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The Economic History of Byzantium:
From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century

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Commerce, Trade, Markets, and Money: Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries

Klaus-Peter Matschke

The Fourth Crusade opened a new phase in the West's economic penetration of the Byzantine Empire. After 1204 the intermittent presence of Italian merchants in the commercial quarters of various cities turned into a widespread, permanent settlement and colonization of entire regions of the empire. To be sure, in 1261 the Venetians had to relinquish some of their spoils of the crusade and lost their privileged position in Constantinople. However, they were able to hold on to the island of Crete, expand and fortify various other bases, and in the early fifteenth century even gain temporary control of Thessalonike, the second most important city of the empire. As early as 1267 they also regained their original quarter in Constantinople, the restored capital. In 1261 the Genoese were given generous customs privileges and numerous trading bases as a reward for supporting the Byzantine reconquista. But they soon grabbed more than the Byzantines had intended for them by developing the site of Galata/Pera—facing Constantinople across the Golden Horn and assigned to them as a place of settlement—into what was essentially an independent economic competitor of the capital, by establishing a permanent foothold on the island of Chios after clashes that saw their fortunes rise and fall, and by gaining a secure access through the Byzantine straits to the Black Sea and the city of Kaffa as the center of a newly emerging economic region.

In this way the two northern Italian trading powers acquired important entrepôts for economic relations with the East. At the same time, they had now created the geographic and material conditions that allowed them to reach, without impediment, any point in Byzantium and to put the entire economic region in the service of their commercial interests. Latin merchants were a permanent presence in the larger cities of the late Byzantine period and became the chief suppliers to local retailers. They maintained solid trading links with many smaller cities: from Constantinople they regularly brought cloth (*draparia*) to the city of Mesembria on the shores of the Black Sea,[1] and

This chapter was translated by Thomas Dunlap.

[1] G. L. Tafel and G. M. Thomas, *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig,* 3 vols. (Vienna, 1856–57), 3:244f.

from Thessalonike they supplied the city of Melenikon on the upper reaches of the Strymon River with imported cloths as well.[2] Latin merchants also went to market in the villages. In addition to textiles, their agents sold metal wares and other western-made trading goods in the settlements (*casalia* and *loca*) of the various regions. The merchants' staff members as well as native purchasers traveled on their behalf looking for favorable deals on agricultural products and textile raw materials; among the goods they acquired on their trips through the countryside were occasional rugs (*tapeta*), most probably from peasant household production.[3] Westerners visited urban and rural fairs in pursuit of a variety of commercial interests. They sailed their ships to the many landing sites on the islands and the coasts of the Aegean to buy provisions and load the grain that rural growers carted to market after good harvests. Latin artisans from Constantinople and Pera went to the villages to buy cattle and skins and other raw materials they needed for their work. Making full use of their customs privileges, Latin merchants procured additional export permits and special letters of safe-conduct. The Byzantines were swamped by a flood of textile imports. Soon they also grew dependent on the import of foodstuffs into the imperial territory, which was continuously shrinking and losing its autonomy. To the very end of the empire, the Byzantines were unable to shake off this multifaceted economic infusion from the West.

As the former emperor John Kantakouzenos put it, the Latins' every thought and desire were focused on acquiring goods worth many nomismata at the lowest possible cost.[4] This Byzantine aristocrat, whose own attitude was governed by the idea of just price, regarded such conduct as fraud and theft. It was in fact all but incomprehensible to him how Westerners could forget this in their dealings with their Byzantine ὁμόφυλοι and act so contrary to nature as to see their commercial successes as strokes of good fortune and boast about them openly. The Byzantine magnate believed that this commercial behavior, this economic mentality, was one reason—perhaps *the* reason—for the hostility between Latins and Byzantines. It is difficult to say whether Byzantine merchants took a similar view. In any case, things got even more difficult for them when the Latins tried to restrict their movements further by denying them the use of western ships, by making access to the Italian colonies more difficult, and by practically excluding them from markets outside the empire. The Latins were aided in their efforts by the traditional weaknesses of Byzantine trade and commerce: its lack of mobility, its aversion to risk-taking, and its embeddedness within a well-developed framework of state control, which had always guaranteed its basic existence but at the same time had restricted its opportunities.

Varieties of Exchange in the Late Byzantine Empire

The year 1204 was not only a political blow to the Byzantine state, but also cast its traditional economic foundation into question, curtailing its influence on production

[2] Ibid., 278f.

[3] G. Bertolotto, "Nuova serie di documenti sulle relazioni di Genova coll'imperio bizantino," *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria* 28 (1898): 514.

[4] J. Meyendorff, "Projets de concile oecuménique en 1367," *DOP* 14 (1960): 171.

and especially on society's distribution mechanisms. A household system of government replaced a bureaucratic system of government at the center.[5] The material expenses for the imperial court of the Laskarids and for various other spheres of administration in the empire of Nicaea were for the most part borne by the imperial domains. The imperial aristocracy was redirected toward material income from landholdings and productive agriculture and was disconnected from state sources of income. The emperors in exile in Asia Minor promoted the export of agricultural products and limited the import of commercial goods. In this way they were able to increase the inflow of money, reduce its outflow, and limit the influence of foreign merchants on the economy.

Some traditional structures and mechanisms were reactivated when the Palaiologan dynasty assumed the throne and the Byzantine emperors returned to the old capital. Once again the state apparatus and the imperial household grew to a size that far exceeded the resources and dimensions of a private household based on its own domains. When the emperors went to their summer quarters, the local population had to provide unlimited quantities of food supplies, either free of charge or at preferential prices. The imperial horse and wagon stables were also maintained with cheap grain from the peasantry.[6] Members of the imperial family had various ways of stocking their private pantries and cellars at no expense.[7] To alleviate food shortages and secure the food supply to besieged fortresses and invested cities, the state stopped grain shipments by foreign merchants and confiscated the surplus of monasteries.[8]

The restoration of the empire also revived various elements of the traditional imperial ideology along with their economic implications. Michael VIII Palaiologos used generous payments from the treasury filled by the Laskarids to create the political backing that brought him and his family to the throne.[9] His son Constantine, because he was dispensing largesse on a scale permitted only to emperors,[10] was suspected of plotting to depose his brother, Andronikos II. The free interplay of economic forces was thus once again more strongly controlled and impeded by the administration of an empire seeking to recapture its former glory and by the new holders of political power. Still, the commercial foundation of the late Byzantine economy was certainly not jeopardized, nor was there a substantial reduction in the scale of commercial exchanges. Any such moves would already have been prevented by the presence of Latin merchants, western goods, and western money in the Byzantine markets and in the cities and villages of the empire, and by the potency of the Latin privileges. Those

[5] M. Angold, "Administration of the Empire of Nicaea," *ByzF* 19 (1993): 136.

[6] S. Eustratiades, Γρηγορίου τοῦ Κυπρίου Ἐπιστολαὶ καὶ μῦθοι (Alexandria, 1910), 116 (no. 132) (hereafter Eustratiades).

[7] Ibid., 117f.

[8] Bertolotto, "Nuova serie," 534; *Georgii Pachymeris De Michaele et Andronico Palaeologis libri tredecim,* ed. I. Bekker, 2 vols. (Bonn, 1835), 2:588 (VII.13) (hereafter Pachymeres).

[9] Cf. K.-P. Matschke, "Regierungsversprechen und Regierungsverhalten in der frühen Palaiologenzeit," in *Geschichte und Kultur der Palaiologenzeit,* ed. W. Seibt (Vienna, 1996), 133–44.

[10] *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina historia,* ed. L. Schopen, 3 vols. (Bonn, 1829–55), 1:187 (VI.6) (hereafter Gregoras).

privileges made it very difficult for the late Byzantine state to regulate mercantile activity in its various forms, leaving it at best indirect ways of doing so. Attempts to set maximum prices and enforce export restrictions for grain were also unsuccessful in the long run.

Instead, one can observe the opposite trend, that of using state regulation for private commercial activity and of reinterpreting noncommercial forms of exchange. For example, in a letter to Emperor Andronikos II, Patriarch Gregory of Cyprus denounced a group of officials who were abusing their responsibility to care for the imperial horses and pack and draft animals. Their scheme involved redirecting the rye and barley deliveries from the peasantry, intended as fodder, into private granaries and selling them for their own profit. Because they bought cheaply and resold at high prices, in the eyes of the church leader they ceased to be ἱππικόμοι and ὀρεωκόμοι and turned into κάπηλοι τῶν σπερμάτων.[11] Here, too, buying cheap and selling dear is mentioned as a feature of mercantile behavior, but the patriarch seems more indignant about the manner of the cheap purchases than about this basic principle of commercial life. As already noted, John Kantakouzenos later denounced this very principle as fraud and theft. The patriarch emphasized that this was not an isolated case but a common phenomenon of the early Palaiologan period. To prove his point he mentioned those responsible for the imperial table: they, too, took many of the piglets, chickens, and other animals requisitioned from the peasants and sold them privately. The patriarch urged the emperor to issue imperial *prostagmata* declaring such conduct an abuse of authority, to eradicate it or at least cut it back. At the same time he reveals that this was indeed common practice, a result of the fact that both the court itself and the domestic staff were very large. Some well-known people of the early Palaiologan period made great fortunes assessing and collecting taxes; the only explanation is probably that these tasks, still very important at the time, could also be used to pursue a variety of private business dealings. That is the likely scenario in the case of the γεωγράφος, ἐξισωτής, and ἀπογραφεύς Theodore Patrikiotes, though we do not have conclusive proof. His wealth not only allowed him to bail out the state apparatus from financial difficulties in 1340, but he also became a sought-after sponsor and generous donor who distributed money and gifts to his numerous clients. Among them was the freelance poet Manuel Philes. Philes, however, did not see himself as a mere recipient of charity but demanded these gifts as payment for his poetry, which he described as ἐγγράφους φόρους and threatened to withhold if his requests for meat (and other things necessary for everyday life and a modest luxury) were not met.[12] However, the poet's self-confident assertiveness brought him into conflict with prevailing attitudes, which were still resisting the emergence of an independent intelligentsia that was linked to and communicated with society via the market. Only at the very end of Byzantium's existence did these attitudes become somewhat more open to new developments.

[11] Eustratiades, 116.

[12] *Manuelis Philae Carmina,* ed. E. Miller, 2 vols. (Paris, 1855), 1:349; cf. G. Stickler, *Manuel Philes und seine Psalmenparaphrase* (Vienna, 1992), 35.

