regions opened up almost immediately to the Italian market, with geography playing a pivotal role alongside the Amalfitan trade networks that the Venetians had inherited across the Adriatic, Ionian, and Aegean seas. In any case, coin finds indicate a much more active economy after the 1120s, when the coasts of Asia Minor were thought to be adequately protected from the Seljuks of Iconium.

In the year 1095 and on the eve of the Crusades that would change in a fundamental way the geopolitical status-quo of the Middle East, Byzantium had already entered a new period of its long history. The Aegean Sea was, as always, the epicentre of the Byzantine state, and inevitably the epicentre of its economy, with trade being an integral part and constituting an important quota of the region's gross product. The eleventh and twelfth centuries may thus be characterised as a new spike in the economic life of the Aegean after late antiquity. 1204 would bring tectonic changes initiated by the fall of Constantinople to the crusaders, and the geopolitical fragmentation of the *Āgāis* would create a new context under which trade and communications had to be conducted.

4. Patterns of trade and communication in times of crisis and the role of the state

“The Eastern empire survived the Western for another thousand years, kept going by the most interesting and most successful bureaucracy the world has ever seen. Many of the men who shaped policies in the offices of the Byzantine emperors were of the intellectual cream of their times. They dealt with a host of legal, monetary, commercial, agrarian and fiscal problems. We cannot help feeling that they must have philosophized about them. If they did, however, the results have been lost. No piece of reasoning that would have to be mentioned here has been preserved”.¹⁰⁷⁰

These words of J. A. Schumpeter, one of the leading figures of the “Historical school of economics”, -along with Gustav von Schmoller and Max Weber, - encapsulate one main problem and “unrequited desire” for those studying the economic history of the Byzantine state. No single written work of original economic thinking has come down to us and only through the legislative initiative of the emperors and occasional references in the sources are we able to trace some thoughts on financial management. In its basic principles, Byzantine economic thinking was a Christian one. The latter was created and established by the Church Fathers of the first centuries CE by blending the Aristotelian economic theories with the moral principles of Christianity. At its core were the concepts of autarky, the “just price” or “just value of a commodity” and the moral condemnation of lending and interest. However, as one could expect, the gap between theoretical Christian ethics and reality was wide and

¹⁰⁷⁰ SCHUMPETER, History of economic analysis, 71.

as result, -to cite perhaps the most typical case-, lending with (fixed) interest was totally accepted in Byzantine law.¹⁰⁷¹

This chapter aims at bringing together the already presented evidence with the inclusion of the role of the state into trade and communication. It is self-evident that the majority of the officials stationed in the provinces were appointed by the central government in Constantinople ensuring the proper application of the laws. Their position in the state and court hierarchy along with their scope of jurisdiction was usually represented by their right to use a lead seal in order to secure their documents. This is a critical detail that usually eludes us, in other words the non-existence of a lead seal does not imply the absence of the official using it. The right to use a lead seal was reserved for specific offices and / or persons for a given period of time after which the clerk could lose this privilege.

Another detail that has to be mentioned concerns the use of the various *termini technici* found in the written sources. Many of these are not found in legislation and its codifications, appearing only in imperial decrees, most usually in *chrysoboulla* that granted privileges to individuals or institutions, the latter being represented in the archival material primarily of monastic foundations.¹⁰⁷² As a result, a technical term can appear with multiple names and / or name variations this being the result of an evolutionary process that led to the appearance of numerous taxes and (sur)charges especially after the eleventh century. In all probability the state tried to take advantage of the rising volume of (commercial) traffic in order to raise its revenues. After all, the Byzantines maintained the (late) Roman infrastructures at least up to a certain level and the imposition of fees was inevitable. Consequently, the relevant taxes and charges became more and more specialised particularly after the eleventh century.

Finally, the various officials mentioned in the following pages had in no case the oversight of communication and trade as their sole duty. Following Roman principles, Byzantine administration had no clear separation of powers and responsibilities. For instance, a state official responsible for the road network had also the jurisdiction to calculate and collect the due tax from the local population that would be used for the maintenance of the infrastructure.

¹⁰⁷¹ For an overview see, LAIOU, Οικονομική σκέψη, 339—352.

¹⁰⁷² For the imperial documents and their variants see, KARAGIANNOPOULOS, Βυζαντινή διπλωματική Α', 92—94.

4.1 The Byzantine monetary system and trade

Introduction

This subchapter will review the monetary system of the Byzantine empire and examine its connection with trade during the years 641 – 741 and 1025 – 1095. The topics under consideration are a) monetary production and circulation in connection with domestic and international trade and its taxation, b) the devaluation and debasement of the eleventh century and, c) the monetary reform of 1092 and its potential relation with the (easier) facilitation of commercial transactions on the eve of the commercial revolution of the twelfth century.

4.1.1 The years 641 – 741

Monetary supply

The year 641 marked the transition from the late Roman / early Byzantine organisational scheme of monetary production to the middle Byzantine one. The *comitiva sacrarum largitionum* (ὕπηρεσία τῶν θείων θησαυρῶν), sole responsible for the collection of the precious metals and their transport to the mints, the production of the coins, and their quality control, -hence the stamp CONOB (*Con[stantinopoli] ob[ryziacus]*): fine gold solidus of Constantinople on the gold solidus and its fractions- had already disappeared in 610. Soon afterwards, the production of coins came under the βεστιάριον with the “master of the mint” (ἄρχων τῆς χαρᾶγῆς) at its head. The precious metal supplied from both withdrawn coins and newly acquired volumes of metal was smelted in the χρυσοχεῖον mint, its *archon* called χρυσοεπητής and being dependent on the σέκρετον τοῦ εἰδικοῦ, the successor of the *comitiva rerum privatarum*. Quality control was under the responsibility of the ζυγοστάτης who was a dependent of the σακελλίων.¹⁰⁷³ The compartmentalisation of the entire production process is more than obvious to secure the reciprocal control between the departments and their officials and for minimising the possibility for the misappropriation of precious metals. From now on, Constantinople would be the sole supplier of gold, silver and copper coins for the Byzantine heartlands until the ninth century. The Roman metrological scale was followed with some deviations until the end of the twelfth century.¹⁰⁷⁴

The coinage of the seventh century preserved the three traditional denominations of the gold *solidus* namely the solidus itself, the *semissis* and the *tremissis*. The standardised gold content and the weight however were reduced during the 680's (from c. 98% and 4.36g to c. 96% and 4.20g on

¹⁰⁷³ HENDY, *Monetary economy*, 371—372, 412—413; MORRISSON, *Βυζαντινό νόμισμα*, 45, 48—49.

¹⁰⁷⁴ HENDY, *Monetary economy*, 329—338; MORRISSON, *Βυζαντινό νόμισμα*, 54—57, 65.

average). In terms of fine gold content, the rate of savings appears relatively small (2,7%) however in the long run it must have eased the strain put on the treasury because of the continuous needs related to the war effort of Byzantium on various fronts. Furthermore, the loss of the eastern provinces and especially Armenia caused an inelastic supply of new precious metals that became a standard feature of Byzantine public finances from the seventh century until the end of the empire crucially affecting the decisions of its monetary policy makers.¹⁰⁷⁵

The silver *ἑξάγραμμα* (known as *hexagrammon* in modern literature) was at first introduced under Heraclius in order to cover the expedient needs of the Persian war, however it did not survive the reign of Constantine IV becoming a ceremonial coin afterwards. A silver coinage, the *μυλιαρήσιον* (*miliaresion*) was reintroduced by Leo III in 721 being a close recall of the contemporary Arabic *dirham*. Initially intended to compete with its Muslim equivalent on the political – ideological level it soon went beyond this function and in 740 it was demanded in payment for the newly introduced, however extraordinary, *dikeraton* tax. Although its weight seems to have been extremely irregular, based on the surviving examples, -the “silver famine” between the seventh and the eleventh century playing an important role to this development, -¹⁰⁷⁶ its fiduciary value was versatile allowing its longevity for over three centuries. It thus became the intermediary coinage par excellence, replacing the divisions of the *solidus* / *nomisma* and allowing the facilitation of trade not only with the Muslims but also with the Rus that had a certain preference for silver as a precious metal.¹⁰⁷⁷

The copper *folles* and its denominations were also bequeathed by the late Roman / early Byzantine period with the denominations loosing rapidly in quality and quantity during the eighth century.¹⁰⁷⁸

In 741 a simple trimetallic structure (gold *nomisma*, silver *miliaresion*, copper *folles*) had been established. Its existence facilitated the gradual revitalisation of the economy since it allowed the easier control on the flow of precious metals, the collection of taxes on provinces that were trying to recover after the tribulations of the seventh century and the conduct of whatever domestic and international trade was active. The *miliaresion* was critical in this respect since it was preferred by both the east and the west for commercial transactions.

¹⁰⁷⁵ HENDY, *Monetary economy*, 492—493; MORRISSON, *Βυζαντινό νόμισμα*, 65—66, 87—89.

¹⁰⁷⁶ See also above, p. 56—57 with fn. 322.

¹⁰⁷⁷ HENDY, *Monetary economy*, 494—495; MORRISSON, *Βυζαντινό νόμισμα*, 66—67, 68—69.

¹⁰⁷⁸ HENDY, *Monetary economy*, 496—500; MORRISSON, *Βυζαντινό νόμισμα*, 67—68.

Circulation

When attempting to estimate even roughly the entire circulation of a coin in Byzantium (and the medieval world in general) several factors must be taken into consideration. First of all, the average life span of a coin which in the case of the *solidus* has been calculated between sixty and eighty years, the *miliaresion* and the *folles* having shorter life spans when used, because of their material.¹⁰⁷⁹ Other factors affecting circulation were its accidental loss and last but in no way least, hoarding. Consequently, the average life span of a coinage affected the total / annual rates of reminting.¹⁰⁷⁹

For the period between 641 and 741 the main feature of the archaeological record has been the notorious eclipse of the copper *folles* (and obviously its denominations). This fact is combined with the steady debasement and devaluation of the *folles* after the reign of Heraclius. Only Constantine IV tried to avert this course however his attempt did not outlast him. With the supply of copper being inelastic, the government resorted occasionally to extreme measures such as the melting down of bronze statues and the seizure of metal from the roofs of churches in Rome during the visit of Constantine II. The *folles* were struck with haste and no quality control was applied in terms of their appearance suggesting inflation with overstrikes, countermarks and blanks scissored by cutting the older larger pieces into four.¹⁰⁸⁰ Thus, their virtual disappearance could have been a combination of two factors: the shrinking of commercial day-to-day transactions and the declining quality of the *folles* that made them more susceptible to wear. Eventually, they became useless and were perhaps melted for the manufacture of artisanal products, a percentage returning to the mint to be used for the production of new coinage.

4.1.2 The years 1025 – 1095

Monetary supply during the tenth and eleventh century

In the closing decades of the tenth and during the eleventh century, money and its supply changed in a critical way, a change that was followed by a crisis. This crisis affected first and foremost the gold *nomisma* and in a later stage the silver *miliaresion* and the copper *folles*.

The *miliaresion* proved to be of pivotal role with the gradual revitalisation of trade from the middle of the ninth century. Its heyday came with the reapproach of Kievan Rus with Byzantium after 989. For decades to come, Byzantine administration was pouring the much desired silver in the form of the *miliaresion* to the Rus territories facilitating trade with the north. In the domestic sphere, the present status of coin finds does not indicate the same success, however this could be a false picture based on the limited data available.¹⁰⁸¹

¹⁰⁷⁹ MORRISSON, Βυζαντινό νόμισμα, 82—84.

¹⁰⁸⁰ See fn. 93.

¹⁰⁸¹ HENDY, Monetary economy, 500—503.

In fact, the archaeological record shows a substantial expansion in the production and circulation of the copper *folles* both in its standard and *anonymous* variations.¹⁰⁸² The rising volume of small-scale commercial transactions must have dictated an increase in their production that is also mirrored in their declining weight.¹⁰⁸³

The gold *nomisma* experienced a gradual decline in three phases, the first dated between the middle of the tenth and the middle of the eleventh century. The percentage of silver in the gold coinage showed a very slight annual increase that allowed a rise in coin supply at a rate of 0.2% a year. It was during this century that Nikephoros II Phocas introduced the lightweight gold *nomisma* called the τεταρτηρόν (i.e., “the small quarter”), which was reduced by one-twelfth in relation to the full-weight *nomisma*, now called the ιστάμενον (i.e., “the standard / established one”). As could be expected, payments to the treasury were made in *histamena* and expenditure in lightweight *tetartera* in order to retrieve precious metal from the difference. Thus, the state was able to issue 8% more coins using the same quantity of metal. Nikephoros II was probably trying to find a way to finance his vigorous military campaigns. His successors continued to issue lightweight *tetartera*, distinguishable from *histamena* only by weight.¹⁰⁸⁴ It seems that from the 960’s onwards, the growing economy along with the expansionary foreign policy were putting a strain on the treasury that was dealt with the actions described above. The state was paying, at least partially, its expenses in *tetartera* while collecting taxes in *histamena*. A corrective action taken later was the redesigning of the *tetarteron* in order for it to be perfectly recognisable and distinguishable from the *histamenon* thus responding to the general outcry caused by its introduction, its initial appearance being received as a deceit from the public.¹⁰⁸⁵

Despite the initial “shock” caused by this financial measure it seems that the developing (market) economy welcomed the *tetarteron* since it offered a degree of flexibility in commercial transactions. The obligation to pay the taxes in the *histamenon* and accept payment in *tetartera* was absorbed because of the positive growth rate. However, in the second phase of the devaluation during the second half of the eleventh century, the debasement rate speeded up especially during the reign of Romanos IV Diogenes (1068 – 1071). The average silver content rose from 10,9% to 24,8% with an annual increase of 0.4%. This allowed an increase of monetary supply of 1% per year.¹⁰⁸⁶ The political

¹⁰⁸² The designation “anonymous” emanates from the redesign of the *folles*, in the reign of John I Tzimiskes, that included religious imagery on both sides and not the traditional imperial figure on the obverse and inscription on the reverse. These elements were reintroduced in the second half of the eleventh century. The event has been recorded by the written sources, see, Skylitzes (311, 74—81 THURN).

¹⁰⁸³ HENDY, Monetary economy, 511—512.

¹⁰⁸⁴ MORRISSON, Βυζαντινό νόμισμα, 69—70.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Skylitzes (275, 69—75 THURN); Zonaras XVI 25, 25—27 (507, 1—14 BÜTTNER-WOBST). MORRISSON, Βυζαντινό νόμισμα, 70; HENDY, Monetary economy, 506—510.

¹⁰⁸⁶ MORRISSON, Βυζαντινό νόμισμα, 71.

context of this second phase of devaluation is characterised by the appearance of new enemies in various fronts and the needs to cover the expenditure of the military and diplomacy.

The third and most serious phase from 1071 to 1092 saw the gold fineness falling rapidly from 35.8% to 10.6% alone under Alexios I. Gold had been replaced with an alloy that included silver and copper thus changing even the appearance of the *histamenon* and the *tetarteron*. The silver *miliaresion* and copper *follis* followed suit. The *miliaresion* fell from above 90% of silver until the years 1059 – 1067 to 45% until 1081. The *follis* ended up as a lead coinage in 1092.¹⁰⁸⁷

The reform of 1092

Alexios I put an end to this crisis by restructuring the monetary system. At the top was the ὑπέρπυρον (i.e., “the one refined by fire”) a gold coinage of high fineness (c. 21 carats). Its division was the τραχὺ ἄσπρον with 30% gold, 60% silver and 10% copper. Silver coinage was replaced by the ἄσπρον τραχὺ a billon coin of copper and silver called στάμενον in the common tongue. Finally, the *follis* was replaced by the τεταρτηρόν and its half. The creation of this new system was clearly dictated by metallurgical constraints and the dearth of new metal. Thus, the *hyperpyron* was produced mainly by melting down the gold *histamena* and *tetartera* of the years 1025 – 1056 and the *trachy aspron* by recycling the profoundly debased and devalued *nomismata* of the years 1070 – 1091. However, - intentionally or not- this monetary system proved the most elaborate of the period compared to the western and eastern ones. Its pattern of denominations was articulated to the highest level, allowing a wide range of transactions to be carried out while at the same time it secured the interests of the treasury in terms of taxation.¹⁰⁸⁸

The Byzantine monetary system and trade (10th – 12 centuries)

The theory according to which the gradual devaluation -up to a certain degree- of the coinage after 960 and the establishment of a new monetary system in 1092 was, among other things, a response to the expanding economy and its need for growing volumes of cash, is not a new one. The (re)appearance of a growing market must have played a role for the controlled devaluation until the 1060's. The trimetallic system inherited from the earlier period did not leave many options to the authorities and the issue of the *tetarteron* by Nikephoros II, although originally intended to cover military expenditure was probably soon recognised as a flexible tool for the market. It was used as a model in the following decades, especially after the death of Basil II in 1025. This “soldier-emperor” accumulated a huge reserve in the treasury that at least partially found its way to the market in the form of money in

¹⁰⁸⁷ MORRISSON, Βυζαντινό νόμισμα, 71—73.

¹⁰⁸⁸ MORRISSON, Βυζαντινό νόμισμα, 73—74; HENDY, Monetary economy, 513—517.

subsequent years. The Byzantine historiographers of the period accused the successors of Basil II for ridiculously wasting this treasure on various pharaonic construction projects and other personal oddities.¹⁰⁸⁹ However, behind the usual rhetorical hyperbole and personal (dis)taste a concise policy can be discerned and the support of the market with the flow of newly minted coin must have been one of its elements. When during the reign of Constantine X Doukas (1059 – 1067) the geopolitical and economic situation began to slip out of hand, trade was gradually affected. The extreme fiscal measures taken by Nikephoretzes during the 1070's, clearly impinged on trade, the establishment of the *phoundax* being the most characteristic. It seems that by this time, public finances were in the brink of collapse, at least in Constantinople and its economic region that were crumbling from the presence of thousands of refugees from Asia Minor. The “provincial” written sources confirm the wider picture of general insecurity and disruption. At the same time however, the material evidence, including coin finds, contradicts this narrative especially in the region of central and southern Greece along with Cyclades and Crete. There is nothing abnormal to this: the provinces that were less or even not at all afflicted from the troubles of the late eleventh century continued to develop and prosper, serving as strategic “reserves” that eventually helped Byzantium to recover.¹⁰⁹⁰ Nonetheless, the monetary system reached its minimum limit between the years 1078 and 1092 leaving its extensive restructure as the only viable option.