It is probably not entirely coincidental that the urban sphere in the fourteenth century became the center of these special forms of commerce. During the siege of his city by the Turks around 1320, the governor of Philadelphia, Manuel Tagaris, turned his house into a granary and bakery(τὴν αὐτοῦ οἰκίαν εἰς ἕνα . . . σιτῶνα καὶ αὖ ἀρτοπώλιον) and sold the grain that was stored in the city, and was at his disposal, to the hungry residents at high prices.[13] Evidently he, too, became a kind of grain merchant *qua officio*. The *protosebastos* Leo Kalothetos, who, in the year 1350, wanted to transport grain and salt from Old Phokaia "ad partes et terras amicorum" on Venetian ships,[14] was probably also acting as governor of the city. As such he controlled considerable quantities of foodstuffs, for the seat of his administration was already in the 1340s a collecting point for grain from Turkish areas ("de frumento nato in partibus Turchie"); from there some was transported to the Byzantine capital and some to other places.[15] The basis of such activities was surely the μιτάτον, the right of late Byzantine city and provincial governors to procure agricultural products from the inhabitants of their jurisdiction through compulsory sales at nominal prices. Though intended chiefly for the local administration, these products were also used as commercial goods. This turned city governors into feared competitors on the local markets,[16] and in favorable circumstances it even allowed them to gain access to foreign markets. Similar effects flowed from the προτίμησις and the μονοπώλιον, that is, the right of first purchase for certain goods and the exclusive right to sell wine (and possibly other goods, as well) for a specified period of time. In the late Byzantine period, these privileges were granted preferentially, but not exclusively, to city governors.[17] Finally, certain other functionaries were also given specific access to the market. One example is ὁ τῆς ἁλιευτικῆς προστατῶν (the supervisor of fish dealers), who is mentioned in a letter of Demetrios Kydones from the year 1383(?). He turned εἰς τὸν ἰχθυοπῶλον ("into a fishmonger") by arbitrarily raising the dues in kind from the fishermen around Constantinople and offering his loot for sale on the market. In the eyes of Kydones, himself a high official, this behavior brought great discredit to the honor of his office.[18]

According to the social norms and the code of conduct still valid, a Byzantine landowner could take only his own agricultural surplus to market,[19] an *archon* was essen-

[13] D. R. Reinsch, *Die Briefe des Matthaios von Ephesos im Codex Vindobonensis Theol. Gr. 174* (Berlin, 1974), 209 (A 18).

[14] *Démétrius Cydonès, Correspondance,* ed. R.-J. Loenertz, 2 vols. (Vatican City, 1956–60) 2: app., 434 (D 1).

[15] Ch. A. Maltezou, Ὁ Θεσμὸς τοῦ ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Βενετοῦ βαΐλου, *1268–1453* (Athens, 1970), 230: de inde . . . alias.

[16] L. Maksimović, *The Byzantine Provincial Administration under the Palaiologoi* (Amsterdam, 1988), 159.

[17] Cf. P. Magdalino, "An Unpublished Pronoia Grant of the Second Half of the Fourteenth Century," *ZRVI* 18 (1978): 157, 162. On the occasional exemption of monasteries from this monopoly, cf. A. E. Laiou, "The Agrarian Economy, Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries," *EHB* 368.

[18] *Démétrius Cydonès, Correspondance,* ed. Loenertz, 2:165f (no. 261). See the new interpretation by F. Tinnefeld, *Demetrios Kydones, Briefe,* vol. 3 (Stuttgart, 1999), 72ff.

[19] Cf. K.-P. Matschke, *Die Schlacht bei Ankara und das Schicksal von Byzanz* (Weimar, 1981), 224f.

tially prohibited from engaging in commercial activity,[20] and a *stratiotes,* too, should avoid trade because of his military obligations.[21] However, in late Byzantine daily life, these precepts and prohibitions, formulated for reasons of status, morality, and utility, were probably observed less than ever before in Byzantine history. Not least so because it became increasingly difficult for the social groups concerned to conform their behavior to these norms; with the traditional social arrangements falling apart, those affected were simply forced to violate the norms. Yet at the same time their entry into the market, their behavior in the market, and their introduction and promotion of instruments and mechanisms foreign to the market imparted a very special character to commerce during these years, obstructed the development of the domestic market also from within, and caused or influenced the emergence of some economic phenomena characteristic of the late Byzantine period.

The Primary Locales and Principal Goods of Late Byzantine Domestic Commerce

In the late Byzantine period, trading was carried on everywhere, with all manner of goods, at many different occasions, and by all kinds of people: in the open, in the streets, inside and outside church buildings, in private homes, on peasant farms, in the cabins and on the decks of ships, at riverbanks and on beaches, after the harvest, upon acceding to an inheritance, before an urgent journey, during a military campaign, and after a successful raid, by peasants, artisans, soldiers, private people, churchgoers, robbers, and even slaves who were themselves merchandise, with products of one's own labor and with purchased, inherited, and even captured goods.

However, in Constantinople and other cities of the empire, commercial activity was concentrated in an extensive system of special shops and permanent markets. The sale of foodstuffs to urban consumers was handled by bakers, butchers, and grain, milk, and wine merchants. Commerce involving cloth played an essential role, but its objects, carriers, and forms had changed considerably since the middle Byzantine period. Around 1320, Byzantine customs officials were still trying in various ways to prevent the Venetians from selling *pannos* and *telas* (clothes and cloth) both wholesale *(in grossum)* and retail (*ad minutum*),[22] but by this time they were already tilting against windmills. A century later the import of textiles and their wholesale trade were almost entirely in Italian hands, though the business partners to whom wholesalers such as the Venetian Giacomo Badoer sold cloths from various western manufacturing centers, and who then sold it retail, were still almost exclusively Greeks/Byzantines.[23] And in Thes-

[20] Cf. A. Ellissen, "Plethons Reden über die Angelegenheiten der Peloponnes," *Analekten der mittel- und neugriechischen Literatur,* 5 vols. (Leipzig, 1855–62), 4:150.

[21] Cf. *Ioannis Cantacuzeni Historiarum libri IV,* ed. L. Schopen, 3 vols. (Bonn, 1828–32), 1:238 (I.48) (hereafter Kantakouzenos).

[22] G. M. Thomas and R. Predelli, *Diplomatarium Veneto-Levantinum,* 2 vols. (Venice, 1880–99), 1:132.

[23] Cf. M. M. Shitikov, "Torgovlia suknom v Konstantinopole i ego okrestnostiakh v pervoi polovine XV v. (po dannym knigi shchetov Dzhakomo Badoera)," *ADSV* 10 (1973): 284.

salonike, the old-established residents were able to preserve their privilege of selling woolen and linen cloth retail even during the period of Venetian rule.[24] Special cloth retail shops are also attested toward the end of the thirteenth century in the city of Smyrna.[25] Badoer described the native cloth merchants of the capital with the respectful term *drapieri.* Apparently the traditional Byzantine word, βεστιοπράτης, does not appear in contemporary Greek sources, or only in a modified or even distorted form and in rather obscure places.[26] Perhaps this discontinuity in terminology and this terminological vacuum reflect in a special way the profound and long-term changes in an area of the economy that played a key role in economic development in the preindustrial age.

In Constantinople, linen—both raw linen and linen cloth—was sold retail by special *linaruoli* and *linaropuli* also during the late Byzantine period. Linen cloth still came, as it traditionally had, chiefly from Egypt, which was now under Mamluk control.[27] Raw linen continued to be very popular in aristocratic households, where wives and servants finished it into products that were probably intended exclusively for domestic use.[28] The terms for linen dealers in the *Book of the Eparch* are also no longer found in the late Byzantine period, but at least one of the terms used by Badoer (*linaropuli*) appears to be genuinely Byzantine in origin and thus to have replaced the older words.

Badoer also makes repeated mention of *spiziere,* who offered "siropi e medexine" and other such things.[29] Perhaps they are identical with the σαλδαμάριοι rarely mentioned in late Byzantine sources and also ran σαρδαμαρικὰ ἐργαστήρια[30] (mentioned only once). N. Oikonomides has described the latter as "magasins d'alimentation générale" ("general grocery stores"), resembling more or less the modern-day *épiceries.*[31] But perhaps they were also close to the μυρεψοί, that is, apothecaries with their μυρεψικὰ ἐργαστήρια, who had their own market in Constantinople[32] and in Thessalonike still controlled the remnants of their own corporation.[33] Grocers and druggists were difficult to tell apart already during the time of the *Book of the Eparch.* It is almost certain that the strict legal lines of separation that were drawn by the authors of this

[24] F. Thiriet, *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie,* 3 vols. (Paris–The Hague, 1958–61), 2:229 (no. 1995).

[25] MM 4:286.

[26] *Philae Carmina,* ed. Miller, 1:195: ἐσθητοπράτης. *PLP* 8:138 (no. 20305): βεστοπρώτης (protobestiarios? βεστιοπράτης?).

[27] G. Badoer, *Il libro dei conti: Costantinopoli, 1436–1440,* ed. U. Dorini and T. Bertelè (Rome, 1956), 105, 167, 367, and elsewhere (hereafter Badoer).

[28] Cf. the letter of Lukas Notaras to Gennadios Scholarios, ed. Sp. Lambros, in Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά, 4 vols. (Athens–Leipzig, 1912–30), 2:194.

[29] Badoer, 280, and other passages.

[30] *Actes de Lavra,* ed P. Lemerle, A. Guillou, N. Svoronos, and D. Papachryssanthou, Archives de l'Athos, 4 vols. (Paris, 1970–81), 3:25 (no. 123).

[31] N. Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires grecs et latins à Constantinople: XIIIe–XVe siècles* (Montreal, 1979), 95.

[32] H. A. R. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta,* 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1958–94), 2:510.

[33] F. Dölger, *Aus den Schatzkammern des Heiligen Berges* (Munich, 1948), 302f (no. 111); cf. Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires,* 111.

regulatory work of the middle Byzantine period[34] no longer played a role in the late Byzantine era.

Finally, Badoer mentions in his account book a "botegier de mazarie," that is, a seller of *minutae merces.*[35] Mostly, though, we hear only of *botegieri* and *botege* (shops) without any further specification. They correspond to the (καπηλικὰ) ἐργαστήρια and sometimes also to the ἀποθήκαι in late Byzantine sources, for a western text from the year 1447 speaks of *apoticaire(s)* in the capital who bought a variety of goods from Burgundian captains.[36] Stores of this kind probably also existed in the smaller cities, but there are no indications at all of comparable retail outlets in villages. That seems to accord with the actual situation, since in the eyes of contemporaries, ἐργαστήρια (shops) in which money changed hands were typical only of cities.[37]

At least in the large cities, stores and retail outlets that were largely similar in nature were found in specific places, in ἀγοραί (marketplaces),[38] in καμάραι (arcades),[39] in *fonticis* (warehouses),[40] and *nel bazar.*[41] However, outside Constantinople[42] there is so far no unequivocal evidence for the existence of special grain, meat, fish, and produce markets.[43] We do know about a butcher's stall that was supposed to be set up in 1417 next to the Venetian fortress of Korone, but only because it was to receive animals from all parts of the Peloponnese, and thus from the territory of the Byzantine Empire as well. Byzantine agriculture, as that of the Frankish part of the peninsula, profited from the restoration of the *Hexamilion* (a fortified wall across the isthmus of Corinth), at least for a short time.[44]

We also have great difficulties grasping the temporal rhythms of market activity. Only one commercial site in Skoutari is explicitly described as a weekly market, where, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, Latin and Byzantine merchants from Pera and Constantinople met with Turkish buyers and sellers.[45] But there are some indica-

[34] Cf. J. Koder, *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen* (Vienna, 1991), 112, 118.

[35] Badoer, 40, 234, 258.

[36] Cf. J. Paviot, "'Croisade' bourguignonne et intérêts génois en Mer Noire au milieu du XVe siècle," *Studi di storia medioevale e di diplomatica* 12/13 (1992): 151: "Stephano, Grec, apoticaire demourant à Constantinoble," and "Stenon, Grec, apoticaire" as buyers of *graine cramoisy* and *kamocas.*

[37] *Démétrius Cydonès, Correspondance,* ed. Loenertz, 2:184 (no. 268). I refer to the translation and commentary in Tinnefeld, *Briefe,* 3:184ff.

[38] Cf. K.-P. Matschke, "Die spätbyzantinische Öffentlichkeit," *Beiträge zur Mentalitätsgeschichte* 2 (1993): 159ff.

[39] Cf. G. Dagron, "Poissons, pêcheurs et poissoniers de Constantinople," in *Constantinople and Its Hinterland,* ed. C. Mango and G. Dagron (Aldershot, 1995), 69f.

[40] Thomas and Predelli, *Diplomatarium,* 1:189f (no. 91); cf. P. Magdalino, "The Grain Supply of Constantinople, Ninth–Twelfth Centuries," in *Constantinople and Its Hinterland* (as above, note 39), 44f.

[41] Badoer, 356; A. Roccatagliata, "Con un notaio genovese tra Pera e Chio nel 1453–1454," *RESEE* 17.2 (1979): 226 (no. 57); cf. Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires,* 107.

[42] P. Canivet and N. Oikonomides, "La Comédie de Katablattas: Invective byzantine du XVe siècle," Δίπτυχα 3 (1982–83): 53ff; Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires,* 97ff.

[43] Matschke, "Die spätbyzantinische Öffentlichkeit," 61f, should be corrected along these lines.

[44] K. Sathas, *Documents inédits relatifs à l' histoire de la Grèce au moyen-âge,* 9 vols. (Paris–Venice, 1880–90), 3:162f (no. 718); cf. Matschke, *Die Schlacht bei Ankara,* 232f.

[45] U. Lindgreen, *Clavijos Reise nach Samarkand, 1403–1406* (Munich, 1993), 39.

tions that, at least in Constantinople, various weekly markets existed alongside permanent market installations.[46] Usually we have to be content with the bare information that a market existed. The city of Komotini in the southern foothills of the Rhodope range had one, or possibly even several, substantial markets around 1340. We know this from an incidental report by Nikephoros Gregoras, who recounts in 1344 that the troops of John Kantakouzenos, prior to setting out on a new military campaign, bustled about these ἀγοραί to buy everything they needed.[47]

In order to provision larger military contingents, special temporary markets were set up outside cities and, if need be, also behind the city walls in areas where the troops operated or had to pass through.[48] Byzantine and foreign fleets were fitted out and refitted chiefly in the large port cities, but during their military operations they also called repeatedly at the many σκάλαι on the islands and along the coast of the Aegean to resupply themselves especially with fresh produce and drinking water.[49] The late Byzantine economy suffered immensely from the random destruction of almost constant warfare, but a good many merchants also made a living from the needs and opportunities of war, and some urban and rural markets profited from it. That also explains some surprising constellations and coalitions of the late Byzantine period that are discussed below.

Late Byzantine Fairs

Annual fairs continued to play a considerable role in the economic life of the late Byzantine period alongside permanent commercial establishments and the weekly markets that we can barely make out.[50] Some of these πανηγύρεις date back to earlier times, such as the famous St. Demetrios fair of Thessalonike,[51] the St. Michael fair of Chonai,[52] and a so-called Asomatoi market near Stelaria in Chalkidike.[53] Though many fairs are first

[46] Cf. Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires,* 107.

[47] Gregoras 2:706 (XIV.4); cf. C. Asdracha, *La région des Rhodopes aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (Athens, 1976), 197, 221.

[48] *Georgii Acropolitae Opera,* ed. A. Heisenberg, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1903), 1:82 (45); *Ioannis Anagnostae De extremo Thessalonicensi excidio,* ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1838), 492 (5).

[49] The attempt, in the joint crusading expedition of 1444, to close the straits and prevent the Turks from crossing over failed chiefly because the Latin naval force was not able to resupply itself along the coast in the area in which it was operating.

[50] The fundamental work is Sp. Vryonis, Jr., "The Panegyris of the Byzantine Saint: A Study in the Nature of a Medieval Institution, Its Origin and Fate," in *The Byzantine Saint,* ed. S. Hackel (London, 1981), 196–227.

[51] Ibid., 202ff.

[52] Cf. Sp. Vryonis, Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1971), 33f, 154, 222; K. Belke and N. Mersich, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini,* vol. 7, *Phrygien und Pisidien* (Vienna, 1990), 65; E. Kirsten, "Die byzantinische Stadt," *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongreß* (Munich, 1961), 75–102. We know that the fair continued into the early 13th century. It is unclear, however, whether it was also held during the short-lived period of the Laskarids.

[53] W. Regel, E. Kurtz, and B. Korablev, "Actes de Philothée," *VizVrem* 20 (1913): 20 (no. 3); cf. F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches,* 5 vols.(Munich–Berlin, 1924–65), 3:67

mentioned after 1204 or 1261, this does not rule out that they are much older, since none of them can conclusively be shown to have been set up in the late Byzantine period. Some of these fairs were located in or near larger cities; in addition to Thessalonike, one should mention Skopje at the upper reaches of the Strymon River and Ioannina in Epiros. Most fairs, however, were held in smaller cities, in villages, or even in fairly remote locations. While most of what we know relates to the greater Thessalonike region and the Peloponnese, there is some scattered information from western Asia Minor, from the coastal region of the Adriatic, and from the environs of Constantinople.[54]

A number of late Byzantine fairs are known only from reports by Latin visitors. Occasionally these visitors came from far away and traveled great distances, such as Alberto Stella of Venice. In 1268/69, he took his wares by ship from the Venetian base in Negroponte to the Byzantine naval base at Anaia. From there he went overland "ad civitatem Belongi ad panager," and after concluding what seems to have been successful business dealings, he headed for the city of Ephesos.[55] The trade goods that western merchants brought with them were chiefly textiles, what they purchased were mostly agricultural products and raw materials. Only a single visitor to a late Byzantine fair is known to us by name, a certain Corcondille/Krokodeilos from Greater Arachova in the Peloponnese. Apparently he was a local landowner, who, in 1296, appeared as a seller of silk at the Frankish-controlled *Panejour(s)* of Vervaina in the mountain region of Skorta.[56] Whether peasants from the Byzantine Peloponnese also played a role as suppliers of raw silk at this and other fairs is a question we cannot answer at this time. They themselves were probably most interested in tools and draft animals, as was the peasant Nikodemos in an idyll by Maximos Planoudes (whose work was influenced by Theokritos). Nikodemos visits the fair in the town of Aithra, probably a fictitious name, to find a replacement for his best plowing ox.[57] Late Byzantine merchants, too, were active at fairs in the territory of the empire, as attested by various privilege charters for the inhabitants of Monemvasia and the Monemvasiots living in Pegai; included in these charters are exemptions from dues at fairs.[58]

(no. 2021); M. A. Poliakovskaia, "Gorodskie vladeniia provintsial'nykh monastyrei v pozdnei Vizantii," *VizVrem* 24 (1964): 208.

[54] To date no systematic survey of late Byzantine fairs has been done. The relevant material has been collected only for certain regions. Cf. J. Lefort, *Villages de Macédoine,* vol. 1, *La Chalcidique occidentale, TM,* Monographies 1 (Paris, 1982), passim. A. I. Lampropoulou, "Οἱ πανηγύρεις στὴν Πελοπόννησο κατὰ τὴ μεσαιωνικὴ ἐποχή," in Ἡ καθημερινή ζωή στο βυζάντιο (Athens, 1989), 291–310. C. Asdracha, "Les foires en Epire médiévale: La fonction justificative de la mémoire historique," *JÖB* 32.2 (1982): 437–46.

[55] Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden,* 3:193.

[56] J. Longnon, *Livre de la conqueste de la princée de l'Amorée: Chronique de Morée, 1204–1305* (Paris, 1911), 319 (§ 802); cf. D. Jacoby, "Silk Production in the Frankish Peloponnese: The Evidence of the Fourteenth-Century Surveys and Reports," in *Travellers and Officials in the Peloponnese: Descriptions—Reports—Statistics* (Monemvasia, 1994), 45. Cf. also Laiou, "The Agrarian Economy," 323.

[57] C. R. von Holzinger, *Ein Idyll des Maximus Planudes* (Vienna, 1893), 12f.

[58] P. Schreiner, "Ein Prostagma Andronikos' III. für die Monembasioten in Pegai (1328) und das gefälschte Chrysobull Andronikos' II. für die Monembasioten im byzantinischen Reich," *JÖB* 27 (1978): 211–23.

All fairs for which we have relevant information were under the authority of church institutions and ecclesiastical dignitaries, from the Great Church of Constantinople to a few small *metochia* in the provinces. The Great Lavra on Mount Athos even controlled a considerable number of fairs.[59] The fact that in 1294 a certain Manuel Tzamandras took steps against various Genoese cloth merchants at the "panizerium de Mandara" on behalf of an unnamed "sevasto picherni," does not necessarily indicate that this fair, probably located in Asia Minor, did not also lie within the church's jurisdiction.[60] Church influence on the fairs resulted from the close connection between market activities and the feasts of the patron saints of churches and monasteries. The bishops and abbots who headed the religious establishments where fairs were held used these occasions to raise revenues, not only from the religious festivities, but also from the market dealings, especially by levying stall fees and frequently also by collecting the commercial taxes. In many cases there was also an indirect benefit from fairs: they promoted the commercial development of the domains of the churches and monasteries and the involvement of peasants in the exchange of goods, which provided opportunities to acquire some money, something on which churches and monasteries were very keen.

This probably also explains why most late Byzantine information about fairs comes from the first half of the fourteenth century, that is, a period when monastic landholding reached its height, while agricultural production experienced a noticeable decline soon after 1340.[61] After the middle of the fourteenth century we hear little more about the many rural fairs of the monasteries of Mount Athos in the hinterland of Thessalonike. By contrast, the urban fairs survived longer. Around 1420 there is evidence for at least three Thessalonian *panegyreis,* at the churches of St. Demetrios, St. Sophia, and Hagioi Angeloi, and possibly another one at the church of the Acheiropoietos.[62] It is not clear whether the Demetria fair was still held outside the city, as it was in the middle Byzantine period, but the tightening political pressure around the city would suggest it was not. Revenue from the yearly feasts of patron saints and markets no longer appears to have been very substantial, and some of it had to be passed on to the metropolis and the metropolitan officials. In November 1421, however, those entitled to a share of the income came away empty-handed, since the despot Andronikos, lord of the city and in great financial straits, had seized the revenues from the *panegyris* of St. Demetrios.[63] That may have been one reason for the estrangement between the metropolitan and the despot on the eve of the city's handover to the Venetians.[64] Following old custom, the city administration should in fact have contributed money for holding the city's most important fair: 200 hyperpyra in peacetime, 100 in wartime. In July 1425, the Senate of Venice, responding to a request by envoys from Thessalonike,

[59] Lemerle et al., *Actes de Lavra,* 2:275, 282, 305, and elsewhere.

[60] Bertolotto, "Nuova serie," app., 544f.

[61] Cf. Laiou, "The Agrarian Economy," 364ff.

[62] S. Kugeas, "Notizbuch eines Beamten der Metropolis in Thessaloniki aus dem Anfang des XV. Jahrhunderts," *BZ* 23 (1914–15): 145f (nos. 27, 29).

[63] Ibid., 147 (no. 42).