On a first reading, the main purpose of the new “Komnenian” system was to put an end to the abysmal devaluation of the coinage that had caused, primarily, a difficulty in the calculation and collection of land taxes.¹⁰⁹¹ To what extent it had been designed to cope with the growing volume of commercial transactions we cannot tell. A connection with Venetian infiltration to domestic and international trade has been proposed, however there is no evidence to further support it.¹⁰⁹² Judging from twelfth century developments, it is obvious that the new system offered an excellent medium for commercial transactions, being used as a standard and imitated across the eastern Mediterranean for centuries to come. The major concentrations of coin finds are spread across the Macedonian, Thracian and Helladic provinces of the empire. To cover the increasing needs, the mint of Thessalonike, already reactivated in the middle of the eleventh century was supplemented by a second mint located probably at Thebes. The Thessalonian mint issued the full range of coins while that of Thebes only the copper ones. The emphasis of the Theban mint to the copper *tetarteron* may have multiple explanations.¹⁰⁹³

¹⁰⁸⁹ ANGOLD, Πολιτική ιστορία, 145—146.

¹⁰⁹⁰ ANGOLD, Πολιτική ιστορία, 215.

¹⁰⁹¹ Zonaras XVIII 22, 20 (738, 3—11 BÜTTNER-WOBST). ANGOLD, Πολιτική ιστορία, 252—254; HENDY, Monetary economy, 516—517.

¹⁰⁹² First proposed by Metcalf, cited and refuted by HENDY, Monetary economy, 600, fn. 208.

¹⁰⁹³ HENDY, Monetary economy, 435—437.

Firstly, the needs on *hyperpyra* and *trachea* were sufficiently covered by Thessalonike. Secondly, with the continuous growth of urban centres such as Thebes, Athens, Corinth and Sparta, the need for low-value money used in everyday market transactions was increased and possibly required an additional mint established near to these centres. Last but not least, the production of the *hyperpyron* and of the *trachea* required precious metals, i.e., gold and silver. Consequently, the mint of Thessalonike, being the nearest to Constantinople, allowed direct control over the entire production process (perhaps with the establishment of officials as representatives of the bureaus involved in the minting?). In contrast in rather remoted Thebes the possibility of tampering with the precious metals was much higher thus making the collection and minting of copper the only viable option.

The Byzantine monetary system was designed in its principals to facilitate the smooth collection of taxes. Occasional adjustments were made with one parameter in mind: the inelastic supply of precious metals that called for a close monitoring on their imports and exports and for the retrieval of as much as possible coinage through taxation. If there were any thoughts on facilitating commercial transactions they must have been secondary although always in the minds of the policy makers. Indeed, this seems to have been the case after the middle of the tenth century and especially during the eleventh. As much as the principle of self-sufficiency remained the dominating one perfusing all social classes and mindsets, the reality of the market was continuously present. The existence of a monetary system that would make mercantile activities easier while securing an increased flow of taxes must have been taken into consideration from those anonymous bureaucrats that conceived and implemented the reform of 1092. The diachronic success of their policy is perfectly illustrated in the fact that even after its disappearance in 1354 the *hyperpyron* remained the standard money of account across the Aegean until the end of the fourteenth century.¹⁰⁹⁴

To return to the observation of J. A. Schumpeter, it can be said that being under the constant influence of Christian thinking and its limitations the Byzantines might not have systematically philosophised on economic matters. Nevertheless, being forced to manage a reality that required flexibility and readjustment to the circumstances, they created the conditions that favored the development of trade and its exploitation as a source of wealth for the state. Their ultimate failure to adapt to the ever-changing conditions of the ensuing commercial revolution should rather be traced to the broader geopolitical context created by the Crusades (and especially the Fourth) rather than to a lack of ideas or an inability to execute them.

¹⁰⁹⁴ LAIOU – MORRISSON, Βυζαντινή οικονομία, 306—308; PENNA, Χρήμα και αγορά, 375—376.

4.2 Institutional oversight

With the term “institutional oversight” of communication and trade in Byzantium I define the legislation that set the rules under which these activities had to be conducted and the ministries / bureaus, - along with their respective clerks, - that were responsible for their implementation. I will focus on selected topics that deserve some further scrutiny, the results of which can be useful for filling in the picture, to the extent possible, on patterns of trade and communication during times of crisis. These topics are a) the civil servants responsible for the supervision of trade and communication, including its taxation and b) the role of finance in trade in the periods under consideration. Before addressing these issues, a review of the legislation concerning trade and communication is essential.

Legislation

During the early Byzantine period the legislation concerned exclusively with (maritime) trade, was dispersed along the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* and especially in the *Codex Iustinianus* and the *Digesta*.¹⁰⁹⁵ The provisions covered a wide range of issues such as seizure, theft and jettison of cargo, the charter of ships and the risk taking of the seller. Furthermore, the *Novella 106* was concerned with ship loans although it was abolished a year after its publication.¹⁰⁹⁶

Almost two centuries later the *Ecloga* (Ἐκλογή τῶν νόμων) was issued in March 741.¹⁰⁹⁷ Putting emphasis on property, inheritance and penal law it did not address trade as a separate topic. Only in one single chapter concerning loans and in dispersed provisions dealing with trust, lease and sale the care of the legislator about such matters can be traced.¹⁰⁹⁸ However, in an extended version of the *Ecloga*’s appendix (“erweiterter *Appendix Eclogae*”), among other statutes the so-called “Rhodian Sea Law” is preserved as the maritime legislation par excellence.¹⁰⁹⁹

The reduction of the *kommerkion* tax paid in Abydos and Hieron by Eirene in 801 and the tenth “vexation” (κάκωσις) of Nikephoros I around 809 / 810 were the next legislative acts relevant to maritime trade.¹¹⁰⁰ During the last quarter of the ninth century two of the major legal compilations of the “Macedonian Renaissance” namely the *Eisagoge* (c. between 879 – 886) and the *Procheiros Nomos* (c. between 870 – 879 or 907) contain some scattered provisions on mercantile activities. From these provisions we can ascertain that issues such as trust, charter, sale and loan were of high importance for

¹⁰⁹⁵ TROIANOS, Quellen, 72ff. The legal provisions under consideration can be found in RODOLAKES, Νόμος Ποδίων, 35 with fn. 5—7; PIELER, Νομική φιλολογία, 274ff.

¹⁰⁹⁶ RODOLAKES, Νόμος Ποδίων, 35.

¹⁰⁹⁷ TROIANOS, Quellen, 118—126; *Ecloga*, 1—4, 9—12; PIELER, Νομική φιλολογία, 315—317.

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Ecloga* 204, 514—208, 576, 212, 623—633; RODOLAKES, Νόμος Ποδίων, 35—37 with fn. 11 and 12.

¹⁰⁹⁹ TROIANOS, Quellen, 127—128; RODOLAKES, Νόμος Ποδίων, 37; PIELER, Νομική φιλολογία, 319—320.

¹¹⁰⁰ DÖLGER – MÜLLER, Regesten I 1, nos. 356, 378 (187, 199); RODOLAKES, Νόμος Ποδίων, 38, fn. 20.

the legislator.¹¹⁰¹ A number of the *Nearai* issued by Leo VI (886 – 912) during the first years of his reign were also concerned with similar matters.¹¹⁰² An important milestone is the inclusion of the “Rhodian Sea Law” in the *Basilika* (first redaction 886 – 912, second redaction 1025 – 1028), the most important codification after (and of) the *CIC*.¹¹⁰³ Leo VI continued issuing legislation of economic nature and the work known as the “Book of the Prefect” (Ἐπαρχικόν Βιβλίον / *Librum Praefecti*) published between 911 and 912 deals with the organization of the guilds of Constantinople and the regulation of various trade activities inside the capital.¹¹⁰⁴ An anonymous law book dated between 886 and 912 has been discovered in the *Codex 121* in the monastery of the Metamorphosis tou Soteris in Zavorda, north-western Greece. The law book contains provisions on fiscal law and law concerning neighbours ranging chronologically from various sixth century *Epitomae* of the *CIC* to the legislation of the early Macedonian emperors. Its value is significant since it gives an indication of the interests of its compiler(s) and the criteria prevailing in the reduction of such legal textbooks.¹¹⁰⁵

During the tenth and eleventh centuries a series of private compilations based on the *Basilika* appeared, the most important being their *Synopsis maior* (c. middle of the tenth century) and *Scholia* (third quarter of the eleventh century).¹¹⁰⁶ The *Rhopai* (original version c. last decade of the sixth century, later versions based on an *Epitome* of the tenth century) is a compilation of the legal provisions of the *CIC* (on their Greek translation).¹¹⁰⁷ Finally, the *Peira*, a collection of excerpts from judgements and opinions issued primarily by the senior judge Eustathios Rhomaïos and compiled in Constantinople between 1040 and 1050 contains some contemporary information on matters of trade.¹¹⁰⁸ The *chrysoboulla* issued by the emperors are discussed separately on the respective chapters.

4.2.1 Overseeing communications and trade on land and sea

The logothesion tou dromou and its responsibilities

Responsible for the seamless prosecution of communications was the λογοθέσιον τοῦ δρόμου. Being the successor of the early Byzantine *cursus publicus*, its head the λογοθέτης τοῦ δρόμου is mentioned

¹¹⁰¹ TROIANOS, Quellen, 191—200; PIELER, Νομική φιλολογία, 336—340; 343—344; RODOLAKES, Νόμος Ροδίων, 37—38.

¹¹⁰² TROIANOS, Quellen, 175—185; PIELER, Νομική φιλολογία, 330—332.

¹¹⁰³ TROIANOS, Quellen, 205—211; RODOLAKES, Νόμος Ροδίων, 40.

¹¹⁰⁴ TROIANOS, Quellen, 244—248; PIELER, Νομική φιλολογία, 366—367. Book of the Eparch, 20—23, 31—32 (KODER).

¹¹⁰⁵ TROIANOS, Quellen, 215—216; PIELER, Νομική φιλολογία, 349.

¹¹⁰⁶ TROIANOS, Quellen, 222—224, 226—229; PIELER, Νομική φιλολογία, 347—348, 355—357.

¹¹⁰⁷ TROIANOS, Quellen, 116—117.

¹¹⁰⁸ TROIANOS, Quellen, 239—240 ; PIELER, Νομική φιλολογία, 363—364.

in the written sources probably for the first time in 742 / 743¹¹⁰⁹ and securely attested in 762.¹¹¹⁰ The office remained of importance until the end of the twelfth century. His main task was the overall supervision of the foreign affairs of the state and additional responsibilities included ceremonial duties, the security of the emperor and the gathering of intelligence making the *logothetes* the de facto head of government.¹¹¹¹ He is mentioned in all the *Taktika* of the ninth and tenth centuries, in various written sources and is attested in several lead seals the first of which, belonging to a certain David, *basilikos asekretes* and *logothetes tou dromou* is dated to the first half of the 8th century.¹¹¹² The rising importance of the office is further attested by the honorary titles that accompanied it, namely those of *πατρίκιος*, *ἀνθύπατος πατρίκιος* or *πρωτοσπαθάριος*.¹¹¹³

According to the *Taktika* and the sigillographic evidence the *logothetes tou dromou* had a series of subordinates charged with specific tasks. The so-called “Kletorologion of Philotheos” written in 899 mentions the following clerks in hierarchical order: *πρωτονοτάριος τοῦ δρόμου*, *χαρτουλάριοι τοῦ δρόμου*, *επισκεπτῖται*, *διατρέχοντες* and *μανδάτωρες*.¹¹¹⁴ In the late tenth / early eleventh century the *ἐκ προσώπου* and the *ἀναγραφεὺς* were added on an ad hoc basis, to cope with the expanding road network.¹¹¹⁵

The primary duties of these officials associated with the foreign relations of the empire will not concern us here.¹¹¹⁶ I will attempt to trace their activities as far as the administration of the road infrastructure is concerned. Since the tasks of the *logothetion* included the reception of foreign embassies and the gathering of intelligence it is to be expected that the good condition of at least the main highways was of primary importance although the secondary arteries must have also been maintained as indicated in various occasions.¹¹¹⁷ Be as it may, the *protonotarios* was the deputy of the *logothetes* while the *chartoularioi* had fiscal duties in both central and local level such as Basileios,

¹¹⁰⁹ THEOPHANES (416, 9—10 DE BOOR). JONES, *Later Roman empire II*, 830—834; AVRAMEA, *Επικοινωνίες*, 127—128; HENDY, *Monetary economy*, 608, fn. 240; DÖLGER – MÜLLER, *Regesten I* 1,1 nos. 310a, 310b. There were two persons sent as ambassadors to al-Walid. The spatharios Andreas (PmbZ, n. 387) from the emperor Constantine IV and the logothetes Gregorios (PmbZ, n. 2382) from the usurper Artabasdos. Both could be logothetes tou dromou in their capacity as ambassadors with the difference that Andreas is mentioned with his title and not his office.

¹¹¹⁰ THEOPHANES (431, 10 DE BOOR). PmbZ, n. 4305, Leon.

¹¹¹¹ GUILLAND, *Les logothètes*, 32ff.; DÖLGER, *Beiträge*, 22.

¹¹¹² OIKONOMIDES, *Listes de préséance*, passim. For the seals see DELIVORIA, *Les οξέα*, 187—189; ZV I, 3 nos. 3098, 3099: Θεοτόκε, βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλῳ Δαυιδ βασιλικῷ ἀσηκρητῇ καὶ λογοθέτῃ τοῦ δρόμου.

¹¹¹³ OIKONOMIDES, *Listes des préséance*, 51, 5, 139, 29, 249, 17.

¹¹¹⁴ OIKONOMIDES, *Listes des préséance*, 117, 10—18.

¹¹¹⁵ KOUTAVA-DELIVORIA, *Les οξέα*, 187—189.

¹¹¹⁶ BURY, *Administrative system*, 91—93; GUILLAND, *Les Logothètes*, 38—42; OIKONOMIDES, *Listes des préséance*, 311—312.

¹¹¹⁷ For example, in 968 – 969 Liudprand of Cremona had to travel following (or being obliged to follow) the route Constantinople – Naupaktos which included also secondary roads, although we do not know which exactly. See LIUDPRAND, *Legatio* 58—61 (213, 963—215, 1018 CHIESA). McCORMICK, *Origins*, 533—534, 971, 972 (nos. 824, 828); AVRAMEA, *Επικοινωνίες*, 145.

basilikos protospatharios and *chartoularios* of the *dromos ton Armeniakon*.¹¹¹⁸ The *episkeptitai* were lower ranking clerks that were probably responsible for the inspection of the infrastructure. The *diatrechontes* and the *mandatores* were the lowest of all, responsible for the day-to-day management.¹¹¹⁹

This allocation of responsibilities should not be considered rigid. Byzantine administration was adapting continuously in accordance with the needs that arose. Therefore, the clerks of the *dromos* were occasionally assigned with special tasks and / or jurisdiction over certain geographical areas, especially during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Two indicative cases can be given here: the first is that of Georgios, *exactor*,¹¹²⁰ *judge of the velum*¹¹²¹ and *anagrapheus*¹¹²² of the *Anatolikos dromos ton Melanion*.¹¹²³ The combination of the first two offices means that he probably was at the head of a specific district, in this case that part of the highway that beginning from Chalcedon and Nicaea passed through Dorylaion, Ankara and Sebasteia towards the eastern frontier. This main road was used from the armies throughout the middle Byzantine period and Melania / Melanion can be read for Malagina / Malaginion, that is the first *aplekton* (permanent field camp) where the *strategoï* of the *Themata* of the *Thrakesion* and the *Anatolikoi* joined the expeditionary forces from Constantinople.¹¹²⁴ The *anagrapheus* was responsible for the survey of the taxable land and the calculation of the relevant duties. The simultaneous possession of the three offices probably implies that Georgios was charged with the census and calculation of the taxes destined for the maintenance of the infrastructure while also acting in his capacity as a judge to resolve immediately any problem that would arise. The second case is that of Nikolaos, *ek prosopou of the dromos of Thrace*.¹¹²⁵ The *ek prosopou* was the representative of a higher official mainly charged with fiscal duties both in the central and provincial administration.¹¹²⁶ Nikolaos was probably acting as a plenipotentiary of the *logothetes* in the region of Thrace the road network of which was heavily frequented for civil and military purposes during the 11th century.

¹¹¹⁸ LAURENT, Corpus II, n. 463: Βασιλείῳ βασιλικῷ πρωτοσπαθαρίῳ καὶ χαρτουλαρίῳ τοῦ δρόμου τῶν Ἀρμενιάκων (10th / 11th c.).

¹¹¹⁹ LAURENT, Corpus II, n. 472: Κ(ω)νσταντῖνος μαν(δ)άτωρ τοῦ λογοθέτου τοῦ δρόμου (10th / 11th c.).

¹¹²⁰ KATSONE – GREGORIOU-IOANNIDOU, Λεξικό βυζαντινῆς ορολογίας. Οικονομικοί ὅροι Β΄, 181—184: ἐξάκτωρ.

¹¹²¹ GKOUTZIOUKOSTAS, Απονομή δικαιοσύνης, 138 ff.

¹¹²² KARAGIANNOPOULOS, Λεξικό βυζαντινῆς ορολογίας. Οικονομικοί ὅροι Α΄, 105: ἀναγραφεὺς.

¹¹²³ LAURENT, Corpus II, n. 466: Κύριε βοήθει Γεωργίῳ ἐξάκτωρι, κρ(ι)τῇ τοῦ βήλου καὶ ἀναγραφεῖ τοῦ Ἀνατολικοῦ δρόμου τῶν Μελανίων.