[64] D. Balfour, *Politico-Historical Works of Symeon Archbishop of Thessalonica, 1416/17 to 1429* (Vienna, 1979), 56f, 150ff.

announced that it was willing to continue this custom in the city now under Venetian rule.[65] But the Venetians could not give the city's inhabitants the peace they longed for, with carefree festivities in honor of the city's patron saint and lucrative markets with open city gates. According to the "Threnos" of John Anagnostes, the conquest of Thessalonike by Sultan Murad II in the spring of 1430 also meant the end of the city's *panegyreis*.[66] To be sure, soon after the beginning of Turkish rule, there were efforts by the clergy and the laity to continue the patron saint festivities at the churches still in Christian hands, and with them no doubt also the fairs. These efforts showed some success, at least until 1453, at the church of St. Paraskeve and possibly even St. Demetrios. Eventually, however, festivities and fairs ceased to be of any importance in the life of the residents of Turkish Selânik and for their commercial activities.[67] A number of *panegyreis* were newly established in the village hinterland of Thessalonike under Turkish rule, but in places where no fairs are attested in Byzantine times, which shows that these were entirely new developments on a very different basis.

The Peloponnese is probably the only place where the Byzantine tradition of the *panegyreis* was carried on, and not so much by the Byzantines themselves as by the Latins and Venetians.[68] The general decline of the fairs was caused primarily by the expansion of the Turks, but perhaps also by a progressive weakening of the main Byzantine elements that carried them and took an interest in them. Meanwhile, the people who were the mainstay of Byzantine trade during the final phase of the empire seem to have taken little interest in the traditional fairs.

The Role of the Late Byzantine Merchant in the Emergence of Regional Economic Zones

We have already seen several indications that the year 1204 entailed a change not only in the material but also in the geographic structures of the Byzantine economy. Separate Byzantine economic regions, if and to whatever extent they existed before the Fourth Crusade, were now once and for all a thing of the past. There was no corner of the empire in which the Byzantines were only among themselves. Latin, Slavic, and Turkish soldiers, merchants, conquistadors, and colonizers established themselves, as the champions and executors of foreign political and economic interests, not only at the margins of the empire but also at its centers. They appropriated the economic resources they found and destroyed established economic ties. However, attempts to form a new large imperial realm or reestablish the old one had little success initially.

[65] Thiriet, *Régestes,* 2:229 (no. 1995); C. Mertzios, Μνημεῖα τῆς μακεδονικῆς ἱστορίας (Thessalonike, 1947), 57.

[66] *Ioannis Anagnostae De extremo Thessalonicensi excidio,* 533.

[67] Sp. Vryonis, Jr., "The Ottoman Conquest of Thessaloniki in 1430," in *Continuity and Change in Late Byzantine and Early Ottoman Society,* ed. A. Bryer and H. Lowry (Birmingham–Washington, D.C., 1986), 318ff.

[68] Cf. H. Lowry, "Changes in Fifteenth-Century Ottoman Peasant Taxation: The Case Study of Radolifo (Radolibos)," in *Continuity and Change* (as above, note 67), 23–35; S. Faroqhi, "The Early History of the Balkan Fairs," *SüdostF* 37 (1978): 50–68.

With Byzantines and Turks as sole rulers on either side of the straits, the region saw a lengthy phase of political pluralism, which favored the development of a new kind of economic regionalism. One result of permanent settlement in this political situation was the formation of specific regional identities and sometimes of regional solidarities that transcended political boundaries. Byzantine economic forces, too, were incorporated into these new identities, as we can see at both the center of the empire and its periphery.

Strictly speaking, the late Byzantine capital itself was already a periphery for long periods. After 1261 the traditional hinterland of Constantinople was only briefly under Byzantine control, and, given the Latin trading bases, that control was far from absolute. The coastal stretches of Asia were almost completely lost to the Turks as early as the first decades of the fourteenth century. From the middle of the fourteenth century, ever larger pieces of the capital's European hinterland were sliced off, and the Byzantines regained small fragments for only brief periods of time. Until the loss of Asia Minor, there is evidence of particularly close trading ties with the city of Nikomedeia, in close proximity to Constantinople, and with Pegai, located a bit farther away on the southern shores of the Sea of Marmara.[69] The island fortress of Chele on the Black Sea coast of Asia Minor may also have been part of this group, though it is possible that its inhabitants used their boats to take on guard duties for the capital rather than running supplies.[70] The much more important Black Sea city of Herakleia, meanwhile, may have shifted its focus increasingly to trading links with the east and north and away from the Byzantine capital to the west even earlier than the second half of the fourteenth century.[71]

From a long-term perspective, the political loss of Asia Minor was by no means tantamount to the severing of Constantinople's economic ties with the coast of Asia Minor. But there were changes in the topography of trade and commerce: while the gulf of Nikomedeia appears to have lost its traditional importance, various other places on the gulf of Chios moved to the fore, especially Trigleia and Mundania, the latter situated on the site of the old coastal town of Apameia. Surely both towns profited, first of all, from being the closest ports to the first Ottoman capital,[72] but the shortest route to Constantinople also ran through them. Trigleia was also important as an export port for products from its hinterland. From the second half of the fourteenth century, Genoese merchants exported alum from the nearby pit of Ulubad (*allume de Lupai*) to the west[73] and wine from the surrounding vineyards to various locations in the Black Sea

[69] Cf. Vryonis, *The Decline,* 11f; E. Fenster, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae* (Munich, 1968), 362; Schreiner, "Ein Prostagma," 203f.

[70] Pachymeres, 1:419, 2:233, 619. For a discussion of this and other possible indications of the importance of this site, see P. Diaconu, *Les Coumans au Bas-Danube aux XIe et XIIe siècles* (Bucharest, 1978), 108ff.

[71] Cf. P. Schreiner, *Texte zur spätbyzantinischen Finanz- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte in Handschriften der Biblioteca Vaticana* (Vatican City, 1991), 33ff.

[72] Cf. Lindgreen, *Clavijos Reise,* 21.

[73] M. Balard, *La Romanie génoise: XIIe–début du XVe siècle,* 2 vols. (Rome, 1978), 2:774.

area, either directly or via Pera.[74] But around 1350 there was also a Greek merchant in Constantinople who offered wine from Trigleia, and he found a Venetian buyer who was staying in Constantinople.[75] Mundania, on the other hand, was merely a fishing port and a way station to Prousa. During the time of Sultan Murad II, the city's landing site was leased to two Turks from merchant circles, who supervised the local commander and merchants and their dealings with arriving shipmasters and the wares they were transporting.[76] Around 1440, Greek and Genoese *barcharuoli* and barge captains, carrying trading goods from the Venetian merchant Badoer and his Latin and Greek partners in Constantinople or loading wares from Prousa destined for him,[77] moored their vessels at this *skala;* Badoer's account book also lists payment of the "chomercio a la Montanea."[78] In 1445, when the captain of a Burgundian crusading fleet seized a barge with wares belonging to Turks and other "infidels," from the Crusaders' point of view meaning Orthodox Christians, outside of this port, the Genoese of Pera, from whom he had a letter of safe-conduct, forced him to disarm his ship and give up the captured barge by declaring that the goods in question were Genoese, and by hinting that they did not want to jeopardize their relations with the Turks.[79] Greeks thus appear not only as transporters but also as owners of goods, participants in the exchange of goods across political boundaries that were now cutting across the greater Constantinopolitan region. When it came to securing this commercial activity, they saw eye to eye with the local Turks and Latins and formed a united front against outside interference in a newly created regional balance of power.

Skoutari, located on the coast of Asia Minor directly across from the Byzantine capital and the main Genoese base in the empire, also seems to have become a solid connecting link between Italian, Byzantine, and Turkish merchants and suppliers from the middle of the fourteenth century on.[80] According to the travel account of the Castilian envoy Clavijo from the beginning of the fifteenth century, Turks daily visited the market in Constantinople and Pera, and those cities "in turn hold a market once a week on Turkish soil, namely in a field by the sea which they call Escotari."[81] The lively commercial dealings between Greeks and Turks at this site were confirmed by the

[74] Ibid., 844f; C. Mango and I. Ševčenko, "Some Churches and Monasteries on the Southern Shore of the Sea of Marmara," *DOP* 27 (1973): 235f; I. Beldiceanu-Steinherr, "La population nonmusulmane de Bithynie," in *The Ottoman Emirate, 1300–1398,* ed. E. Zachariadou (Rethymnon, 1993), 13.

[75] A. E. Laiou, "Un notaire vénitien à Constantinople: Antonio Bresciano et le commerce international en 1350," in *Les Italiens à Byzance,* ed. M. Balard, A. E. Laiou, and C. Otten-Froux (Paris, 1987), 122.

[76] N. Beldiceanu, *Les actes des premiers sultans conservés dans les manuscrits turcs de la Bibliothèque Nationale à Paris* (Paris, 1960), 132 (no. 44).

[77] Badoer, 452, 482.

[78] Ibid., 123.

[79] Paviot, "'Croisade' Bourguignonne," 156, 158f (nos. XIII, XV).

[80] In Byzantine-Turkish relations, Skoutari served initially as the site of political meetings; cf. Kantakouzenos, 3:28 (IV.4).

[81] Lindgreen, *Clavijos Reise,* 38f.

Russian deacon Zosima around 1420.[82] A short time later, Bertrandon de la Brocquière attests to the existence of a landing site where Turkish customs officials collected transit fees and commercial taxes.[83] When this French diplomat crossed from Skoutari to Pera on a Greek ship, he was shocked to discover that the Greek sailors treated him graciously while they were under the impression he was a Turk, but showed open hostility once they had discovered he was a Latin.[84] But in 1437, the Venetian merchant Badoer made several trips to Skoutari to collect for an Italian business partner assets from business deals in Adrianople,[85] and he does not report encountering personal problems of any sort. Greek *barcharuoli* in the waters around Constantinople were surely not generally anti-Latin and pro-Turkish; rather, they were also, and perhaps chiefly, concerned to shield a zone of pragmatic cooperation against grand politics, which time and again jeopardized it and put its very existence in doubt.

A similar development is visible on the European shores in the Thracian hinterland of the Byzantine capital. Here, too, the various Turkish advances to hem in the empire's territory and the repeated, unsuccessful attempts to blockade and capture Constantinople outright alternated with periods of relative political calm and economic exchange. In 1438 the Venetian merchant Badoer organized the purchase of wool in the Thracian hinterland from the city of Rhaidestos, which had already been in Turkish hands for some time. He did so not once but several times, in one case extending his lines as far as the city of Quaranta Chiese (Σαράντα Ἐκκλησίαι), which had been under Turkish rule since about 1368 but still had a largely Christian population.[86] On at least one occasion, his Italian agents and employees put up in the *chonacho* of Rhaidestos, which was inhabited by two Greek buyers. The latter carried out the purchases together with a Greek family (a father and his four sons); on the first occasion the man who transported the goods for them was also a Greek.[87] This situation thus involved purchases carried out on orders from a Venetian merchant residing in Constantinople, by Italians from the *konak* of a Turkish city, with help from Greek buyers and haulers, in a territory already under complete Turkish control, from what were presumably still largely Greek producers. But evidently the Byzantine city of Herakleia/Perinthos also served as a starting point or way station for these kinds of commercial and purchasing activities by Venetians and Genoese, and we also hear of the small Thracian town of Tzouroullos (Çorlu) in the Byzantine-Turkish border region.[88]

[82] G. P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington, D.C., 1984), 190–91.

[83] Bertrandon de la Brocquière, *Le voyage d'Outremer,* ed. C. Schefer (Paris, 1892), 140.

[84] Ibid., 148f.

[85] Badoer, 126.

[86] Cf. P. Soustal, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini,* vol. 6, *Thrakien* (Vienna, 1991), 420f.

[87] Badoer, 396, 628.