¹¹²⁴ Tres Tractatus (80, 3, 6—7 HALDON). LAURENT, Corpus II, n. 466 commentary. For the roads see the respective chapter.

¹¹²⁵ LAURENT, Corpus II, n. 465: Κύριε βοήθει Νικολάῳ βασιλικῷ σπαθαροκουβικουλαρίῳ καὶ ἐκ προσώπου τοῦ δρόμου τῆς Θράκης (11th c.).

¹¹²⁶ KATSONE – GREGORIOU-IOANNIDOU, Λεξικό βυζαντινῆς ορολογίας. Οικονομικοί ὅροι Β΄, 131—132: ἐκπροσωπῶν (ἐκπροσώπου).

After the mention of the various officials, we can proceed with the maintenance of the infrastructure. This was served through the imposition of compulsory labour on the rural population residing along the main road network. This mandatory labour was usually called ἀγγαρεία (pl. ἀγγαρεῖαι) a continuation of the *munera sordida* of the early Byzantine period.¹¹²⁷ The παραγγαρεία / was imposed to the inhabitants dwelling along the secondary roads.¹¹²⁸ There is the issue concerning the presence of another term, ἐπήρεια (pl. ἐπήρειαι)¹¹²⁹ which can be translated in English and German also as “compulsory labour”.¹¹³⁰ In the documents from the eleventh century onwards, the two terms (i.e. *angareia* and *epereia*) are usually mentioned separately, mainly in their plural form to describe a series of surcharges in cash and / or kind imposed to service the needs of the state in general.¹¹³¹ In most cases the recipients of the documents were exempted from these surcharges or had to pay a reduced amount since the *angareiai* / *epereiai* had already been converted to mandatory cash payments in the fourth century.¹¹³² The *angareiai* / *epereiai* were the following: δρόμος also known as ἐνοχὴ τοῦ δρόμου or δρομικὴ στρατεία,¹¹³³ the διαβατικόν / διαβατίκιον / διαβατόν also known as the ποριατικόν, ὁδοστρωσία and γέφυρα / γεφύρωσις / γεφυροκτησία.¹¹³⁴ Apparently and since any further detail is missing it can be reasonably assumed that most of the taxpayers and users of the road network had to pay these surcharges.

The *dromos* and its synonyms are mentioned in documents of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and refer to the compulsory service for the needs of the *logothesion tou dromou*.¹¹³⁵

The *diabatikon* and its synonyms were tolls imposed on the traffic of persons, animals and commodities through land and riverine crosses. The *poriatikon* is either an alternative name for the *diabatikon* or a specific term designating the tolls paid for the crossing of a river (πόρος).¹¹³⁶

The *odostrosia* referred to the construction and maintenance of the roads while the *gephyra* and its synonyms was an obligatory service for the construction and maintenance of bridges.¹¹³⁷ The

¹¹²⁷ Basilica 17, 1—22 (2592, 4—2593, 23 SCHELTEMA – VAN DER WAL); JONES, Later Roman empire II, 774.

¹¹²⁸ KARAGIANNOPOULOS, Λεξικό βυζαντινῆς ορολογίας. Οικονομικοί ὅροι Α΄, 53—56: ἀγγαρεία; STAURIDOU-ZAFRAKA, Αγγαρεία, 26—32; OIKONOMIDES, Fiscalité, 106—107; DÖLGER, Beiträge, 62.

¹¹²⁹ KATSONE – GREGORIOU-IOANNIDOU, Λεξικό βυζαντινῆς ορολογίας. Οικονομικοί ὅροι Β΄, 211—213: ἐπήρεια; DÖLGER, Beiträge, 61.

¹¹³⁰ LBG, ἐπήρεια: der Frondienst, die Sonderaufgabe, translated in English as “compulsory labor”, “corvée”.

¹¹³¹ STAURIDOU-ZAFRAKA, Αγγαρεία, 32; OIKONOMIDES, Fiscalité, 85, 106.

¹¹³² STAURIDOU-ZAFRAKA, Αγγαρεία, 50—52; OIKONOMIDES, Fiscalité, 86.

¹¹³³ OIKONOMIDES, Fiscalité, 119—120.

¹¹³⁴ OIKONOMIDES, Fiscalité, 109; DÖLGER, Beiträge, 22.

¹¹³⁵ KATSONE – GREGORIOU-IOANNIDOU, Λεξικό βυζαντινῆς ορολογίας. Οικονομικοί ὅροι Β΄, 98—99: δρόμος, see also, SVORONOS, Cadaster of Thebes, 143—144. Svoronos was of the opinion that the *dromike strateia* referred to a plot of land cultivated by a person owing service to the *logothesion* of the *dromos*, in the same way the *strateia* of the thematic soldiers was tied with the compulsory military service.

¹¹³⁶ KATSONE – GREGORIOU-IOANNIDOU, Λεξικό βυζαντινῆς ορολογίας. Οικονομικοί ὅροι Β΄, 62—63: διαβατικόν.

¹¹³⁷ KATSONE – GREGORIOU-IOANNIDOU, Λεξικό βυζαντινῆς ορολογίας. Οικονομικοί ὅροι Β΄, 203—204: γέφυρα.

bridge erected on the Eurotas river in 1027 and mentioned in the Testament written by the monk Nikodemos could have been maintained through the collection of the *diabatikon* / *poriatikon* surcharge.¹¹³⁸

The office of the parathalassites and its evolution

The institutional oversight on maritime affairs during the early and middle Byzantine period was the responsibility of ministries and later bureaus established in Constantinople. As an introductory remark it can be said that initially the area of jurisdiction of these officials was extending within the limits of the (economic) region of the capital, that is from Abydos and the straits of the Dardanelles to the south up to the northern exit (or entrance) of the straits of the Bosphorus with Hieron as entry point. The two early ἄρχοντες (τῶν στενῶν) were replaced by Justinian I with two κόμητες τῶν στενῶν each one responsible for the south and the north respectively.¹¹³⁹ Who was the superior of these officials we do not know and the same goes concerning their fate after the middle of the seventh century.

Be that as it may, the παραθαλασσίτης, a subordinate of the eparch of Constantinople appears in the *Taktikon of Philotheos* in 899 and in the *Chronicon Bruxellense* of the tenth / eleventh century.¹¹⁴⁰ In fact this chronicle, drawing its material from Procopius for the earlier period, replaces the *kometes ton stenon* mentioned by the latter with the *parathalassites*, in accordance with tenth century terminology. The *parathalassites* is counted as the last clerk in the administrative hierarchy under the eparch indicating the minor importance of his office and consequently the minor role given by the state to commercial shipping at the time.¹¹⁴¹ In any case, the *parathalassites* had judicial and administrative authority over the vessels and their crews certainly within the region of Constantinople.¹¹⁴² In the second half of the eleventh century, it seems that the office had gained in importance in accordance with the rising role of trade in the empire. A certain Melias, mentioned in two poems of Christophoros Mitylenaios, bears the title of *patrikios* and the office of *parathalassites* among other offices during his cursus honorum.¹¹⁴³

Some further texts allow us to trace the evolution of the *parathalassites* and the ministries / bureaus responsible for the handling of ships. In the middle of the eleventh century the *Peira*, when delineating the jurisdiction of various officials, states clearly that “those voyaging the sea are under

¹¹³⁸ FEISSEL – PHILIPPIDIS-BRAAT, *Inscriptions* 43 (301, 1—302, 45); GEROLYMATOU, *Αγορές*, 219.

¹¹³⁹ Procopius, *Secret History* 15, 1—6 (152, 18—154, 7 HAURY – WIRTH); Malalas (432, 14—16 DINDORF). AHRWEILER, *Fonctionnaires*, 246—247.

¹¹⁴⁰ OIKONOMIDES, *Listes des préséance*, 113, 8, 21, 321; *Anecdota Bruxellensia*, 27, 10—12 (CUMONT); KÜLZER, *Studien*, 437.

¹¹⁴¹ AHRWEILER, *Fonctionnaires*, 248.

¹¹⁴² POZZA – RAVEGNANI, *Trattati*, I 3, 24; DÖLGER – MÜLLER, *Regesten* I 2, 189 (n. 781).

¹¹⁴³ Christopher of Mytilene, *Verses* 15, 16 (15, 1, 16, 10—12, 17, 26—27 DE GROOTE). OIKONOMIDES, *Πόλος του κράτους*, 215.

the jurisdiction of the *parathalassites*".¹¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, the chrysobull of May 1082 granted to Venice mentions the *parathalassites* as an independent official, second only after the prefect of Constantinople among the clerks that had no jurisdiction over the Venetians and their ships.¹¹⁴⁵ The *chrysoboullon* of 1102 granting tax exemptions to the ships of Megiste Laura mentions not only the *parathalassites* but also his subordinates, *praktorai*, *synonarioi*, *epiteretai tes thalasses*, *exankelistai* and *limenarioi*.¹¹⁴⁶ Probably, after the middle of the eleventh century at the latest, the *parathalassites* became the head of an autonomous bureau, with clerks as representatives across the various harbours of the capital and the provinces. A plausible theory has been presented according to which around the year 1071, the *parathalassites* was also known as the *logothetes ton hydaton* based on a reference by Michael Attaleiates.¹¹⁴⁷ A *komes ton hydaton* is present in the *Kletorologion of Philotheos* as a subordinate of the *logothetes tou genikou*. This functionary was probably responsible for the operation of Constantinople's aqueducts as is verified by another source.¹¹⁴⁸ The hypothesis that regards the *logothetes ton hydaton* of the 1070s as a successor of the *komes ton hydaton* of 899 is unsupported.¹¹⁴⁹ Rather it is most likely that Attaleiates, a bureaucrat himself with direct knowledge of the whereabouts of his colleagues was indeed referring either to the *parathalassites* with the usual descriptive terminology, so common in Byzantine historiography, or to his successor, the *logothetes ton hydaton*.¹¹⁵⁰

There is further evidence to support the latter case: in a notarial act drawn up between September 1076 and August 1077 one of the witnesses signing the document is a Νικόλαος παραθαλασσίτης ὁ Δουρής.¹¹⁵¹ The editors of the text that is included in the archive of the Megiste Laura, have placed the act in the category of the "actes privés laïques". The document was drawn up

¹¹⁴⁴ JGR IV, 218: "Οἱ δὲ πλέουσι τὴν θάλασσαν, καὶ ὑπόκεινται τῷ παραθαλασσίτῃ". AHRWEILER, *Fonctionnaires*, 249; GKOUTZIOUKOSTAS, *Απονομή δικαιοσύνης*, 193—194.

¹¹⁴⁵ POZZA – RAVEGNANI, *Trattati*, II 8D and E, 41. AHRWEILER, *Fonctionnaires*, 251; DÖLGER – WIRTH, *Regesten* II, 93—95 (n. 1081).

¹¹⁴⁶ *Actes de Lavra* I, 285, 32—286, 34 (n. 55). AHRWEILER, *Fonctionnaires*, 249—250; DÖLGER – WIRTH, *Regesten* II, 154—155 (n. 1215c).

¹¹⁴⁷ Attaleiates (129, 15—18 TSOLAKES). AHRWEILER, *Fonctionnaires*, 250.

¹¹⁴⁸ OIKONOMIDES, *Listes des préséance*, 113, 31, 314; Theodore of Cyzicus, *Letters* V, XXVIII (276, 18—20, 293, 11—12 LAMPROS).

¹¹⁴⁹ ODB II, 1139, lemma *komes hydaton*.

¹¹⁵⁰ AHRWEILER, *Fonctionnaires*, 250. According to LSJ the noun ὕδωρ, gen. ὕδατος, pl. ὕδατα means "water of any kind and in Homer rarely seawater without an epithet", see LSJ lemma ὕδωρ. In the R. J. Cunliffe *Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect* in various passages of the *Odyssey*, ὕδωρ has also the meaning of "the sea or the wave of the sea or the water of the sea", for example ἐνθεν γὰρ Σκύλλη, ἐτέρωθι δὲ διὰ Χάρυβδις δεινὸν ἀνερρύβδησε θαλάσσης ἄλμυρὸν ὕδωρ (μ 235—236), τοὺς δ' Ἰθάκη ἐπέλασσε φέρων ἄνεμός τε καὶ ὕδωρ (ο 482) and further examples. A bureaucrat with the formation of Attaleiates could thus have known ὕδωρ in both its meanings as "sweet" (i.e., fresh) water or sea water the more since the phrase ἐπέλασσε φέρων ἄνεμός τε καὶ ὕδωρ is a formulaic one. Furthermore, the descriptive terminology used by Byzantine writers when referring to offices and the intention to honour his colleague and friend that had died heroically at Mantzikert, could have made Attaleiates to "upgrade" the *protovestēs* and *parathalassites* Basileios Maleses to a *logothetes ton hydaton*.

¹¹⁵¹ *Actes de Lavra* I, 215, 49 (n. 38).

in all probability in Thessalonike. Since it would be rather unusual for the *parathalassites* based in Constantinople to be present as a witness in the drafting of a private secular document away from the capital it can only be assumed that *Nikolaos Doures the parathalassites* was a clerk of a larger ministry. This ministry could indeed have been the *logothesion ton hydaton* as indirectly implied by Attaleiates for the year 1071. The exact date of the establishment of this ministry is difficult to estimate. A date range between 1042 and 1071 is plausible based on the extensive administrative reforms initiated during the reign of Constantine IX (1042 – 1055). Within this period the reign of Constantine X (1059 – 1067) could also have been a founding date for the new *logothesion*. Being notorious for his (excessive) scrutiny over public finances, Constantine X could have probably invented new ways to bring much needed cash into the treasury and the creation of a new *logothesion* that would also be responsible for properly taxing the expanding trade would fit in this context.

There is a further possibility: Attaleiates could have indeed referred to a *parathalassites* in 1071, however using terminology appearing near the time of the composition of his work, dated after 1078. This scenario gives us a further time window between 1071 and 1078 at the earliest, that means the reign of Michael VII (1071 – 1078) an emperor under the major influence of two people: Michael Psellos, the once promising bureaucrat in the court of Constantine IX and Nikephoros or Nikephoretzes, for many modern scholars the last in a series of “prime ministers” that had dominated the state apparatus for more than a century. An up and coming clerk during the reign of Constantine X and receiving the office of the *logothetes tou dromou* shortly after 1071, Nikephoretzes instigated with vigour and determination a series of reforms in all areas of administration to strengthen a state crumbling after the battle of Mantzikert and its repercussions. The most (in)famous of these measures, was a fiscal one, namely the establishment of the *phoundax* in Rhaidestos, a centrally administered facility in which all the purchase and sale of cereals destined for Constantinople had to take place obligatorily.¹¹⁵² An extremely capable person as recognised by friends and enemies alike, Nikephoretzes could have very plausibly instigated the evolution of the autonomous bureau of the *parathalassites* into an independent ministry, i.e., a *logothesion ton hydaton* that would have the means and (human) resources to exercise with maximum efficiency its control over trade not only within the economic region of the capital but also outside of it. In which provincial ports the officials of the *logothesion* were installed is not known although a plausible assumption could include at least the most important ones such as Debeltos and Trebizond in the Black Sea and Smyrna, Thessalonike and Euripos in the Aegean.

¹¹⁵² ANGOLD, Πολιτική ιστορία, 201—205.

The theory presented above can also explain the further evolution of the *logothesion ton hydaton* into the *sekretou tes thalasses*, mentioned clearly in a series of documents concerning the ships of the monastery of Patmos, dated in 1195, 1199 and 1203. In these documents the clerks of the *sekretou* after having proceeded with the measurement and delivery of the newly built ships of the monastery are signing the respective documents. Among them are *basilikoi notarioi tou sekretou tes thalasses* and *parathalassitai*, the latter bearing relatively high court titles.¹¹⁵³ The *sekretou tes thalasses* was under the supervision of the *logothetes ton sekretou*, the “chief minister” responsible for the smooth running and coordination of the various bureaus of the government. It could be possible that in the end of the twelfth century the *parathalassitai* were (again) the officials in-charge of the *sekretou tes thalasses*, reporting directly to the *logothetes ton sekretou*.¹¹⁵⁴ However, the exact date of the transformation of the *logothesion ton hydaton* to the *sekretou tes thalasses* eludes us.

To sum up the evidence: the *parathalassites*, appearing in the sources for the first time in the end of the ninth century as a subordinate of the eparch of Constantinople was responsible for the administrative and judicial supervision of ships and their crews within the region of the capital. With the gradual expansion of trade his geographical area of jurisdiction expanded outside the limits of Constantinople, to encompass all imperial territories. This development can be dated tentatively between 1042 and 1078 and is indirectly confirmed by the existence of the *parathalassites / logothetes ton hydaton*, i.e., the head of the ministry (*logothesion*) *ton hydaton*. In the years after 1081 this *logothesion* must have acquired its definite form as the *sekretou tes thalasses*, that is a centralised bureau under the direct jurisdiction of the *logothetes ton sekretou* with the *parathalassites* acting as its chief clerk and an intermediary between the bureau and the *logothetes ton sekretou*.

4.2.2 The kommerkiarioi (revisited)

The kommerkiarioi are perhaps the most thoroughly studied officials of middle Byzantium. Especially the study of their functions and role during the “Dark Ages” of the empire has produced research of depth and high quality. This is even more surprising owing to the fact that this research is based mainly on material evidence and especially the lead seals that these officials used for a long period of time. The written evidence is scarce and complements the picture only partially. However, if used with thoroughness and caution they provide a useful insight in the way in which the state regulated trade during the years 641 – 741 and 1025 – 1095.

¹¹⁵³ Έγγραφα Πάτμου, 93, 21—94, 31 (n. 56), 123, 22—124, 26 (n. 59), 131, 25—132, 37 (n. 60).

¹¹⁵⁴ AHRWEILER, *Fonctionnaires*, 252; for the above mentioned see also, CHRISTOPHILOPOULOU, *Πολίτευμα και θεσμοί*, 429, 432—433.

The secondary literature concerning the *kommerkiarioi* is vast. It has been conveniently summarised in the beginning of the twenty first century with the related bibliography and will not be repeated here.¹¹⁵⁵ I will focus on some aspects concerning the function of this office based on what has already been presented in the previous chapters.

The period 641 – 741

From c. 654 / 659 up to c. 730 / 731 the *kommerkiarioi*, generally mentioned in the seals as “*genikoi kommerkiarioi* of the *apotheke* of.... (a specific province or provinces)” (*γενικοὶ κομμερκιάριοι ἀποθήκης....*), were active across the empire. The year 730 / 731 marks another milestone in the evolution of the *apotheke* system. The *genikoi kommerkiarioi* disappeared and were replaced by the *βασιλικά κομμέρκια*, the seals bearing now the inscription *τῶν βασιλικῶν κομμερκίων...* followed by the name of the respective province or provinces. Already in 685 an *apotheke ton basilikon kommerkion* had made its appearance and it seems that the reformed *basilika kommerkia* of 730 had been built on this earlier structure. This development was part of the wider reform initiated during the reign of Justinian II, only to be dropped after his fall, and reinstituted by Leo III some decades later. The term *basilika kommerkia* included both the activities and the infrastructure involved, the *apotheke* disappearing completely from the sources.

There is a wide consensus among modern scholarship that the primary duty of the *kommerkiarioi* and the *basilika kommerkia* was the provision of foodstuffs and materiel to the armies the first being collected through the *coemptio / synone* (*συνωνή*), a regular, probably annual, levy of grain. The interesting detail is that according to a Greek-Latin lexicon of the mid-seventh century the term *commercium* equals with that of *coemptio / synone*, which before 641 referred to the compulsory purchase of military supplies. Other duties seem to have included the supply of Constantinople with staples and last but not least the control of the movement of goods, precious and non-precious alike, within the Byzantine state.¹¹⁵⁶

However, *ad hoc* geographic agglomerations like that of the “southern Aegean arc” (738 / 739) or the rather impressive conglomeration that covered almost the entire Aegean (Asia, Caria, the islands and Hellespont) are also present in the surviving evidence. They probably aimed at controlling the exploitation of (strategic) resources for a specific period of time to cover the needs of the state.

¹¹⁵⁵ The most recent summaries are BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 239—247; MONTINARO, *Commerciaires Byzantins*, 355—364; and in condensed however articulated form, WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Κομμερκιάριος του βαμβακίου*, 324—327. I would like to thank Prof. Wassiliou-Seibt for the discussions on all topics connected with lead seals in general and the *kommerkiarioi* in particular.

¹¹⁵⁶ BRANDES, *Finanzverwaltung*, 305—309, 312ff.; BRUBAKER – HALDON, *Iconoclast era*, 684ff.

A rather peculiar case is a seal discovered in the upper Dniester region, in what is today western Ukraine. Being in a mediocre state of preservation, the lead seal of *Petros, apo hypaton and genikos kommerkiarios*, belonged probably to a Byzantine merchant, -since it would have been rather improbable for a *kommerkiarios* to travel so deep in foreign territory- that had the official permission to do business with the Slavonic elites of the upper Dniester.¹¹⁵⁷ Although a single case so far, this discovery allows us to assume that a lead seal of a *kommerkiarios* could also be carried by third parties in order to perform specific tasks for a given period of time.¹¹⁵⁸

The interim period (middle of the eighth – end of the tenth century)

During the years between c. 750 and c. 950 the *basilika kommerkia* were replaced once more by individual *kommerkarioi*. Thessalonike is the most characteristic example of this change while in the wider region of Macedonia and Thrace other customs included Christoupolis,¹¹⁵⁹ Adrianoupolis,¹¹⁶⁰ and Didymoteichon¹¹⁶¹ in the ninth century. The area(s) of jurisdiction of these *kommerkarioi* seem to have been of a purely ad hoc nature depending on where the entrepôts of the empire were located during specific periods. The most characteristic, although circumstantial, example is that of Joseph *imperial vestitor and abydikos and kommerkiarios of Thessalonica, of the West, and of the theme of Hellas*, dated in the late ninth / early tenth century.¹¹⁶² An *imperial kommerkiarios of Hellas, Peloponnesos, and Cephalonia* is also attested in the ninth century¹¹⁶³ while Peloponnesos alone was also under the jurisdiction of a *kommerkiarios* during the eighth and ninth centuries.¹¹⁶⁴

In the region of the Black Sea, the *kommerkarioi of Chaldia* appear in the late eighth / early ninth century and are continuously present up to the eleventh century.¹¹⁶⁵ They were the successors of their seventh century colleagues thus being the missing link in the long-lasting presence of these officials at the eastern fringes of the Byzantine State where the trade routes from central and far east Asia ended with the southern branch of the Silk Road being the most important.

¹¹⁵⁷ It would have been a quite extreme case for a *kommerkiarios* such as the *apo hypaton Petros* to have been assigned with a (covert) diplomatic mission deep in foreign territory. Lacking any other explanation for the time being I adopt the proposal of WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Kommerkiarios seal*, 40, that the bearer of the seal was in all probability a merchant that also acted as a kind of spy, collecting intelligence in the region of the upper Dniester during a critical period for Byzantium that coincides -among other events- with the first Arab siege of Constantinople (667—668).

¹¹⁵⁸ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, *Kommerkiarios seal*, 37—41.

¹¹⁵⁹ NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, *DOSeals I*, 108 (n. 39.5).

¹¹⁶⁰ NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, *DOSeals I*, 125—126 (nos. 44.5 and 44.6).

¹¹⁶¹ NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, *DOSeals I*, 133 (n. 50.1).

¹¹⁶² NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, *DOSeals II*, 36—37 (n. 8.30); see also Constantine, *imperial kommerkiarios of Hellas* (10th c.) (n. 8.29).

¹¹⁶³ NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, *DOSeals II*, 3 (n. 1.5).

¹¹⁶⁴ NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, *DOSeals II*, 66—68 (nos. 22.11 – 22.14).

¹¹⁶⁵ NESBITT – OIKONOMIDES, *DOSeals III*, 89—95 (nos. 32.16 – 32.25 and 32.28 – 32.30); GEROLYMATOU, 214—215.

The duties of the *kommerkiarioi* of this “interim” period were probably the same as in the earlier one, however a gradual shift to the sole responsibility of controlling and taxing the imported and exported merchandise must have been already underway.

Overseeing trade across the borders: the kommerkiarioi until c. 1071

Around the year 1000 the *kommerkiarioi* were stationed across the empire on nodes of strategic importance. Starting from the Black Sea region, these were Cherson, Chaldia, Debeltos, Presthavitza and Dristra. In the Aegean basin, Thessalonike is the only major entrepot with a *kommerkarios* installed there in the turn of the tenth to the eleventh century. The *kommerkiarioi* of this period bear middling honorary titles such as *spatharokandidatos*, *protospatharios* or (*basilikos*) *spatharios* and in some cases combined the office of *kommerkarios* with other duties as well for example *exaktor*, *chartoularios of the genikos logothetes*, *oikistikos of the sakelle* or *asekretes*. Most of these offices were directly connected with the various bureaus of the fisc and are mentioned on the seals before the office of *kommerkarios*. This could be an indication that by this time, the duty of *kommerkarios* was an ad hoc assignment, a constituent element in a range of responsibilities given to specific clerks most probably for a definite period of time. A recently discovered seal of a κομμερκιάριος τοῦ βαμβακίου, dated between 1010 and 1040 indicates clearly that these officials could be responsible for the handling of a single commodity that was deemed of strategic importance for the state.¹¹⁶⁶ This can also explain the right of these officials to carry a lead seal in order to secure their documents and the commodities controlled. Especially the *kommerkiarioi* stationed across the Danube frontier were responsible for the implementation of the “trade against raid” policy, first conceived by Ioannes Orphanotrophos, the high skilled “first minister” and brother of the emperor Michael IV. This policy aimed at keeping the nomads north of the Danube, mainly Petcheneks, under control by supplying them with finished Byzantine (luxury) products in exchange for their raw materials and above all in exchange for peace across the Danubian frontier. When this policy collapsed around the middle of the eleventh century, the frontier of the Istros went down with it. The same goes for the *kommerkiarioi* of Chaldia, in the eastern fringes of the empire, one of them bearing also the office of *basilikos raptēs*, literally “imperial tailor”. This last detail clearly indicates that this *kommerkarios* was also responsible for the quality control of the imported precious fabrics, most probably raw silk, that were destined for the imperial palace in Constantinople. The last seals of a *kommerkarios Chaldias* can be dated to the second quarter of the eleventh century, in all probability being one of the last *kommerkiarioi* in the east. In the following decades, both in the north and in the east, the continuous pressure from new enemies that

¹¹⁶⁶ WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Κομμερκιάριος του βαμβακίου, 327—331.

led to the collapse of the frontier along with the new trade policy introduced after 1081 marked the (symbolic) end of the *kommerkiarioi* as front line civil servants with the right to carry their personal lead seals and their reassignment in a purely customs role as will be seen below.

The kommerkiarioi on the eve of the “commercial revolution” (1071 – 1095)

The *kommerkiarioi* did not disappear after the third quarter of the eleventh century. To mention only a few indicative texts, they are still present in the *chrysoboullon* of 1082 granted to the Venetians,¹¹⁶⁷ in another chrysobull issued for Megiste Laura (1102)¹¹⁶⁸ and finally, in a *chrysoboullon* of 1197 granted to the monastery of Saint John the Theologian at Patmos.¹¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, in *Timarion* it is clearly stated that merchandise coming from the Black Sea region to the panegyris of Saint Demetrios had to be cleared in Constantinople before being expedited to Thessalonike.¹¹⁷⁰ The *kommerkiarioi* must have been directly engaged to this process, being responsible for the calculation and levying of the *kommerkion* tax.

4.2.3 Taxation

The kommerkion

The exact nature of the *kommerkion* remains vague and a number of theories have been postulated.¹¹⁷¹ The imperial chrysobulls and legislation are not of particular help since they mention the tax itself but not its nature or the circumstances in which it was collected. Narrative sources mention the *kommerkion* in various contexts, the first being the (famous) passage in the *Chronographia* of Theophanes, according to which, in the year 795, Constantine VI, relieved the panegyris of Saint John the Theologian at Ephesos from the *kommerkion*. Five years later (800) empress Irene abolished the *kommerkion* paid in both entrances of the economic region of Constantinople and around 810 Nikephoros I restored the tax.¹¹⁷² It would seem then, that the *kommerkion* was a tax introduced by the first Isaurian emperors. It is tempting to associate the transition from the *apotheke* / *genikoi kommerkiarioi* system to that of *basilika kommerkia* with the introduction of the *kommerkion* as a tax however, the evidence is purely circumstantial, and no further assumption can be made. The *kommerkion* resurfaces in the written sources in the chrysoboull of 992 granted to the Venetians as a

¹¹⁶⁷ POZZA – RAVEGNANI, *Trattati*, II 8D and E.

¹¹⁶⁸ *Actes de Lavra I*, 286, 40 (n. 55).

¹¹⁶⁹ *Ἐγγράφα Πατμίου Α΄*, 106, 36 (n. 11).

¹¹⁷⁰ Pseudo-Lucian, *Timarion* 47 (55, 155—157 ROMANO).

¹¹⁷¹ BIBICOU, *Douanes*, 112—115; OIKONOMIDES, *Ρόλος του κράτους*, 185—186; GEROLYMATOU, *Αγορές*, 206—209.

¹¹⁷² Theophanes (469, 30—470, 1, 475, 16—17, 487, 17—19 DE BOOR).

tax imposed on incoming and outgoing merchandise in the economic region of Constantinople¹¹⁷³ although it was certainly collected from the *kommerkiarioi* stationed across the provinces as well.

The tax imposed on whatever merchandise circulated between the years 641 and 741 is not known. The Romans imposed the *octava*, a 12,5% *ad valorem* tax that was retained also in the early Byzantine period.¹¹⁷⁴ For the “dark centuries” the Arabic sources mention a 10% tax imposed in all merchandise imported by foreign traders (mainly Byzantines) to the Caliphate on the basis that the same tax was imposed by the Byzantines on Muslim merchants.¹¹⁷⁵ These sources extend for a period between the 640’s and the tenth century and although for the earlier Umayyad period they could be characterised as somehow tentative, they complement each other.¹¹⁷⁶ The 10% tax imposed by the Byzantines could have been a form of the δεκάτη tax. When the first two Isaurians instigated their fiscal reform they probably retooled the *commercium* / *coemptio* / *synone* under the term *kommerkion* now as a 10% *ad valorem* tax on all (valuable) goods imported to Byzantium. Thus, the missing link between the early Byzantine *octava* and the middle Byzantine *kommerkion* is filled leading to the *commercii* / *commerkii* of the Venetian privileges.

Other taxes connected with trade

The *kommerkion* was not the only (main) tax imposed on merchandise. Another 10% *pro-rata* tax was imposed on domestic trade however it is first mentioned in a chrysobull of 1111. Written sources of the ninth century also attest for the existence of a number of flat rate taxes imposed on all seafarers that entered the region of Constantinople and on trade fairs. Their exact nature and time of their implementation is unknown to us. In 1102 the term δεκατισμός appears together with the *kommerkion*. It seems that the two taxes were of similar nature. The *dekatismos* / *dekateia* was probably a *pro-rata* tax connected with the trade of agricultural products. A plausible scenario would be that around the end of the eleventh / begin of the twelfth century, the Byzantine state decided to take advantage of the rapidly expanding domestic trade in order to tax staple commodities that until that time had escaped systematic taxation. This development can further be connected with the establishment of a new monetary system by Alexios I that served the collection of multiple taxes and surcharges thanks to its versatile structure. In the course of the twelfth century the terms *kommerkion* and *dekateia* were used interchangeably to designate the one and the same 10% *ad valorem* tax imposed on domestic and international trade on all merchandise.¹¹⁷⁷

¹¹⁷³ POZZA – RAVEGNANI, Trattati, I 23.

¹¹⁷⁴ BIBICOU, Douanes, 59—74.

¹¹⁷⁵ GIBB, Arab-Byzantine relations, 230.

¹¹⁷⁶ GEROLYMATOU, Αγορές, 207—208.

¹¹⁷⁷ GEROLYMATOU, Αγορές, 210—211.

In addition to the basic taxes of *kommerkion* and *dekateia*, a series of secondary taxes or surcharges were imposed that are repeatedly mentioned in the various chrysoboulls from the eleventh up to the fifteenth century.¹¹⁷⁸ Because of their scattered reference in time and space I will mention some of them only briefly since their systematic study would probably require a separate monograph. As with the respective surcharges for the use of the road network the *terminus technicus* used for the tax (usually) gives away the object of payment. The *καταρτιατικὸν* was paid to moor at a harbour, the *λιμενιατικὸν* to anchor at a harbour (*limen*) and the *σκαλιατικὸν* for the use of landing platforms or alternatively for the use of smaller ports with simple wooden piers (*skala*). Furthermore, in the chrysobull of 1082 additional surcharges are mentioned such as *xylocalami* (ξύλοκαλάμη), *caniskii* (κανίσκιον), *exafolii* (ἐξάφολλον), *archonticii* (ἀρχοντίκιον) and “any other taxes that are connected with trade”.¹¹⁷⁹

Another category of surcharges (*δοσίματα*) where those paid for the measurement or weighing of commodities using the official weights and measures of the state. Finally, the *μονοπώλια* was a term used to describe the obligation of a merchant to wait for a specific period of time before beginning to sell his merchandise. In this way, the local producer(s) had an advantage to sell their products first before the foreign tradesmen could put theirs (and perhaps cheaper) into circulation.

The secondary taxes imposed on trade when calculated cumulatively formed a considerable financial burden on traders which was inevitably passed on to the consumer. Due to practical reasons, they were probably collected in the customs across the empire together with the basic taxes. Some of these surcharges were a kind of supplementary salary for the respective clerks and this could lead inevitably to arbitrage in their calculation. The *chrysoboulla* of the eleventh and particularly of the twelfth century reveal a situation in which the state officials took advantage of any loophole that allowed them to collect more for the state and themselves. As a result, a certain picture emerges in the closing decades of the eleventh century: in the eve of the “commercial revolution” of the subsequent period, the Byzantine state granted extensive tax exemptions and at the same time tried to raise its revenues leading to a confusion and conflict of interests between itself, its officials and the domestic and primarily foreign actors that tried to safeguard their privileges from any encroachment while attempting to be granted new ones.¹¹⁸⁰

¹¹⁷⁸ For what follows see, OIKONOMIDES, Πόλος του κράτους, 243—244.

¹¹⁷⁹ POZZA – RAVEGNANI, Trattati, II 8D and E. GEROLYMATOU, Αγορές, 216—218.

¹¹⁸⁰ GEROLYMATOU, Αγορές, 221; OIKONOMIDES, Πόλος του κράτους, 245—247.

5. Conclusion: patterns of communication and trade. An adaptable balance-sheet.

At this point *adaptability*, might be the best term to describe the historical course of communication and trade in Byzantium during the years 641 – 741 and 1025 – 1095. First of all, *adaptability* at the regional and local level since the core territories of the eastern Roman empire, responded differently to the challenges. The Black Sea remained an enclosed Sea. Its coast is accessible either through extensive plains that lead to marshy river deltas or through steep and rocky shorelines that are virtually cut off from their hinterland. None of the nomads that settled along its shores was able to exploit the Euxenos Pontos for their own advantage. The Bulgarians and the Khazars did not attempt to sail for the open sea. They were satisfied with the control of strategic locations such as the straits of Kerch in the case of the Khazars or the coastal cities such as the Bulgarian Develtos that allowed them to tax the merchandise coming mainly from Byzantium. When the Arabs appeared in the beginning of the eighth century in the region of the Caucasus they showed more interest in securing the rich metal deposits of the Armenian highlands than the neighbouring sea. They did not try to establish a naval presence as they did in the Mediterranean. The reasons for this choice remain unknown. At least in theory, Constantinople was more accessible as a target through the north than the south. This fact would be confirmed by the only intruders to the “Byzantine lake” of the Euxenos that took repeatedly the initiative to besiege the capital: the Rus, were the only foreigners that attempted to establish a more permanent and active presence in the dark waters of the *Axenos Pontos*. They succeeded to a certain level, with the signing of a series of treaties with Byzantium that regulated their mercantile activities primarily in Constantinople itself. Some provisions concerning the north-western shores of the Black Sea were of secondary importance. However, their inclusion to the sphere of influence of Byzantium after their massive turn to Christianity during the end of the tenth century, practically neutralised whatever threat they might have posed. Their raid against Constantinople in 1045 was an isolated incident with no further implications since both sides profited from trade.