[88] This is based on the activities of the Genoese Raffaele Castiglione, a correspondent of Cyriacus of Ancona: W. Bodnar and C. Mitchell, *Cyriacus of Ancona's Journeys in the Propontis* (Philadelphia, 1976), 21ff. On Castiglione, see also F. Babinger, *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen zur Geschichte Südosteuropas und der Levante,* 2 vols. (Munich, 1962–66), 1:131f.

Orders for these kinds of purchases of foodstuffs and raw materials in the larger region of Constantinople came not only from Latins, but also from Byzantines and even from the Byzantine emperor himself. In 1390 the emperor provided a ship to Jane de Draperiis, a Genoese from Pera, so he could load 1,000 modioi of grain for a Venetian in the city of Panidos (at times probably already under Turkish control) and at other Greek and Turkish landing sites, as far away as Abydos, "in quibus solita sunt navigia honerari."[89] Purchases were also carried out around 1440 by the imperial city governor Asanes, who bought grain in Panidos (once again in Turkish hands) and had it taken to Constantinople on a Byzantine or Latin ship. As a precaution he took out insurance on the shipment from a Venetian, but the insurer himself took the precaution of exempting possible threats from the Turks.[90]

The leaseholders of the landing sites mentioned by the emperor, even in the Turkish section of the coast, were occasionally Greek *syntrophiai* or commercial associations with Greek participation, as we know from the example of the judge Isidore. In 1453 Isidore and his partners obtained, for the highest bid, among other things the *skala* of Koila/Cilla in the Dardanelles. At Koila he had to hassle with the *kapitanios* and the *skaliatoroi,* who were demanding food supplies from his agents and were harassing the *sandalia* of the *stenitai,* the sailors of the straits, which, according to Isidore's agents, had never happened before.[91] This complaint, along with the restrictions on an insurance guarantee for a Byzantine grain shipment some ten years earlier, indicates the complex problems that existed during the last phase of Byzantium's presence in this economic region, and the many difficulties confronting the last Byzantine merchants and entrepreneurs trying to live and survive in this sphere. The Byzantine capital and the Byzantine economic agents active in the city and its environs did not play the most important role in this regional economic activity. Some things bypassed Constantinople, some remained closed to Byzantine merchants. But it is equally clear that Constantinople continued to be a significant economic force that radiated its influence on the now politically thoroughly transformed area between the two straits, and which also received new economic impulses across the new borders, especially from trade. The surprisingly long survival of Constantinople as a Byzantine city may not have been caused by these impulses, but it was certainly aided by them.

While the late Byzantine capital was pushed into a marginal position early on, the Byzantine province of Morea rose notably in importance and moved into much more central positions than before in the political and economic topography of the empire. The leading commercial forces in the Peloponnese were initially the merchants of Monemvasia; their activities, however, were not merely regional but oriented chiefly toward the entire Romania. This well-protected trading city on the southeastern coast was also traditionally considered the port of the despot's residence of Mistra,[92] which

[89] Balard, *La Romanie génoise,* 2:752 n. 84.
[90] Badoer, 499.
[91] J. Darrouzès, "Lettres de 1453," *REB* 52 (1964): 87ff (letter 4).
[92] Cf. E. Kislinger, "Die Sizilienfahrt des Isidoros von Kiev (1429)," Δίπτυχα 6 (1994–95): 64f.

was more focused on agriculture and the interior and whose merchants were completely unknown outside the Peloponnese. But already in the early fourteenth century, the two Venetian fleet bases on the southern coast of the peninsula, Korone and Modon, replaced Monemvasia as the most important gateways of the Byzantine interior to the sea. Over time, Korone and Modon also assumed a key economic position for the inhabitants of the Byzantine administrative center in the Peloponnese. The most important products of the peninsula were exported through these two cities: grain, meat, (olive) oil, cotton, and especially raw silk[93] as well as some quantity of artisanal products, such as silk cloth, "panni di seta di Morea."[94] The goods took a number of routes. The most important one went via the port of Kalamata and the Langada pass, though perhaps there was also a route across the Mani from Oitylon to Karyoupolis and Gytheion, and from there to Mistra.[95] Goods were supplied chiefly by landowners of the Morea and by the despots of the imperial house of the Palaiologoi.[96] But professional merchants from Mistra and other places of the despotate were also involved, and the Venetians in this economic sphere took a greater interest in the presence of foreign merchants at their markets than in the presence of their merchants at foreign markets.[97] Already in the early fourteenth century, high-ranking Byzantine officials did financial business with merchants and bankers in Korone and Modon who were of Greek background and had Venetian citizenship.[98] In the early fifteenth century, notables from the same circles deposited their valuables and funds in banks: after 1418, at the latest, the *zentillomo* (Michael or Paul) Sophianos did so,[99] in 1429 the *megasdux* and former *protostrator* Manuel Phrangopoulos,[100] and after 1437/38 the *protostrator* George Eudaimonoioannes, son of the widely traveled diplomat Nicholas Eudaimonoioannes from Mistra, who had deposited his valuables with the bank of one Luca di Verona.[101]

It is unclear whether these deposits also formed the basis for mercantile and finan-

[93] I. P. Medvedev, *Mistra* (Leningrad, 1973), 87ff.

[94] *Acta et diplomata Ragusina,* ed. J. Radonić, 2 vols. (Belgrade, 1934–35), 1:836 (no. 398). On the regional products of Morea and the close ties of its economy to the Venetian economic system, see Laiou, "The Agrarian Economy," 322ff.

[95] Cyriacus of Ancona used this route in 1437; cf. D. M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor* (Cambridge, 1992), 34.

[96] N. Jorga, "Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des Croisades au XVe siècle (fin)," *ROL* 8 (1900–1901): 69; Thiriet, *Régestes,* 3:160 (no. 2835).

[97] Cf. Matschke, *Die Schlacht bei Ankara,* 228f.

[98] The loan that Andronikos Asanes took out prior to 1332 (or 1324) from a certain Simonis Cormulissi through his agent George Magulas (Thomas and Predelli, *Diplomatarium,* 1:202, 231) seems to have been made while he was governor of the Byzantine Peloponnese; although Cormulissi/Kurmulises was a Venetian subject, he owned property in Korone or Modon (cf. G. Giomo, "Registro dei Misti del Senato della Republica Veneta," *Archivio Veneto* 18.1 [1879]: 107), and his family of Greek background is attested in the Venetian territory for several more generations and crossed in a variety of ways the paths of Byzantine lords and subjects in the Peloponnese.

[99] Sathas, *Documents inédits,* 3:178 (no. 731).

[100] Ibid., 350f (no. 937); cf. *PLP* 12:151f (no. 30139).

[101] N. Jorga, "Notes," *ROL* 6 (1898): 390f; Thiriet, *Régestes,* 3:160 (no. 2835).

cial business by the aristocracy.[102] We do know that Byzantine merchants from Mistra were, from the early fifteenth century on, included in normal credit transactions and advance purchases with Venetian partners. The Byzantine authorities disapproved of these practices, which they could not control and considered immoral, and demanded a return to the commercial practices from the time of the first despots of the Morea. However, they were told that it was in the very nature of money to be loaned out for commercial activities.[103]

The diversified mercantile and economic links between the center of the Byzantine Peloponnese and the most important Venetian colonies on the peninsula were so stable that they weathered and outlasted also the more or less continuous political strain on Byzantine-Venetian relations in the south of the empire. Perhaps the city of Monemvasia, more strongly tied to the despotate by a new grant of privileges at the end of the fourteenth century, and the cities of Clarenza and Patras, absorbed into the Byzantine sphere by military action in the early fifteenth century, acquired greater significance for the internal trade of this economic region and brought Mistra more independence and greater commercial diversity. Still, their strong ties to Korone and Modon were preserved and probably even grew in importance. In any case, it appears that various entrepreneurs who were later prominent in the capital during the transition to Turkish rule took their first steps in the zone of contact between the Venetian colonies and the Byzantine despots' residence.[104] Perhaps the region in and around Mistra witnessed the incorporation of peasant elements into mercantile activities, similar to the process one can observe already since the fourteenth century in the district of Korone and Modon.[105]

Byzantine merchants, suppliers, and buyers were also involved in the creation of other economic regions in the empire. Though these processes did not originate primarily with the Byzantines and the concrete form they took was not influenced chiefly by them, they were significant for the development of late Byzantine trade and for late Byzantine merchants. The native economic elements were forced into a mobility that was for them quite novel and unaccustomed. To them, strange lands sometimes began right outside their own door, and competition already took place on the smallest scale. At the same time, the proximity of the competition tended to reveal the secrets of its success, and it promoted the emergence of shared norms and the pursuit of common interests. The economic regions, those described in detail and those I have only mentioned in passing, thus became the setting in which changed forms of Byzantine trade and new kinds of Byzantine merchants emerged and experimented. Though the re-

[102] In 1419, Nicholas Eudaimonoioannes appears as an importer of wood from Crete for the construction of a church (in Mistra?): Thiriet, *Régestes,* 2:174 (no. 1734). However, we have no idea if he also exported goods and, if so, what.

[103] Sathas, *Documents inédits,* 3:367 (no. 953).

[104] Cf. K.-P. Matschke, "Zum Anteil der Byzantiner an der Bergbauentwicklung und an den Bergbauerträgen Südosteuropas im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert," *BZ* 84/85 (1991–92): 67ff.

[105] Cf. C. Hodgetts, "Venetian Officials and Greek Peasantry in the Fourteenth Century," in *Kathegetria: Essays Presented to Joan Hussey for Her 80th Birthday* (Camberley, 1988), 488f.

sults of this learning process varied and instances of success were anything but numerous, they cannot be disregarded.

Late Byzantine Long-Distance Trade and Its Place in the Late Medieval Mediterranean Trade System

Late Byzantine long-distance trade was more strongly influenced than any other form of commercial activity by foreign economic powers and overarching economic developments. The Fourth Crusade had displaced Byzantine long-distance traders from the center of the empire to the periphery and from the coast to the interior. The reconquest of Constantinople in 1261 changed this ominous situation only in part, since it reduced only the political and not the economic pressure of the West on Byzantium. Moreover, the collapse of the crusading states in the Near East shortly thereafter caused the northern Italian seafaring republics of Venice and Genoa to focus even more strongly than before on the empire, trying to make this region the center of further economic expansion and the chief connecting link between the western and eastern termini of their intercontinental trading network. The Genoese used the treaty of Nymphaion to engage in an unprecedented sweep through the northern Romania and secured, in a few short decades, commercial dominance in the entire Black Sea region. The Venetians, having temporarily become *personae non gratae* in Constantinople, were able to keep and even tighten their grip on the economic control of the southern part of the Romania by undertaking a long-term effort to expand and strengthen their unsinkable flagship, Crete. The negative repercussions for Byzantine long-distance traders were obvious. From the end of the thirteenth century, their forces, already fractured by the separation of Trebizond from Constantinople, were systematically pushed out of Black Sea shipping and trade by the Genoese, their footholds in the Crimea and the Danube delta were decimated, and their commercial activities were strictly regulated. Eventually this policy culminated in the attempt by the Genoese in the mid-fourteenth century to gain complete control over access to the Black Sea by closing off the Bosphoros at the fortress of Hieron. Byzantine resistance to the closing of important seaborne trading routes and the obstruction of trading voyages was presumably stronger and more effective in the Aegean region, though the progressive loss of Byzantine naval bases in and around Rhodes, from Anaia to Ephesos, was bound to have lasting negative repercussions. Moreover, the seizure of Byzantine merchants and their wares by Venetian authorities in Cretan ports, which amounted to a de facto temporary closure of these ports to Byzantine ships, further weakened the already fragile Byzantine commercial ties to the Near East, Egypt, and Cyprus. Beginning in the fourteenth century, regional economic zones in which Byzantine commercial interests were initially not involved at all, or only marginally so, developed in both the central and eastern Black Sea region and the southern Aegean.