The collapse of the southern and western shore of the Black Sea at both periods was of temporary nature. After all, as long as the Byzantines stood firmly on their heavily fortified coastal settlements they could always count to an uninterrupted communication with Constantinople and between the settlements themselves. Furthermore, these *poleis-kastra* such as Cherson, Trebizond, Sinope and Amastri with their immediate hinterland served as bases for the control of the sea and the interior. Thus, although their population declined, they managed to keep a certain level of prosperity fuelled by the needs of the local population, the representatives of imperial administration, the army and the higher clergy. We can now tell with certainty that these categories of consumers were sufficient enough to keep trade going up to a certain level during the years 641 – 741. For the years 1025 – 1095

the overall high growth rate along with the international trade conducted with the Petcheneks, the Rus, the Armenians and the Arabs, an international trade that included high-quality silken products, brought a revitalisation across the Euxeinos Pontos. The anomalies of the second half of the eleventh century across the northern Balkans and the region of north-east Asia Minor and the Caucasus brought a severe blow. However, around the year 1095 the coastal settlements were holding their ground and almost a hundred years later would serve as bulwarks for the newly established Empire of Trebizond. Furthermore, in 1095 the empire had managed to bring the entire southern Crimean shore under its control and to annex Kimmerios Bosphoros on the Asian side of the Kerch Straits. Thus, Byzantium's control over southern Crimea and the approaches of the Sea of Azov was complete.

In both periods the state managed to keep a tight control over communication, trade and the management of highly important strategic resources. The flotillas based across the region, secured it from whatever intruder attempted to break through, while the *kommerkiarioi* and their representatives were responsible for various tasks, the two most important being the control and taxation of the merchandise coming from the Caucasian branch of the "Silk Road" and the purchase and transport of the *naphtha*. Although any detail is missing, no other official from those that are known to us would have been suitable for the second task, than the *kommerkiarioi*. Already equipped with the expertise of handling high value commodities since the late Roman period, they had both the competence and the resources to manage such a material of strategic importance for the Byzantine state.

The Aegean Sea has a similar story of *adaptability* to tell. However, its archipelagic character, with the rich natural coastline and above all the thousands of islands, from the larger ones such as Crete to the smaller ones such as Anaphe creates peculiar regions and micro-regions with their own distinctive features and character. This diversity gave to each region its specific historical development including communication and trade. During the years 641 – 741 the eastern Aegean, with the western shores of Asia Minor along with their opposite islands, situated along the Sea Route B, experienced the full pressure of the Arab fleets while the rest of the basin was living under different realities. While Cyclades and Crete continued in a rather secure geopolitical environment, the entire south coastline of the Balkans had to adapt to the new reality created by the presence of the Slavs in its inland region. Again, the northern shore of the Aegean, took the most because of the presence of Thessalonike. Being the only major centre outside Constantinople with a continuous imperial presence attracted repeatedly the interest of its neighbouring Slavic tribes. In the rest of the Hellenic peninsula by the year 700 a *modus vivendi* between the coastal population and the inland newcomers had already been established. Again, as with the case of the Euxeinos Pontos, the sea was the connecting factor between the fortified *poleis-kastra* along the shore. As long as these could secure their immediate hinterland they were able to survive the difficulties of the seventh and eighth centuries and recover soon afterwards. The piratical

activities of the Arabs that mounted from the emirate of Crete (c. 824 – 961) arrested the development of many islands and coastal regions culminating to the sack of Thessalonike in 904. With the Byzantine “Reconquista” of Crete in 961 the entire Archipelago was again secure, perhaps for the first time after the sixth century. However, the eastern Aegean was tested again during the closing decades of the eleventh century. This time, the threat did not come from afar, as had been the case with the Arabs which had attempted to establish interim bases to bridge the distance between Syria and Constantinople. Instead, it came from the western shore of Asia Minor, where the new Turkish emirs established their dominions, right across the eastern Aegean islands. After a tenacious fight, the Byzantines were able to secure control over the islands in a first phase and later also over the opposite mainland.

Despite these geopolitical fluctuations at the end of the eleventh century, the economic development across the Archipelago had been already underway. The production of silks, olive oil, wine and ceramics in an almost industrial scale was achieved through a rather advanced form of division of labour inside and between the centres of production. Silken and other clothing, mastic, olive oil and wine and ceramics were produced in a region extending from Chios to the north-east up to the Peloponnese in south-west. Several settlements across the islands, along with Thessalonike, Thebes, Athens, Corinth, Lakedaimon and Monemvasia in the mainland, that had successfully survived the critical period between 641 – 741 were now on a steady ascent. The state actively supported this policy by re-activating the mint of Thessalonike and establishing a new one in the region of southern Greece, probably at Thebes. Coin circulation was amplified significantly while the entrance of the Venetian merchants after 1082 gave another boost with an increased volume of exports. This picture of growth and prosperity is manifested in the continuously expanding archaeological record and primarily through its most diachronic examples, the various religious monuments dotting the landscape of the Aegean both in its terra firma and its islands.

In a thorough and thought-provoking analysis of the middle Byzantine economy, Mark Whittow reflected on its overall development between 600 and 1204. He embraced the theory that the eastern Roman empire of the “Dark Ages” had a more active economy than previously supposed, although (rightfully) adding that this had to be independently verified by archaeology. Such a thesis would have implications not just for the seventh and eighth centuries but also for the subsequent period up to beginning of the thirteenth century. However, Whittow’s balance sheet for the year 1204 is a negative one: the provincial centres of Byzantium might have done better for the first time since late antiquity although viewed from a contemporary European perspective they were not great cities. Furthermore, the surviving places of worship have nothing to do in scale and resources required for their construction if compared with their Romanesque and early Gothic counterparts in the West.

The thesis of Whittow, cannot be fully answered from the results of the present dissertation. However, from the comparative aspect of communication and trade in the years 641 – 741 and 1025 – 1095 it can be securely deduced that an *adaptive continuation* is discernible piece by piece. Settlements vanished however these that survived were more suitable for the new conditions and therefore viable in the *long durée*. Large tracts of land were abandoned but as a result other, nearer to the *poleis-kastra* were exploited more intensively to cover the needs. Communication and trade routes experienced a sharp fall in their traffic however they were still active, carrying people, merchandise, ideas and even diseases. In the provinces of what was now a shrinking eastern Roman empire, people of all social classes still needed to be fed, clothed, use tools and machinery and even have a little slice of luxury in their lives. The state regulated the provision of the armed forces and the control of trade while trying to do its best to serve economic transactions, even in the form of (hyper)inflated low-quality copper coin that changed hands quickly succumbing to the tear and wear of time. Thus, the economy of the empire stayed alive, gradually recovering with some hindrances until the year 1025 when the growth rate settled for an almost continuous upturn. Existing settlements expanded, abandoned land was reclaimed and brought back to use. Land and sea routes were again safe and filled with a growing volume of traffic. The state *adapted* to the new conditions by developing its monetary system and when this system crumbled because of adverse political developments a new one was established in its place, securing the interests of both the state and the public and facilitating transactions. At the same time, the state apparatus continued to make its fiscal demands visible although simultaneously granting fiscal privileges to domestic and foreign entities in return for political alliances and obedience. The economic reasoning behind some of these privileges must have been the incentive to increase production, the surplus being directed to the market, and thus taxation over the finished products. The great *antithesis*, however, was the attempt of the state to impose its authority and control over trade through taxation in order to boost its income on the one hand and the continuous attempts of the grandees of the various fiscal privileges and concessions to avoid this control in order to maximise their turnover and profit on the other. The geopolitical and geoeconomic environment created after the First Crusade and the establishment of a new *status quo* in the eastern Mediterranean would add a whole new dimension in the already complex relation between the imperial administration, firmly established in Constantinople with its representatives across the provinces and the domestic and international actors with their vested interests. This was the economic framework of the Byzantine “Komnenian” empire of the twelfth century that would end with the fall of Constantinople to the armies of the Fourth Crusade in April 1204. It is however another (hi)story.

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Zusammenfassung

Meine Dissertation „Comparative economies: patterns of trade and communication in Byzantium 641 – 741 / 1025 – 1095“ („Wirtschaften im Vergleich: Muster von Handel und Kommunikation in Byzanz 641 – 741 / 1025 – 1095“) vergleicht die Modelle von Handel und Kommunikation der jeweiligen Zeiträume, und untersucht den Einfluss und die Rolle des byzantinischen Staates in diesem Zusammenhang. Das Ziel dieses Vorhabens ist, auf Fragen bezüglich des Hintergrundes, der Art und Weise des Handels und seiner Entwicklung, aber auch der Form von Kommunikation in Krisenzeiten und wie diese miteinander verbunden sind, zu antworten. Beide Perioden, die ich in meiner Arbeit analysiere (641 – 741 / 1025 – 1095), waren von kritischen inneren und äußeren Entwicklungen charakterisiert, die das Byzantinische Reich bedeutend beeinflussten.

Das erste Kapitel der Dissertation beschreibt den historischen Hintergrund beider Perioden.

Aufbauend auf dieser Grundlage, stellt das zweite Kapitel die historische Geographie, die Entwicklung, den Handel und die Kommunikation der zwei Kerngebiete des Byzantinischen Reiches dar. Diese Gebiete sind erstens das Schwarze Meer mit vier Subgebieten, nämlich der Krim, dem Kaukasus, der Nordküste Kleinasiens und der Ostküste der Balkanhalbinsel. Das zweite Gebiet ist die Ägäis, d.h. die Region, die vom Ägäischen Meer umspült wird. Die vier Subgebiete der Ägäis sind die ägäischen Inseln, die Südküste der Balkanhalbinsel, die Westküste Kleinasiens und die östliche Uferzone der griechischen Halbinsel.

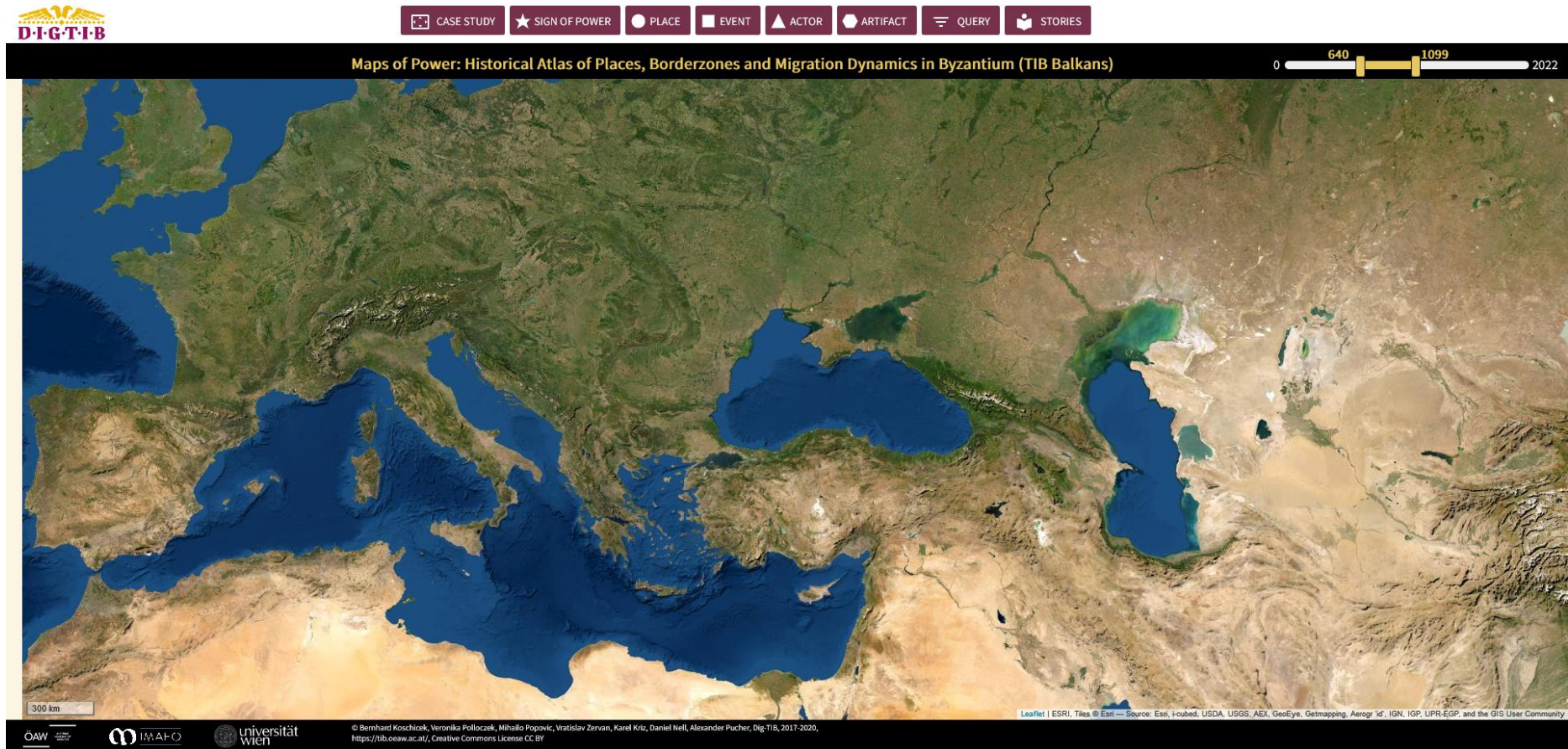
Das dritte Kapitel der Dissertation befasst sich mit der staatlichen Regelung von Handel und Verkehr, d.h. der Prägung und dem Umlauf von Geld und der Steuer- und Handelsgesetzgebung. Außerdem wird die Diskrepanz zwischen den theoretischen Verordnungen und der täglichen Realität im Handel kommentiert.

Das vierte Kapitel präsentiert die Schlussfolgerungen der Arbeit. Zwei Anhänge mit Karten und Tabellen schließen die Dissertation ab.

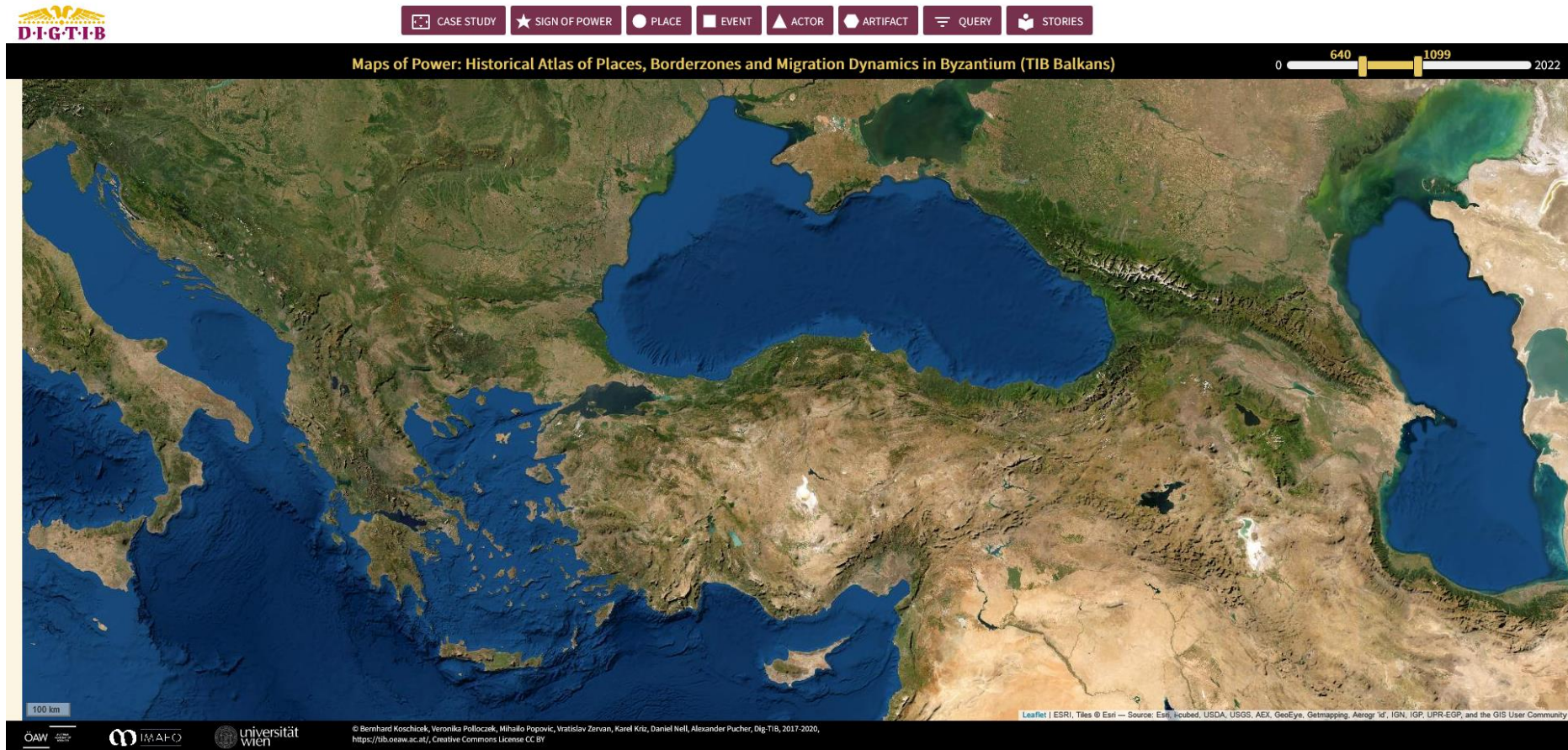
Appendices

Chronology	References	Person(s)	Title	Office(s)
653/654 (more probably 713/714)	ZV 215	Synetos, Niketas	Apo eparchon	Genikoi Kommerkiarioi
659 - 668	ZV 141b	Stephanos	Patrikios	General kommerkiarios of Helenopontos (and asekreitis?)
659 - 668	ZV 144	Stephanos	Apo hypaton, patrikios	Stratitokios logothetes and general kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Paphlagonia
667 - 668		Peter (Petros)	Apo hypaton (?)	genikos kommerkiarios
668 - ca. 672	ZV 150	Theodore	Apo hypaton	Genikos Kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Sebastopolis (?)
673/674	ZV 152	Mikkinos, Gregory		General kommerkiarioi of the apotheke of Honorias
674 - 681	ZV 155	Peter	Apo hypaton	General kommerkiarios of the apotheke of [First or Fourth] Armen[ia] and...
679/680	ZV 156	Kosmas	Stratelates	General kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Helenopontos
687 - 689	ZV 163	Kosmas	Stratelates	General kommerkiarios of the apotheke of the Cycladic Islands (?)
687/688	Unpublished	Julian	Apo hypaton	Genikos kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Lydia
687/688	ZV 160	Kosmas	Stratelates	General kommerkiarios of First and Second Cappadocia
688 - 690	ZV 149	Julian	apo hypaton	genikos kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Crete
689/690		Kosmas	Apo hypaton	Genikos kommerkiarios of Kerasous
690/691	ZV 168	George	Scribon	General kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Asia, Chios, and Lesbos
690/691	ZV 162	Kosmas	Apo hypaton	Kommerkiarios of the apotheke of First Armenia
691 - 693	SBS 9 (2006), 35	George and Theophylaktos	patrikioi	genikoi kommerkiarioi of the apotheke of Asia and Karia
691/692 - 695/696	ZV 192	George	Apo hypaton	General kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Karia and Lykia
692/693	ZV 179	George, Theophylaktos	Patrikios (George)	Genikoi Kommerkiarioi of the apotheke of Lazike, Trapezous and Kerasous
692/693	ZV 180	George, Theophylaktos	Patrikioi	General kommerkiarioi of the apotheke of Paphlagonia and Honorias
694 / 695	SBS 11 (2012), 122			imperial kommerkia of the Karabesianoï
695 - 697	ZV 194	Ge(orge)	Apo hyp(a)ton	General kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Nicaea
695/696	ZV 191	George	Apo hypaton	General kommerkiarios of the apotheke of First or Fourth Armenia
695/697	ZV 193			Apotheke of the imperial kommerkia of Helenopontos
698/699 or 713/714	ZV 200a	Theo(dore,-dosios,-doulos,-phanes)		General kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Mesembria
700 - 702	METCALF, Seals from Cyprus I, p. 164	Konstantinos		General kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Asia and -
711 - 713	ZV 211, Dated Seals, no. 29	John(?)	Apo eparchon	General kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Aigaion Pelagos
711/712	ZV 208	Synetos, Niketas	Apo eparchon	Genikoi Kommerkiarioi of the apotheke of Lazike
713 - 715	ZV 219, Dated Seals, no. 30	Synetos, Niketas	Apo eparchon	General kommerkiarioi of the apotheke of Koloneia, Kamacha and Fourth Armenia
713/714	ZV 213	John	Apo eparchon	General kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Aigaion Pelagos
713/714	ZV 217a	Synetos, Niketas		General lommerkiarioi of the apotheke of Mesembria
716/717 (?)	ZV 221	VACAT, John	VACAT, kandidatos	Genikoi Kommerkiarioi of the apotheke of Lazike
717/718	ZV 222a, 222b	N., N.		(Genikoi?) kommerkiarioi of the apotheke of Koloneia and of all the provinces of the Christ-loving Armeniakon
722/723	ZV 225(a)	John	Hypatos	General kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Pamphylia, Pisidia and Lykia
723/724	ZV 271b	Anastasios	Hypatos, imperial balnitor	General kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Thessalonica
724/725	ZV 231a	Anastasios	Hypatos, imperial balnitor	General kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Thessalonica
726/727	ZV 233	Thomas	Patrikios	Genikos logothetes and kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Mesembria
726/727		Theophylaktos	Imperial spatharios	Kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Thessalonica
727 / 728	SBS 9 (2006), 15 - 16			imperial kommerkia of Hellespontos, Asia and Karia
727/728	ZV 235, LIHACEV, Molivdovuly, 212-213, no. 2	Theophanes	Patrikios	Imperial protospatharios, genikos logothetes and kommerkiarios of the apotheke of Bithynia, (Phrygia) Salutaris and (Phrygia) Pakatiane
730 - 741	ZV 258			The imperial kommerkia of Thrace
730 - 741	SBS 9 (2006), 51			the imperial kommerkia of Crete
731/732	ZV 244			The imperial kommerkia of Mesembria
732/733	ZV 247			The imperial kommerkia of Mesembria
735/736	ZV 250, LIHACEV, Molivdovuly, 241-242, no. 75/5			The imperial kommerkia of Kerasous
736/737	ZV 251, BIBICOU, Douanes, 231 n. 63			The imperial kommerkia of Mesembria
737/738	MK 40			Basilikia kommerkia of Thessalonica
738/739				The imperial kommerkia of Thessalonica
738/739	ZV 255b			The imperial kommerkia of Salonica
740/741	ZV 256			The imperial kommerkia of Thessalonica
741 - 750	ZV 259d			The imperial kommerkia of Mesembria and Thrace
741 - 750	ZV 259a			The imperial kommerkia of Mesembria and Thrace
747/748?	Unpublished			The imperial kommerkia of Thrace

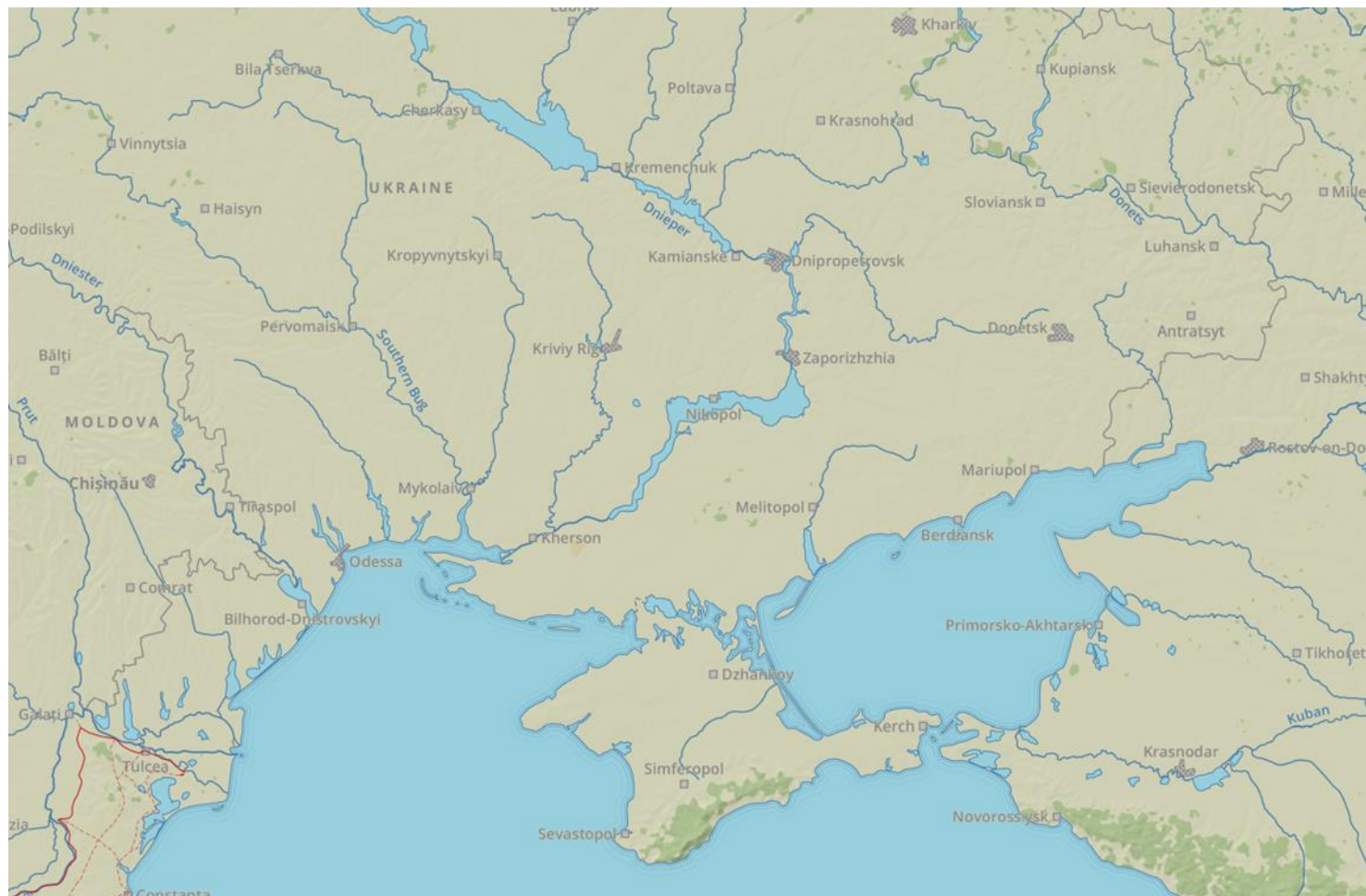
Chronology	References	Person(s)	Title	Office(s)	Bibliography
11th century	Unpublished	Theodore	Protospatharios	Exaktor, chartouarios of the genikos logothetes and kommerkiarios of Debeltos	
11th century	Unpublished	John Spondyles	Unknown	Kommerkiarios	SEIBT, Bleisiegel, 305 - 306
11th century	DO 47.2.2128, Fogg 1750	Eustratios (Romaïos?)	Spatharokandidatos	Kommerkiarios of Persthavitza	
11th century	DO 47.2.137, Mabbolt collection (no.80), American Numismatic Society	John	Unknown	Kommerkiarios of Persthavitza	
11th century	Fogg 1263	Sergios	Unknown	Chartouarios and kommerkiarios of Persthavitza	
10th / 11th century		Euprepios	Spatharokandidatos	Megas Kommerkiarios	
11th century	DO 55.1.4599, TSOUGARAKIS, REB 48 (1990) 246	George	Protosynkellos	Kommerkiarios of Crete	
10th / 11th century	Fogg 108	John	(imperial?) spatharokandidatos	kommerkiarios of Hieron and Pontos	
11th century	DO 55.1.2186	Agathonikos	protospatharios epi tou Chrysotrikinou	kommerkiarios of Chaldia	
11th century	Fogg 1317, LAURENT BZ 33 (1933) 356, no. 7	Pothos	[vestes?]	exaktor, oikistikos of the sakelle and kommerkiarios of Chaldia	
11th century	DO 58.106.5120	Theodo(sios), Theodo(ulos?), or Theodo(tos) Morocharzanes	Hypatos	kommerkiarios of Chaldia	
11th century, 1. third	MK 54 (a), 55(b)	Eustratios		koumerkiarios Debeltou	
11th century, 2. quarter	MK 284	Konstantinos		chartouarios and koumerkiarios Chaldias	
11th c.	DO 47.2.2128, Fogg 1750	Eustratios (Romaïos?)	spatharokandidatos	kommerkiarios of Persthavitza	
11th c.	DO 47.2.137	John		kommerkiarios of Persthavitza	
11th c.	Fogg 1263	Sergios		chartouarios and kommerkiarios of Persthavitza	
11th c.		Ioannes		Asekretes kai kommerkiarios of Debeltos	
11th c.		Basileios ?		kommerkiarios of Debeltos	
10th - 11th c.		Konstantinos Syropoulos	spatharokandidatos	kommerkiarios of Debeltos	CHEYNET, GÖKYILDIRIM, BULGURLU, Sceaux byzantins d'Istanbul, 74 - 75
11th c.		Andronikos	basilikos protospatharios	kommerkiarios of Dristra	
11th c.		Dionysios	spatharokandidatos	kommerkiarios of Dristra	
11th c.	DO 55.1.3333, DO 55.1.3332	Ioannes	Spondyles (?)	kommerkiarios of Dristra	
11th c.		Eustratios Romanakes		kommerkiarios	JORDANOV, Seals from Bulgaria II, 357 - 358
11th c.		Symbatios	Protospatharios	megas chartouarios, imperial raptēs and kommerkiarios of Chaldia	CHEYNET - MORRISSON - SEIBT, Collection Seyrig, p. 101 - 102
11th c.		Konstantinos		Kommerkiarios	LAURENT, Collection Orghidan, p. 134 - 135
11th c.		Leon		basilikos kommerkiarios of Peloponnesos	LAURENT, Collection Orghidan, p. 123
10 - 11th c.		George	Spatharokandidatos	kommerkiarios of Cherson	LAURENT, Collection Orghidan, p. 257
10 - 11th c.		Damianos	basilikos spatharios	kommerkiarios and abydikos of Thessalonike	LAURENT, Collection Orghidan, p. 141
11th c.		Elias		kommerkiarios	CHEYNET, GÖKYILDIRIM, BULGURLU, Sceaux byzantins d'Istanbul, 76
11th c.		Theodoros		basilikos kommerkiarios of Dekapolis	WASSILIOU-SEIBT, W. SEIBT, Byzantinischen Bleisiegel 2., 160 - 161
10th / 11th c.	MK 277	Ioannes	protospatharios	megas chartouarios and kommerkiarios of Chaldia	WASSILIOU-SEIBT, W. SEIBT, Byzantinischen Bleisiegel 2., 171
11th c.		N.		koumerkiarios of Crete	SBS 2 (1990), 150
11th c.	SOKOLOVA, Monety i pecati, 158	George	basilikos kandidatos	koumerkiarios of Cherson	
10th / 11th c.	SOKOLOVA, Monety i pecati , 158 - 159	George	basilikos kandidatos	kommerkiarios of Cherson	
10th / 11th c.	SOKOLOVA, Monety i pecati, 154 - 155	Foteinos	basilikos spatharokandidatos	kommerkiarios of Cherson	
10th / 11th c.	SOKOLOVA, Monety i pecati, 152	Sergios	basilikos spatharios	kommerkiarios of Cherson	
11th c.	SOKOLOVA, Monety i pecati, 153	Damianos		kommerkiarios of Cherson	
11th c.	JORDANOV, SBS 7 (2002), 43	Constantine Syropoulos	spatharokandidatos	kommerkiarios of Debeltos	