Even during this period the Byzantines were not completely cut off from the trading routes in the eastern Mediterranean or confined to small economic areas isolated from each other. For example, shortly after 1300, the Genoese entrepreneur Rainerio Bocca-

negra used his ship to transport a number of different Byzantine merchants and their wares from Alexandria to Pera/Constantinople, and the only reason he got into a quarrel with them was because they were unwilling or unable to pay the freight charges of 500 hyperpyra. In response, the captain, "sic ut mos est," confiscated as many wares for selling as were needed to pay for the *naulum.*[106] In 1310 the *dux* of Crete received the imperial envoy John Agapetos, who not only took care of official matters but evidently also engaged in private business activities, for which he used a *salvum conductum,* which was even to be renewed on orders from the central Venetian authorities.[107] The first more detailed report of commercial or financial activities by Byzantine subjects from the capital of Constantinople dates only from the early 1340s,[108] but the aristocratic family (*archontes*) of the Xanthopoulos-Sideriotes was surely not the first.[109] Under the first Palaiologan emperors, Monemvasiot trading vessels, warships, and privateer ships with Monemvasiot captains at the helm and with Monemvasiot merchants and merchandise are attested throughout the entire eastern Mediterranean region, in the Venetian ports of Crete, in Korone, Modon, and Nauplion in the Peloponnese, in the Cyclades, in the waters around Negroponte, at the naval base of Anaia, and in the waters of Acre. As early as around 1290, they also appear as buyers in Kaffa, a Genoese center in the Crimea, where they even leased a ship for a trading journey to Kuban, Batumi, and Trebizond. They had military and diplomatic contacts with Venetians, Genoese, and Catalans, but they also concluded commercial deals with the Italians, transported wares of merchants from the Italian colonies and their mother cities, sailed as traders on Venetian ships, rented Genoese ships together with Greek subjects of the Venetians, and leased ships to the Catalans. Thus they not only found access to various newly emerging trade regions, but were economically, and especially commercially, active in the entire Romania and even beyond its borders.[110] Native ships with native merchants and a variety of native products are attested between Thessalonike and Constantinople and between various Black Sea ports, independent of the Italians and with no connections to them. Their presence reveals that one cannot speak of a true monopoly of Genoese and Venetians on either side of the straits.[111]

Nevertheless, after 1350, there were certain changes in the relationship between Byzantine and Italian merchants in the Romania, and these changes were, at least in

[106] Bertolotto, "Nuova serie," 521; on Boccanegra, see Balard, *La Romanie génoise,* 2:756.

[107] F. Thiriet, *Délibérations des assemblées vénitiennes concernant la Romanie,* 2 vols. (Paris–The Hague, 1966–71), 1:135 (no. 216). He could be the priest of the same name who undertook a journey by ship around 1316; *Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel,* ed. H. Hunger et al., 2 vols (Vienna, 1981–95), 1:320 (no. 47), cf. *PLP* 1: 10 (no. 121).

[108] K.-P. Matschke, "Byzantinische Politiker und byzantinische Kaufleute im Ringen um die Beteiligung am Schwarzmeerhandel in der Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts," *Mitteilungen des Bulgarischen Forschungsinstituts in Österreich* 2.6 (1984): 76ff.

[109] Cf. A. E. Laiou, "Byzantium and the Black Sea, 13th–15th Centuries: Trade and the Native Populations of the Black Sea Area," in *Bulgaria Pontica II* (Sofia, 1988), 174.

[110] On these activities, see H. A. Kalligas, *Byzantine Monemvasia: The Sources* (Monemvasia, 1990), passim.

[111] Cf. G. Makris, *Studien zur spätbyzantinischen Schiffahrt* (Genoa, 1988), 225ff; Laiou, "Byzantium and the Black Sea," 168ff.

part, the result of changes on the larger political stage. The final occupation of the entire northwestern coastal zone of Asia Minor by the Turks and their first successful advances across the straits to Europe quickly dashed western commercial dreams of a stable and effective control of the Dardanelles and the Bosphoros. Over the long term, the de facto end of the *Pax Mongolica* in Central Asia and the political instability within the successor states to the Golden Horde, a result of the rivalry among them, reduced the significance of the Black Sea region as the connecting link of intercontinental commercial expansion by the Italians and returned the Levantine region of the Mediterranean to greater prominence. As already noted, the regionalization of western trade in the Romania encouraged a gradual dismantling of the barriers between native and foreign merchants, promoted the gradual abandonment of rigid restrictions on Byzantine commercial activity, and enabled Byzantine merchants to emerge slowly from voluntary and enforced isolation and move more resolutely out of traditional and newly created niches.

This change is manifested for the first time in the business contracts drafted by the Genoese notary Antonio di Ponzò during his sojourn in the Genoese trading base of Kilia in the Danube delta in 1360/61. They reveal a world of trade that was very tightly interwoven and functioned in very complex ways. This world was home not only to Genoese and other western merchants, but also to Armenians, "Saracens," and especially Greeks. A significant number of the latter still came from the Byzantine Empire, chiefly from Constantinople, but also from Ainos and Adrianople, cities soon lost to the Latins and Turks, and from Mesembria, which would soon return to the fold of the empire.

Of the fifty-seven ships listed in the Ponzò registers, seventeen (i.e., almost a third) belonged wholly or at least in part to Greek shipowners and patrons.[112] Among them were Theodore Manasi (Manasses) and Tryphon Sinetos (Sinaites?) with his *naukleros* and ship clerk who also hailed from Constantinople.[113] There was even a monk by the name of Josaphat Tovassilico (Basilikos) from the capital's Athanasios monastery, behind whom was perhaps the Xerolophos monastery itself as the owner of the ship.[114] The shipowner Theodore Piro (Pyrrhos) from Constantinople and his partner Ianinos, who was from Trebizond but lived in Constantinople, took out a loan from a certain Ianinus Surianus, also a resident of Constantinople.[115] Surianus may be identical with a certain Canninus, "filius quondam Georgii Suriani," attested in Dubrovnik in 1354 as the seller of a small ship. He lived in the capital "ad logeram Venetiarum,"[116] which means he might have been a Levantine protégé of the Venetians and as such loaded one of his ships in 1354 with supplies for Emperor John Kantakouzenos. However,

[112] M. Balard, "L'activité économique des ports du Bas-Danube au XIVe siècle," *TM* 8 (1981): 40.

[113] M. Balard, *Gênes et l'outre-mer,* vol. 2, *Actes de Kilia du notaire Antonio di Ponzò, 1360* (Paris, 1980), 150 (no. 89).

[114] G. Pistarino, *Notai genovesi in Oltremare: Atti rogati a Chilia di Antonio di Ponzò, 1360–61* (Genoa, 1971), nos. 72, 80, 86; cf. Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires,* 75; Makris, *Studien,* 268f.

[115] Balard, *Gênes et l'outre-mer,* 2:138f, 141f (nos. 80, 82).

[116] B. Krekić, *Dubrovnik (Raguse) et le Levant du Moyen Age* (Paris–The Hague, 1961), 197 (no. 204).

shortly after setting sail he was intercepted by Genoese ships and plundered because Venetian trading goods were found aboard.[117] The Greek shipowner Costanzo Mamali (Mamalis/es) was in the Danube delta on at least two occasions between September 1360 and April 1361: in the fall he concluded a contract for the advance purchase of grain, which, according to the terms of the contract, had to be delivered by the following 15 April in Kilia; at the end of April 1361, he took out a loan from two Greeks through a Genoese agent to pay for grain that was stored in a local granary and was to be taken to Constantinople by boat.[118] Perhaps it was in addition to the grain already ordered half a year earlier, but perhaps it was unrelated to that earlier transaction.

It appears that Theodore Agalo (Agallon) from Constantinople was not only interested in buying goods in Kilia, but had himself transported Greek wine from the south to the mouth of the Danube. The wine was waiting to be sold in a local warehouse, and in the meantime Agalo used it as security for a loan to finance the return cargo.[119] The two Greek investors Jane Francopulo (Phrangopulos) and Jane Fassilico (Basilikos) from Adrianople acted only in tandem, which means their association was probably based on a *syntrophia*. They had nearly 2,000 hyperpyra at their disposal, which they loaned out in various amounts primarily to Greek merchants and captains, and collected with profits in Constantinople or Pera.[120] The Greeks Michael Monenos and Leo Roy (Ῥαής, Ῥάϊος?) from Constantinople are mentioned in the Ponzò registers only because they used a Genoese procurator to collect from a debtor who was staying in Kilia, evidently also a Genoese.[121]

The named and unnamed Greeks showed that they were very familiar with the business practices in the Black Sea colony. They were completely integrated into the prevailing practices, concluded contracts of advance purchase, used Latin procurators, and formed joint associations with them. Not all of them still needed interpreters in their business negotiations, and at least some of them were professional seamen and merchants. One of their ships sailed under the Genoese flag on its return trip to Constantinople,[122] because it was safer that way and pragmatism stood above politics.

As of now there is no Byzantine primary source that offers a direct look at this surprising development from a Byzantine perspective and that would allow us to verify the degree of commercial involvement reflected especially in the Ponzò registers. A weak, but not entirely useless, substitute are the records of the patriarchal court of Constantinople. At the turn of the fifteenth century, in a period of severe crisis for the power of the Byzantine state and its legal authority, Byzantine business circles appealed to the court to settle internal disputes, and its decisions therefore provide some insight into normal business and commercial life. What we see is that even during a period when they were completely encircled by the Turks and cut off from the outside world,

[117] *Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum Meridionalium* (Zagreb, 1872), 3:265f (no. 4009).
[118] Balard, *Gênes et l'outre-mer,* 2:128f (nos. 74, 75); Pistarino, *Notai genovesi,* 79ff (nos. 47, 48).
[119] Pistarino, *Notai genovesi,* 170f (no. 94).
[120] Ibid., 79ff (nos. 47, 48, 58, 59, 66, 67, 71, 83, 89, 90); cf. Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires,* 65f.
[121] Pistarino, *Notai genovesi,* 129 (no. 73).
[122] Balard, *Gênes et l'outre-mer,* 2:69 (no. 30).

late Byzantine businessmen of Constantinople developed notable activities and sought commercial contacts in various directions and with various partners.[123]

The complaint of Andreas Argyropoulos against Theodore Mamalis points to continuing trade links of Byzantine commercial circles to the lower Danube region. Mamalis had sold squirrel furs from Wallachia on his own account for 587 hyperpyra. Evidently he was not entitled to do so, since the furs had been warehoused with the defendant's brother, now deceased, as a deposit from the plaintiff. The basis of the disagreement was a *syntrophia,* the concrete nature of which Argyropoulos was unable to prove to the court since the witnesses to a contract with Mamalis were not in Constantinople and could not be summoned because the city was under siege.[124] The activities of the Argyropoulos family on the lower Danube around the turn of the century are also attested in other sources.[125] If there is a connection between the Mamales brothers and Mamalis, who appears in the Ponzò registers in 1361, one traditional avenue of commercial activity in late Byzantium would be substantiated also in terms of the people involved.