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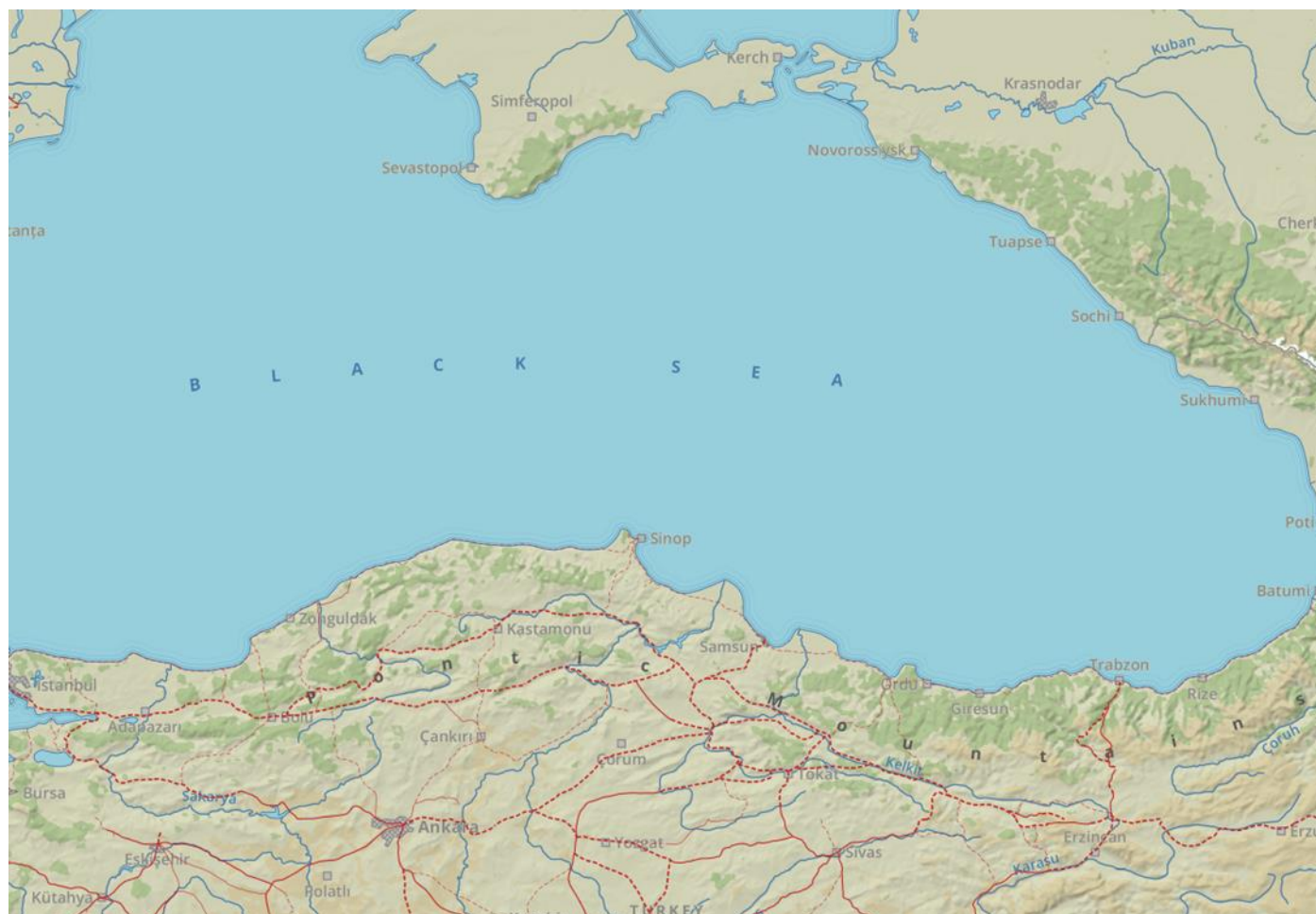
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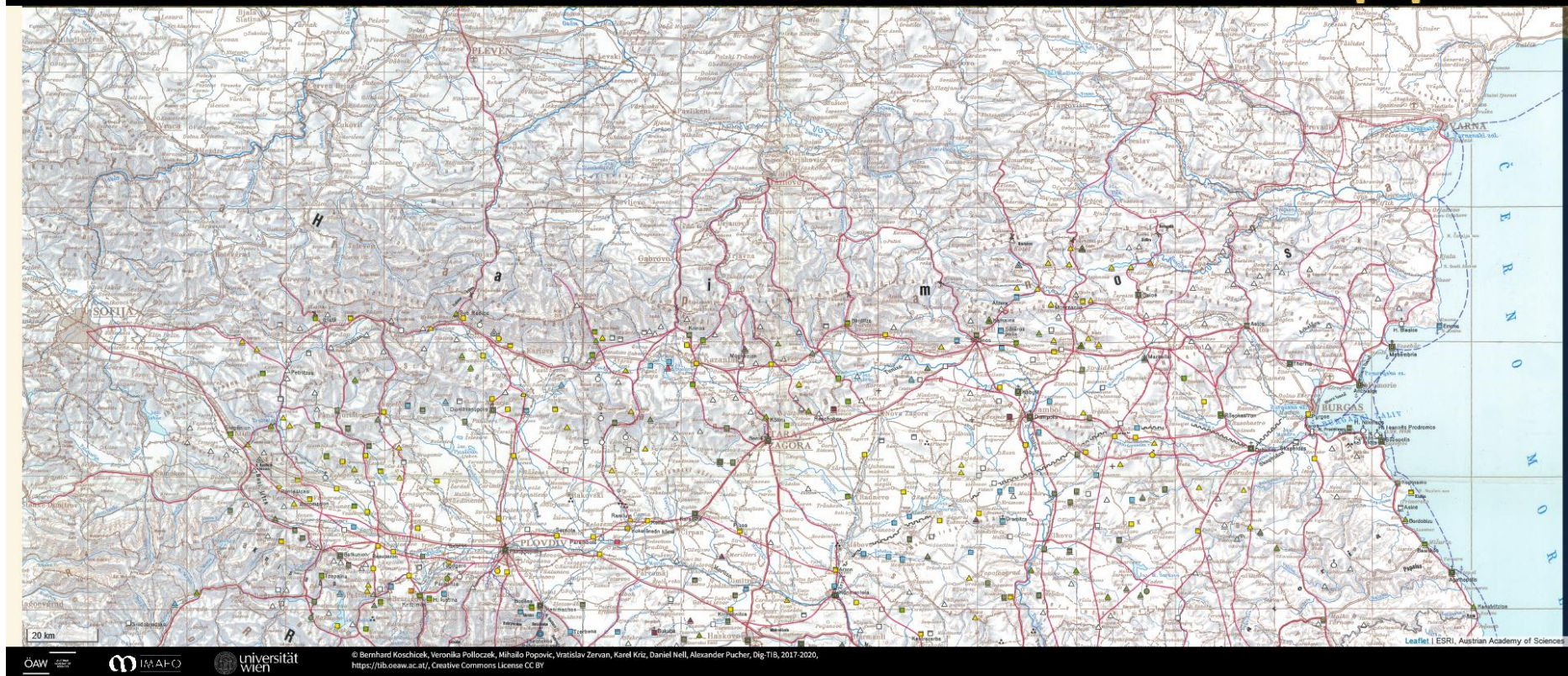
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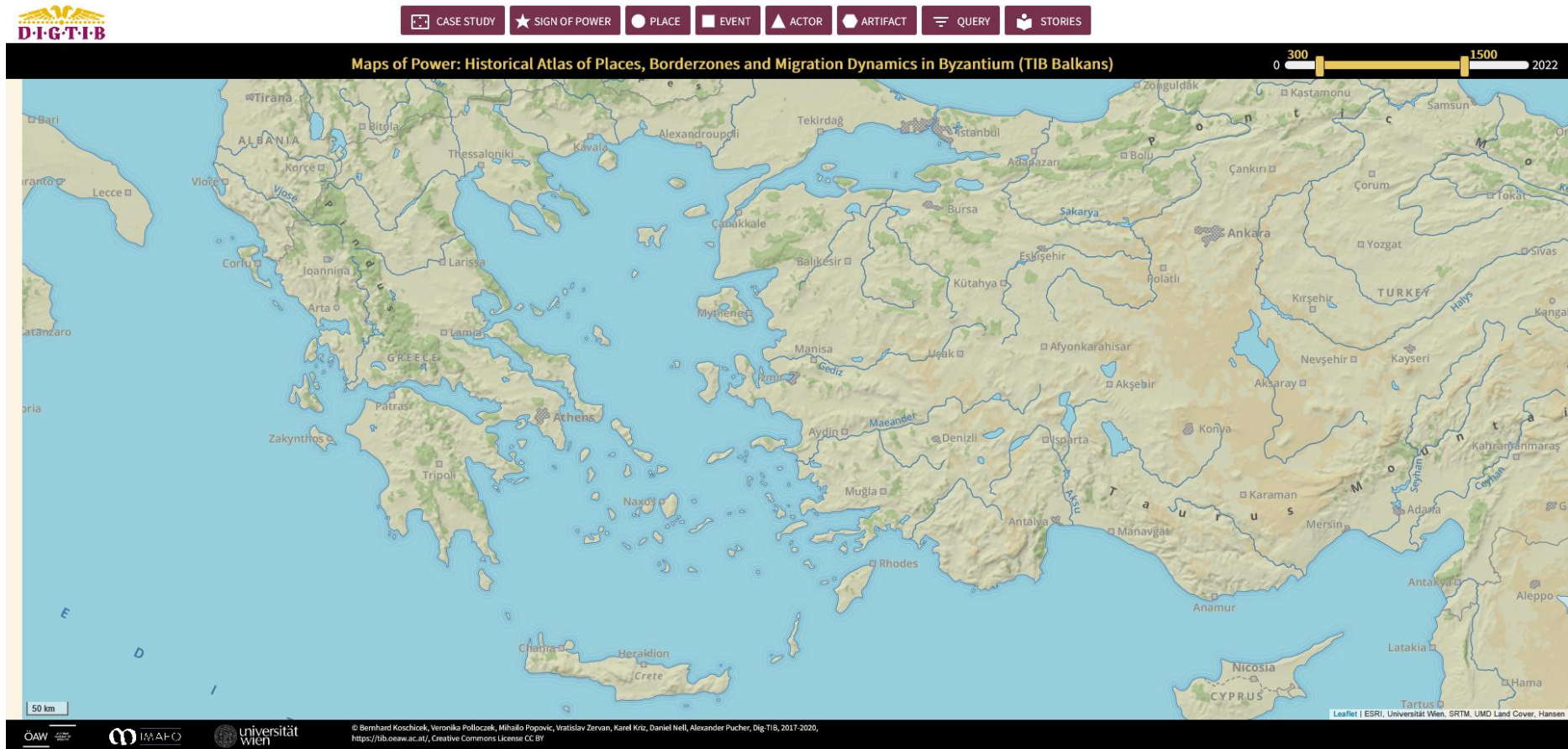
Map 7. The southern shores of the Black Sea and their hinterland. Present-day settlements and Roman road network (© Bernhard Koschichek, Veronika Polloczek, Mihailo Popovic, Vratislav Zervan, Karel Kriz, Daniel Nell, Alexander Pucher, Dig-TIB, 2017—2020, <https://tib.oeaw.ac.at/>, Creative Commons License CC BY).



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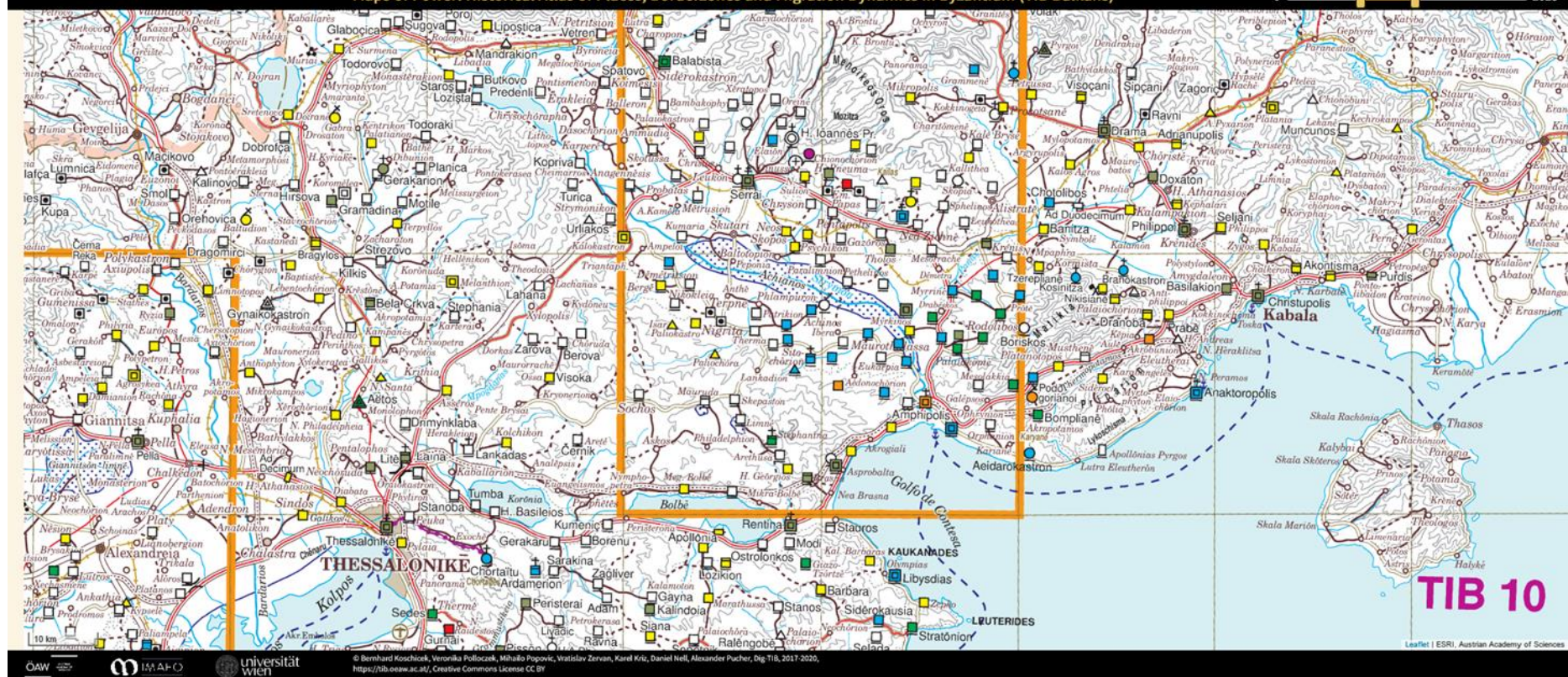


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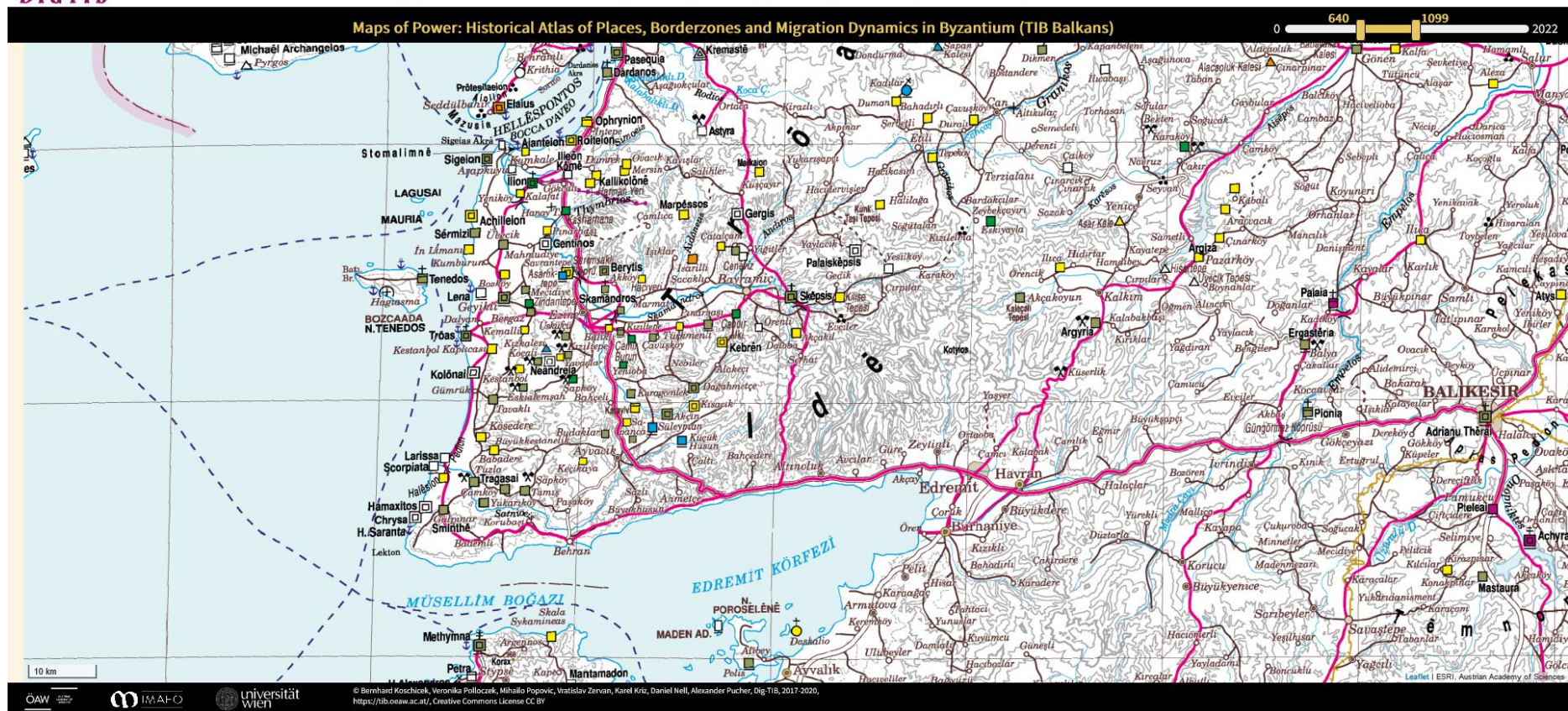
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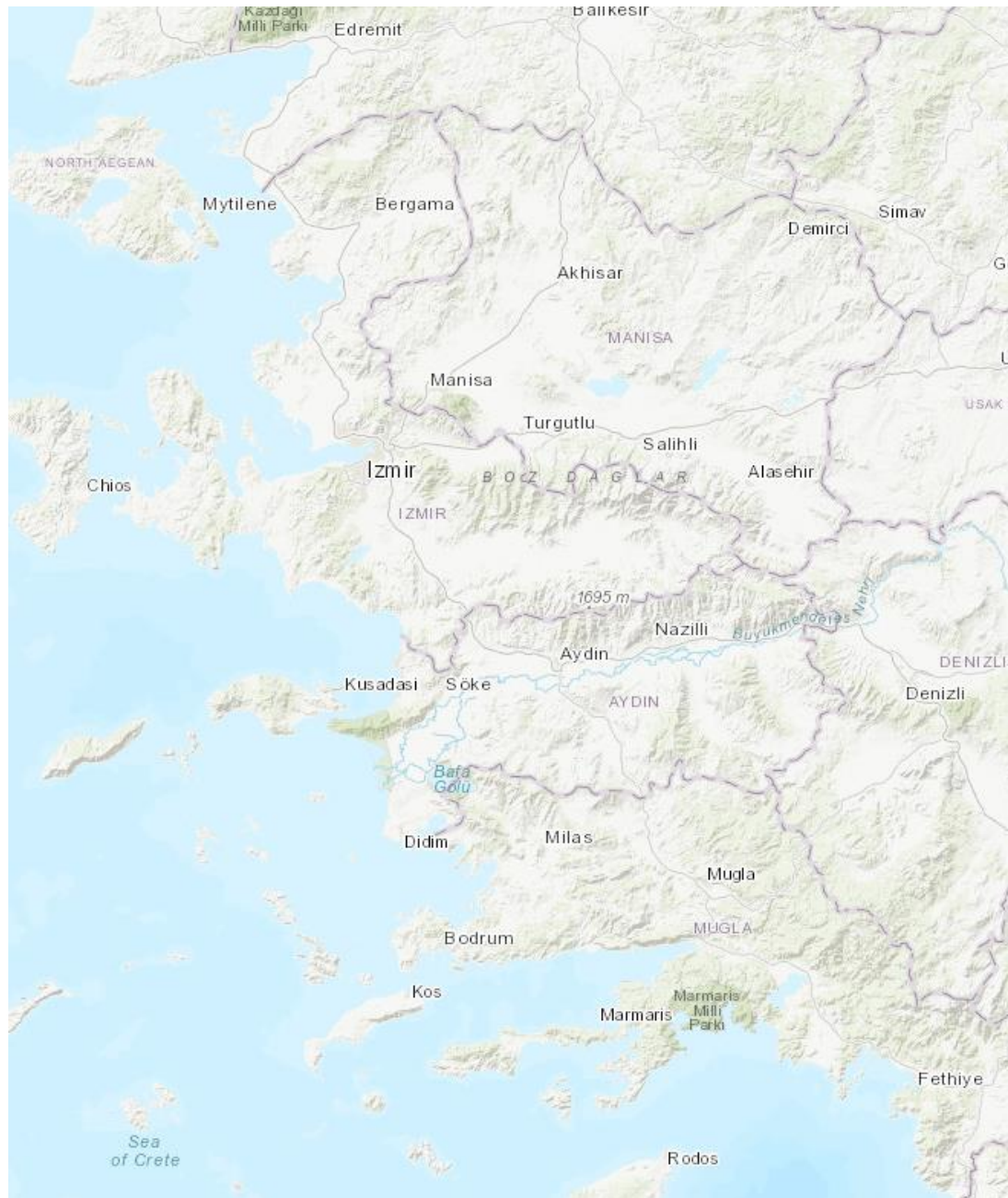