Clearer still are the commercial feelers that were extended into the southern Black Sea region during the siege of Constantinople, which lasted several years. They came specifically from the Goudeles family; around the turn of the century, several of its members were sailing to the cities of Sinope, Amisos, and even to Trebizond and beyond, with trading goods and assistants. They were able to do this, however, thanks only to a *syntrophia* and other business arrangements with the Greek Koreses family from the island of Chios, which by this time had also gained a foothold in the Genoese suburb of Pera. The Koreses channeled the commercial shipments of their business partners through this freely accessible port, something the latter could not do themselves because of certain disagreements with the authorities in Pera.[126] Links to the Crimea are documented in the patriarchal register only in the person of Constantine Pegonites, who returned penniless to the besieged capital from a trip to Symbolon.[127] In reality, trade relations with the Crimea were much livelier around 1400, and, as other sources attest, they encompassed above all its main city of Kaffa.[128] There even seem to have been certain lines of commerce that reached the Rus during those years, but at this point we are unable to trace them in any detail.[129]

[123] Cf. D. Bernicolas-Hatzopoulos, "The First Siege of Constantinople by the Ottomans (1394–1402) and Its Repercussions on the Civilian Population of the City," *ByzSt* 10 (1983): 39–40; N. Necipoğlu, "Economic Conditions in Constantinople during the Siege of Bayezid I (1394–1402)," in *Constantinople and Its Hinterland* (as above, note 39), 157–67.

[124] MM 2:374f.

[125] Cf. K.-P. Matschke, "Bemerkungen zu den sozialen Trägern des spätbyzantinischen Seehandels," *Byzantinobulgarica* 7 (1981): 256.

[126] MM 2:546–50.

[127] MM 2:386; cf. *PLP* 10:14f (no. 23154).

[128] Cf. P. Schreiner, "Bizantini e Genovesi a Caffa: Osservazioni a proposito di un documento latino in un manoscritto greco," *Mitteilungen des Bulgarischen Forschungsinstituts in Österreich* 2.6 (1984): 97–100; Balard, *La Romanie génoise,* 1:338, 398.

[129] Cf. MM 2:385.

What we can trace much more concretely are Byzantine trading links from Constantinople "down the sea" to the Genoese colony of Chios. In 1401 a certain Euphemianos and John Sophianos signed a contract with Constantine Angelos, who agreed to go to Chios on the ship of the Temunelia with money or goods from his partners. The ship probably belonged to Nicolò de Moneglia, who, along with various other Genoese captains, was involved in the lucrative grain deals that the *massarii* of Pera, Ettore Fieschi and Ottobuono Guistiniani, had concluded with the Byzantine emperor during the siege of his capital.[130] Since Angelos had not used this ship, however, and had been shipwrecked sailing with someone else, Euphemianos went to court to demand the return of his money, though without success. Sophianos, meanwhile, had withdrawn his money from the joint enterprise just in time.[131]

Someone who was successfully involved in the dubious grain dealings was John Gudeles, who already had business connections with the Koreses of Chios and who, like de Moneglia, now teamed up with the financial officials in Pera to bring grain from Chios to Constantinople. He probably even took some of it on a ship with a double deck that he owned together with a Genoese from the Spinola family. In Constantinople he then sold the grain at the inflated price of 31 hyperpyra per modios.[132] While the siege of the capital brought impoverishment and hunger to the mass of its inhabitants, and for some even death, a small group of merchants, ship captains, and colonial officials, which also included some Greeks, grew rich by showing great initiative and few scruples. What was true for these grain dealers was also true for a few late Byzantine merchants and bankers who found access to the international financial consortium that, after 1396, worked to ransom the noble prisoners of Nikopolis from Turkish captivity.[133] Once again the Byzantines were junior partners of the Italian entrepreneurs, but the scale of their commercial and financial activities had evidently expanded considerably compared to what it had been in the 1360s.

The account book of the Venetian Giacomo Badoer, compiled in Constantinople between 1436 and 1440, reveals that the merchant who stayed put in one place and directed his wares and money into various enterprises played a notable role in late Byzantine economic life alongside the merchant who traveled and took risks. Badoer's Byzantine business partners had particularly strong ties to the Venetian and Greek commercial circles on the island of Crete, but the contacts of some Byzantine merchants and financiers extended even farther than that. A *chir* Todaro Ralli had solid commercial contacts with Sicily.[134] He may have been identical with the envoy Theodore Rales, sent by the emperor to seek foreign aid. He and his father Constantine had stopped off at the royal courts of France and Aragon during the first decades of

[130] Balard, *La Romanie génoise,* 1:393; 2:732, 736, 740, 783.

[131] MM 2:560f.

[132] Cf. Matschke, *Die Schlacht bei Ankara,* 131.

[133] Ibid., 179f. K.-P. Matschke, "The Notaras Family and Its Italian Connections," *DOP* 49 (1995): 63.

[134] Badoer, 262f; cf. S. Fassoulakis, *The Byzantine Family of Raoul-Ral(l)es* (Athens, 1973), 67 (no. 54).

the fifteenth century.[135] A *miser* Manoli Jagari, who probably accompanied Emperor John VIII on his journey to Venice as early as 1424 and had acted as a witness for a loan,[136] was, according to the Badoer accounts, involved in an exchange transaction between Constantinople and Venice.[137] A puzzling case is a certain Chogia Ise. Despite being called "turcho," he seems to have come from a Byzantine aristocratic family that, in the early fourteenth century for reasons not entirely clear, relocated to Kaffa and Surgat on the Crimea. There the family was strongly orientalized and became quite wealthy, eventually returning to Constantinople shortly before the end of the empire.[138]

It is not only the case of Chogia Ise that shows that the Byzantine capital was, right to the end, an attractive place for wide-ranging business activity, and that Byzantine social circles even in the last days were by no means left to their own devices. They were not simply decimated by streams of emigrants to the Latin colonies and the Latin West; rather, they were also continually reinforced, materially and in terms of personnel, by immigration from every part of the Romania.

Merchants from other late Byzantine cities could hardly compete with the range and volume of Constantinople's commerce, but no small number of them also extended their reach beyond the immediate confines of their native towns. Of course that applies especially to Thessalonike. Ship captains and merchants from the empire's second largest city are attested in the trade region of Crete and the Peloponnese around the middle of the fourteenth century and during the period of Venetian rule between 1423 and 1430.[139] There is good evidence to suggest that merchants from Thessalonike were active in the first half of the fourteenth century also in western Asia Minor, in the area of Chios, Phokaia, and all the way to Philadelphia.[140] Regular sea traffic existed between Thessalonike and Constantinople during long stretches of the late Byzantine period, no small part of which was commercial traffic.[141] It is now also becoming clearer that Thessalonikan trading interests also extended into the Black Sea region. In 1350 we hear of a certain Michael Sofachi (?) (Sofakes?) from the Macedonian metropolis, who resided in Constantinople and in Tana took on a load of lard that a Venetian businessman had ordered from a local butcher.[142] This is the same period when the two Agapetos brothers, along with other merchants from the Byzantine capital, were regularly active at the mouth of the Don.[143] Sofachi may have belonged to the group

[135] A. Rubió i Lluch, *Diplomatari de l'Orient Català, 1301–1409* (Barcelona, 1947), 702ff; *Ordonnances des rois de France* (Paris, 1755), 9:148f.

[136] N. Jorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XVe siècle,* 2 vols. (Paris, 1899), 1:354.

[137] Badoer, 784.

[138] Ibid., 382; cf. K.-P. Matschke, "Das Chogia-Ise Puzzle," paper presented at the symposium "Bulgarica Pontica Medii Aevi VI," Nessebar, 1995.

[139] C. Gasparis, "Ἡ ναυτιλιακή κίνηση ἀπό τήν Κρήτη πρός τήν Πελοπόννησο κατά τόν 14ο αἰώνα," Τὰ Ἱστορικά 9 (1988): 300; Thiriet, *Délibérations,* 2:156 (no. 1299).

[140] Cf. Kantakouzenos, 2:384 (III.63).

[141] However, the only ship captain known to us by name who plied the route with trading goods dates only from the time when Thessalonike was already Turkish: Badoer, 650, 653.

[142] Laiou, "Un notaire vénitien," 103.

[143] MM 2:363ff (no. 162), and 358f; cf. Matschke, "Byzantinische Politiker," 83f.

of Byzantine merchants who tried to establish independent economic footholds in the northern region of the Black Sea around the middle of the century. They had some success, despite coercive measures on the part of the Genoese, which culminated in the prohibition against entering the Sea of Azov.[144]

Around 1420, a resident of Thessalonike, *kyr* Michael (Metriotes), journeyed to Tana,[145] most likely for business reasons. He may have taken the trip without stopping at a way station or landing site in Constantinople, possibly even aboard one of the Venetian convoys that occasionally stopped over in Thessalonike on their regular trips to the Black Sea around this time.[146] The merchants of Thessalonike did not look only toward the south and east, but also toward the north and west. In the year 1424, Theodore Catharo, a "civis civitatis Salonichi," was staying in the trading center of Dubrovnik on the Adriatic Sea as an agent of one Johanne Russotas, also from Thessalonike, in order to pursue a legal quarrel with the local Radosalić family. He declared on this occasion that he had, some time before in Venice, handed over goods and cash of considerable value to one member of this family.[147] The same Katharos must also have been active on business in the Serbian mountain town of Novo Brdo, where his employer Russotas had extensive economic interests in mining and held important functions in the mining administration.[148]

The activities of late Byzantine merchants from the other cities of the empire are much more poorly documented. Most of the merchants and captains from Ainos known to us by name date from the period when the city was already in the hands of the Genoese Gattilusi family,[149] though it is likely that their predecessors had commercial ties to Thessalonike, Constantinople, Crete, and to other regions of the Romania. Only faint traces are discernible of the commercial contacts of the inland city of Philadelphia, which was surrounded and cut off by the Turks from the early fourteenth century. To reach the Aegean, travelers from Philadelphia had to go to Sardis and from there either to Phokaia via Magnesia or to Smyrna via Nymphaion. Shortly after 1300, George Zacharias, who was surely a merchant, continued his journey from Smyrna via Mytilene (on Lesbos) to Thessalonike.[150] A short time later, merchants from Philadelphia, whose destination is unknown to us, put up in a hostel *(xenodocheion)* in Selymbria.[151] On a visit to the capital in 1320, Metropolitan Theoleptos of Philadelphia spoke

[144] E. Ricotti, *Liber Iurium Reipublicae genuensis,* 2 vols. (Turin, 1854–57), 2:603 (no. 203).

[145] Kugeas, "Notizbuch," 153; cf. Laiou, "Byzantium and the Black Sea," 179.

[146] Cf. Jorga, *Notes et extraits,* 2:437.

[147] Krekić, *Dubrovnik,* 275ff.

[148] Cf. Matschke, "Zum Anteil," 60f.

[149] Cf. G. T. Dennis, "Three Reports from Crete on the Situation in Romania, 1401–1402," *StVen* 12 (1970): 246ff; Badoer, 416; cf. F. Thiriet, *Duca di Candia: Ducali e lettere ricevute* (Venice, 1978), 62f; cf. the information in Balard, *Gênes et l'outre-mer,* 2:183f, 186f (nos. 115, 117).

[150] P. Schreiner, "Eine venezianische Kolonie in Philadelpheia (Lydien)," *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 57 (1977): 343.

[151] H. Ahrweiler, "Le récit du voyage d'Oinaiôtes de Constantinople à Ganos," in *Geschichte und Kultur,* ed. Seibt (as above, note 9), 23ff.

of many people from his city who traveled to Constantinople despite the great dangers along the way.[152] It is quite possible that among them were the merchants whom the writer George Oinaiotes encountered only a day's journey from the capital.