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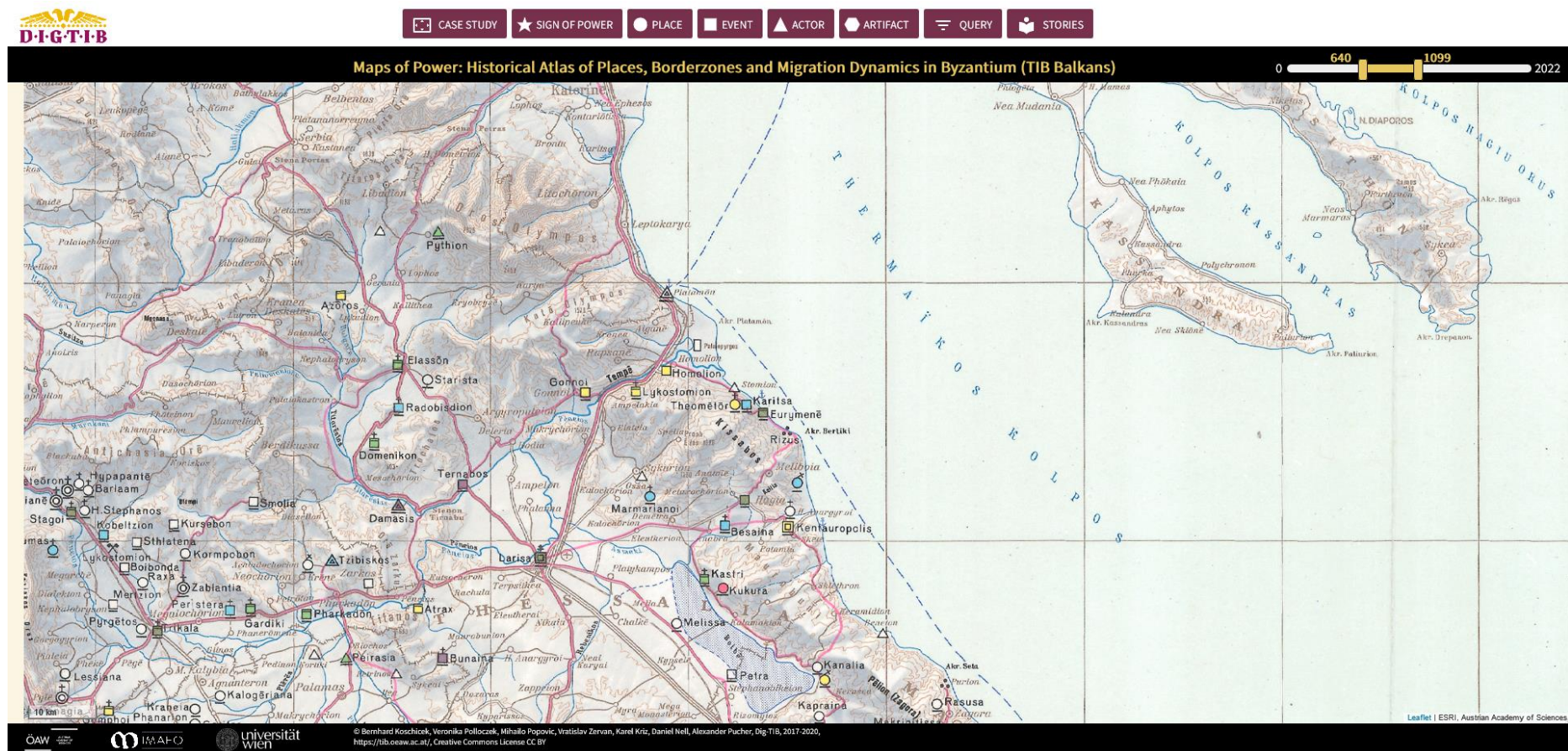


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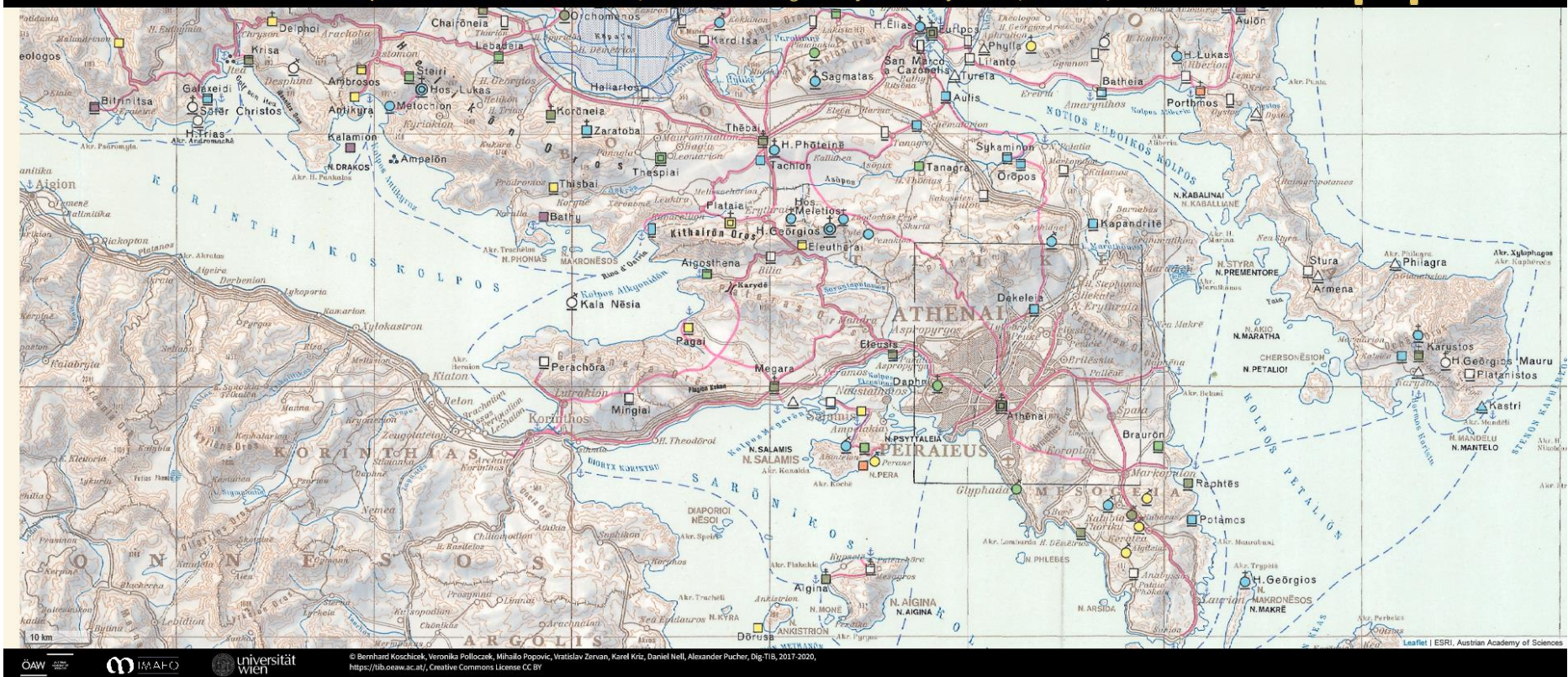
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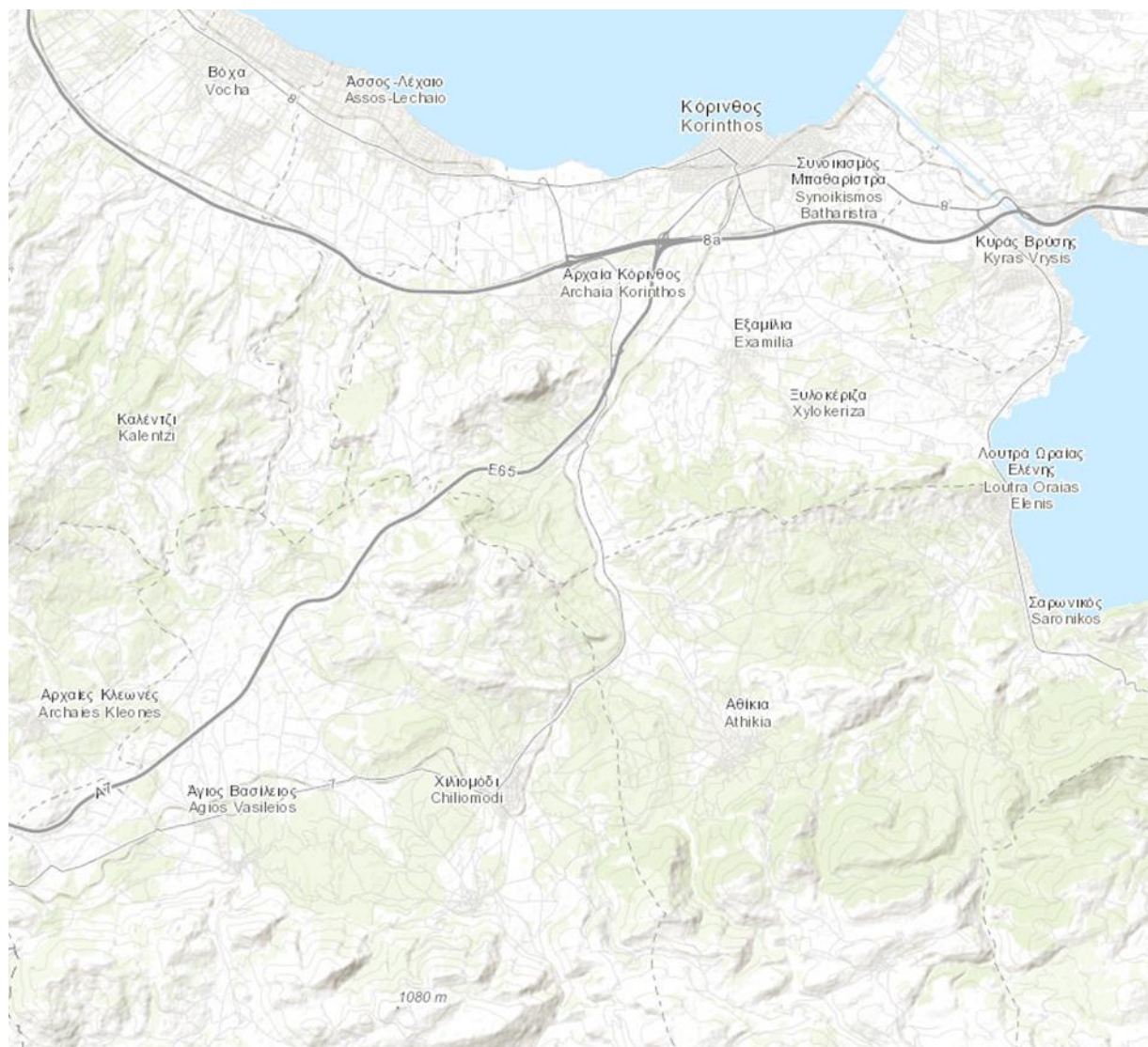
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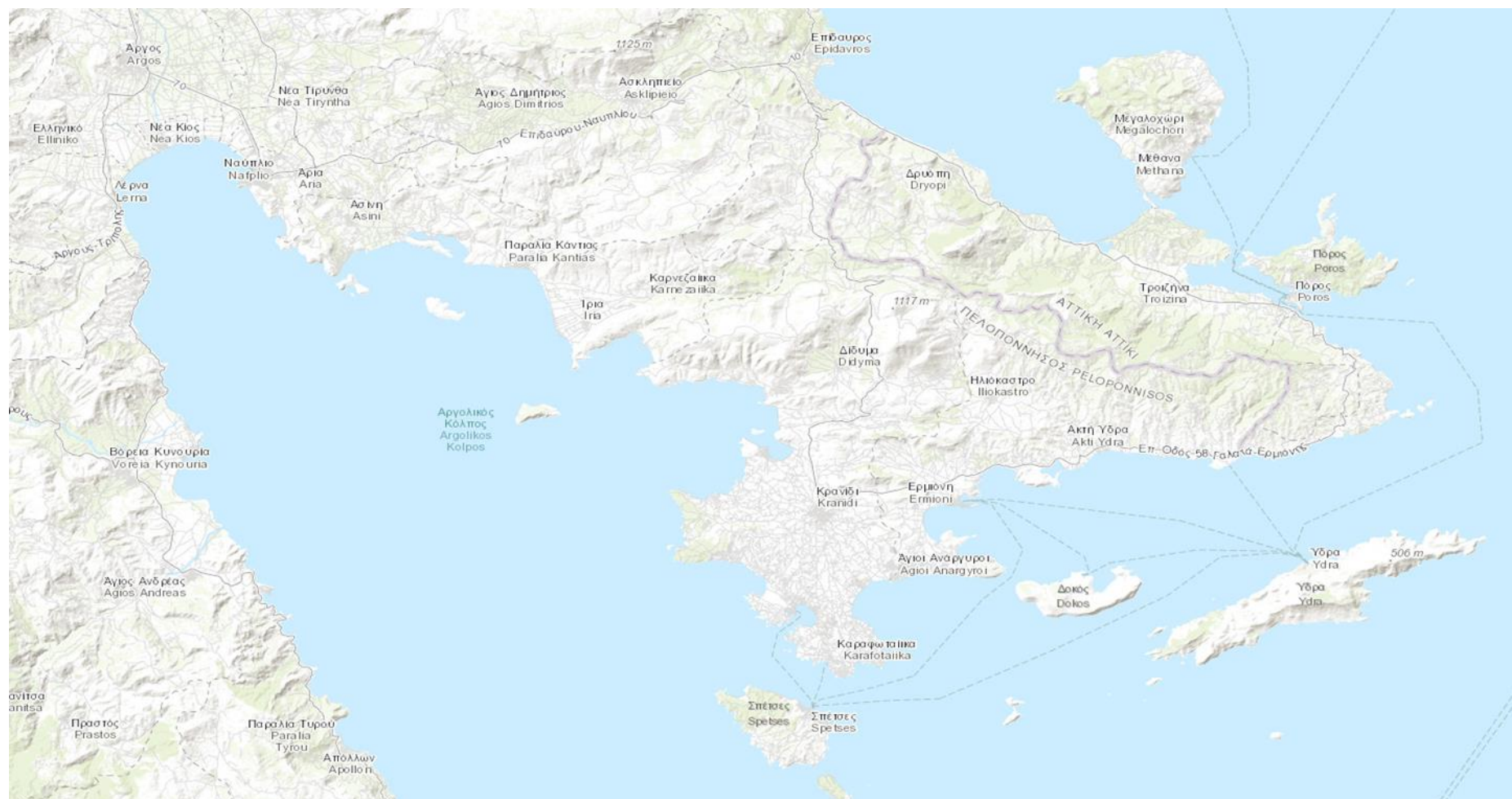
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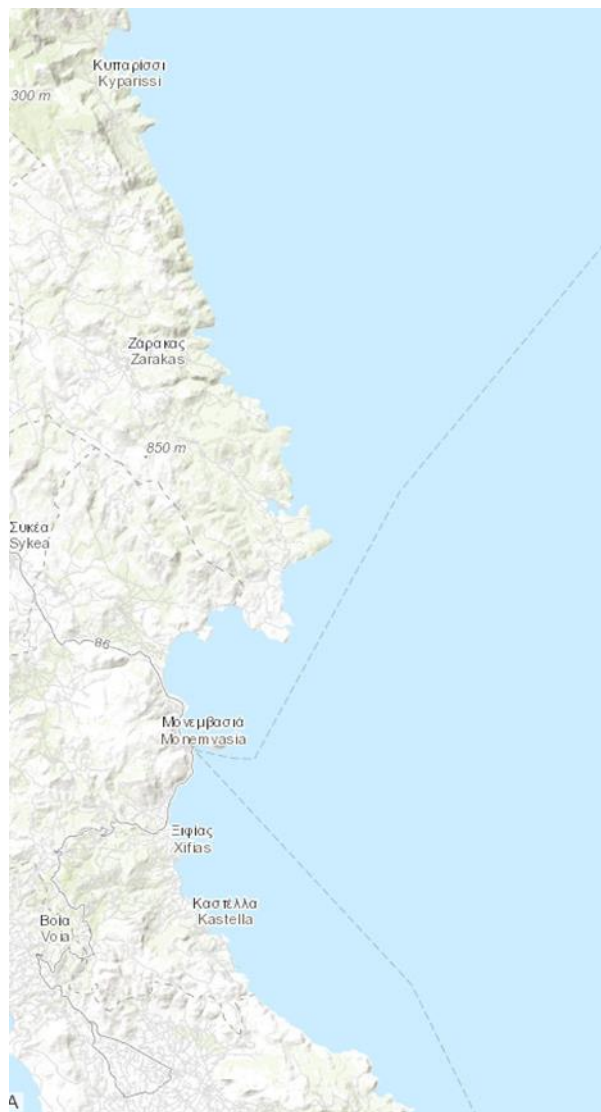
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