The commercial contacts of Monemvasia declined noticeably after the mid-fourteenth century, but that did not mean that the commercial activities of its residents waned. For reasons that are not entirely clear, various families of entrepreneurs or their highly energetic agents seem to have gradually left the city from the mid-fourteenth century in search of new fields of commercial and political activity in Venetian colonies and especially in the Byzantine capital. Hardly any traces at all can be found of the commercial activities of the inhabitants of Ioannina. In 1319 they had received a comprehensive trading privilege for the entire empire, much like that given to the Monemvasiots. However, they hardly seem to have taken advantage of their commercial advantages, since their economic interests were entirely directed toward the western coast of the Adriatic.[153]

Toward the end of the thirteenth century, even before the complete collapse of the Crusader states, the new Palaiologan emperors and Mamluk rulers negotiated new treaties for their traditional commercial relations.[154] During the century that followed, as well, these relations were never completely severed.[155] In fact, in the 1380s, the Byzantine government even appears to have attempted to improve the Byzantine terms of trade in the markets of Egypt and Syria. In 1383 a delegation from Emperor John V petitioned Sultan Barquq for permission to establish their own consulate in Alexandria and for the concession of the same trading privileges that the "Franks" enjoyed in that Egyptian port city.[156] There are some faint indications that the Byzantines got more than merely the sultan's formal assent. For instance, a Greek vice-consul of the Venetians is attested in the port city of Damietta in the early fifteenth century, and there are speculations that this might have been an honorary consul,[157] in which case it is

[152] A. C. Hero, "The Unpublished Letters of Theoleptos, Metropolitan of Philadelphia (1283–1322)," *Journal of Modern Hellenism* 3 (1986): 24.

[153] Trading links existed, especially to Venice and Dubrovnik; the commercial goods were chiefly grain: Thiriet, *Régestes,* 3:115 (no. 2659); Krekić, *Dubrovnik,* 275, 305f (nos. 683, 652). Two merchants from the city from around 1330 are known by name: Thomas and Predelli, *Diplomatarium,* 1:232f (no. 118), though we do not know anything about trading activity outside their own city, including the Adriatic region.

[154] Cf. M. Canard, "Un traité entre Byzance et l'Egypte au XIIIe siècle et les relations de Michel Paléologue avec les sultans mamluks Baibars et Qala'un," in *Mélanges Gaudefroy Demombynes* (Cairo, 1937), 197–224.

[155] Cf. Theodore Metochites, *vita* of St. Michael, *AASS,* Nov. 4:669–78; A. E. Laiou, "The Greek Merchant of the Palaeologan Period: A Collective Portrait," Πρακτικὰ τῆς Ἀκαδεμίας Ἀθηνῶν 57 (1982): 102; P. Schreiner, "Byzanz und die Mamluken in der 2. Hälfte des 14. Jh.," *Der Islam* 56 (1979): 296–304; W. Krebs, "Innen- und Außenpolitik Ägyptens, 741–784/1341–1382" (dissertation, University of Hamburg, 1980).

[156] S. Y. Labib, *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens im Spätmittelalter, 1171–1517* (Wiesbaden, 1965), 343; E. Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J., 1983), 105.

[157] Ibid., 555.

possible that his chief task was to represent Byzantine interests. In 1411 Emperor Manuel II sent letters and presents to Sultan Farağ in an effort to continue the good relations between the two states. The man who delivered them was the Greek merchant Surmuš ar-Rumi, who (regularly?) traveled on business between Egypt and Byzantium,[158] and whose Greek name could have been Zomas. Still, whatever trade there was could not have been very substantial either in terms of goods or the number of people involved, as we learn from a report by Ghillebert de Lannoy in 1437: we are told that no merchants were found in the *couchiers* of Ancona, Naples, Marseilles, Palermo, and Constantinople, quite in contrast to the busy commercial life in the *fontèques* of the Venetians, Genoese, and Catalans.[159]

Now and then the Byzantines even managed to bypass the trading barrier that the Genoese and especially the Venetians had erected to close off the west beyond the Aegean Sea. I have already mentioned the occasional appearance of Byzantines in Adriatic ports, in Dubrovnik, Ancona, and Venice. But that was not all: there is evidence of a small colony of Greek merchants in Bruges from the time of the rule of Duke John the Fearless in Burgundy and Flanders. Shortly after 1453 this community included a number of individuals from the famous and widely branched house of the Laskarids: we hear of one Antonius Loscart, "marchand grossier de Bruges," and one Michiel Loschart, "ruddere van Constantinople."[160] Some of them may have been living in the city for some time, but some no doubt arrived in Flanders only after the fall of Constantinople. Perhaps the Burgundian crusading expedition in 1444 and the following years, which was simultaneously a trading enterprise,[161] also established or reinforced economic ties between the imperiled center of the Byzantine Empire and the expatriate Greeks living on the other side of Europe. In London, too, a variety of commercial activities by Greeks and a small Greek settlement are attested from the early fifteenth century on. In 1445/46, a certain George of Constantinople imported sweet wine to England on Italian ships through the port of London.[162] In 1449 Andronicus de Constantinople exported two shiploads of English cloth to the East on Venetian galleys.[163] He may be identical with Andronicus Effomatos, who had settled in London as a maker of gold thread, and who likewise imported and exported his wares on Italian ships.[164] Knowing what we do, the report in an English chronicle, that

[158] Labib, *Handelsgeschichte,* 343; Dölger, *Regesten,* 5, 97f (no. 3328), gives Sommas as the Greek name version.

[159] C. Potvin, *Oeuvres de Ghillebert de Lannoy, voyageur, diplomate et moraliste* (Louvain, 1878), 110.

[160] E. van den Bussche, *Une question d'orient au Moyen-Age: Documents inédits et notes pour servir à l'histoire du commerce de la Flandre particulièrement de la ville de Bruges avec le Levant* (Bruges, 1878), 28 n. 38; H. Taparel, "Notes sur quelques refugiés Byzantins en Bourgogne après la chute de Constantinople," *BalkSt* 28.1 (1987): 57f.

[161] Cf. W. Schulz, *Andreaskreuz und Christusorden: Isabella von Portugal und der burgundische Kreuzzug* (Fribourg, 1976), 159ff.

[162] J. Harris, "Bessarion on Shipbuilding: A Re-interpretation," *BSl* 55.2 (1994): 293.

[163] J. Harris, *Greek Emigrés in the West, 1400–1520* (Camberley, 1995), 88.

[164] Ibid.

Emperor Manuel II, during his visit to England in late 1400–early 1401, was informed by Greek merchants about the political events on the eastern border of his empire, seems credible.[165]

Against this background, the still puzzling travelogue of Laskaris Kananos,[166] of whom little is known otherwise, takes on a very surprising but entirely realistic dimension: the journey seems to have begun in Sluis, a port of Bruges,[167] and led through the entire region of the Baltic Sea all the way to Norway and Iceland. Along the way our traveler also landed in England on several occasions. He was a man of some education, and his interests included the economic conditions, food and drink, and monetary system and commercial practices in the countries he visited. One thing he thought particularly worth mentioning was that people in the city of Bergen did not use coins of any kind, whether gold, silver, copper, or iron, but engaged in commerce only through barter.[168] Kananos, much like the Greeks in Bruges and London, undertook his northern voyage, the character of which is not entirely clear, on an Italian ship or at least with Italian companions.[169] The mention of Cape San Vincente in Portugal could indicate that it was also such a ship that took him from his Byzantine home in the south to this outpost of Byzantine-Greek trading activity in the European West, where he may even have been welcomed by members of his own family.

Far from being restricted solely to local and regional trade, Byzantines of the late period tenaciously defended their traditional spheres of activity and appeared even in distant trading regions. In the struggle against their superior Italian competitors, at least some Byzantine merchants of the late period still learned the new commercial techniques and methods developed by the Italians, proved willing to take risks of their own, and were able to create their own economic identity by combining old and new economic experience. As junior partners in the slowly emerging collaboration with western competitors, they gained access to the economic zones created by the Latin colonial overlords in the Byzantine Empire and were able to use the trading routes they had established, occasionally even to reach the far ends of the greater economic sphere the Latins had formed. Some of what the Byzantine economic forces once had was lost during this late period, but some of what they would need for the future they were able to acquire during this time. What they preserved and what they acquired were enough for their own lives, but not enough to ensure the survival of their state.

[165] Thomas Walsingham, *Annales Richardi Secundi et Henrici Quarti, Regum Angliae, 1392–1406,* ed. H. T. Riley, Rolls 28 (London, 1866), 336; cf. D. M. Nicol, "A Byzantine Emperor in England: Manuel II's Visit to London in 1400–1401," *University of Birmingham Historical Journal* 12 (1970): 220f.

[166] Sp. Lambros, Μικταὶ σελίδες (Athens, 1905), 580; V. Lundström, "Laskaris Kananos' Reseanteckningar fran de nordiska länderna," *Smärre Byzantinska Skrifter utgifna och Kommentarade* (Uppsala–Leipzig, 1902), 1:14–17; German translation by F. Grabler, "Die Nordlandreise des Laskaris Kananos," in *Europa im XV. Jahrhundert von Byzantinern gesehen* (Graz, 1954), 103–5; cf. Matschke, *Die Schlacht bei Ankara,* 235 n. 430; Makris, *Studien,* 238ff.

[167] Grabler, "Die Nordlandreise," 104f.

[168] Ibid., 103; cf. T. Hägg, "En bysontiner besoker Bergen," *Hellas og Norge* (Bergen, 1990), 221–28.

[169] Grabler, "Die Nordlandreise," 102.

Varieties of Late Byzantine Trade and Types of Late Byzantine Merchants

Professional merchants, that is, people who were active primarily as buyers and sellers of goods and earned their living chiefly from this work, existed throughout the late Byzantine period in various forms. They included the many small shopkeepers who owned or leased their stores and were surely not very well-off. Alone or with a few assistants they purchased trading goods from local and especially western wholesalers[170] and sold them retail to local consumers. To that end they usually formed small, short-term partnerships and often ran into difficulties making the payments on the goods they purchased, as we learn especially from the account book of the Venetian Badoer in Constantinople, though this is also attested in other sources and for other Byzantine cities. They included the undoubtedly less numerous small itinerant traders who sometimes traveled with their goods on the vessels engaged in coastal and tramp trade; it was on such a ship that the rhetorician and diplomat Thomas Magistros made his homeward journey from Constantinople to Thessalonike around 1310. But there is no doubt that these traders also sailed the coasts of the Black Sea and the Peloponnese.[171] Among them was a man whose name was probably Petriotes and who, shortly after 1400, owed 81 hyperpera to Demetrios Angelos and Alexios Kapelitzes. He was able to repay this sum only in installments, which always came due when he returned to Constantinople from another (trading) journey.[172] As a whole this group probably did not have much economic clout, but it was also not greatly dependent on the general economic situation. Even if taxes and dues were a significant burden, and loans and usurious interest rates posed considerable hazards, these things threatened the individual much more than the group. The latter always sought and found the ways and means of regenerating itself, because it was indispensable for the material life in a society whose economy was largely commercial in orientation.

Late Byzantine commerce was also shaped in important ways by another, not very coherent group of people; at times its influence may even have exceeded that of the other groups. These were people who could and did use the access to goods and commodities that came with governmental or private offices to bring these goods to market themselves or through their agents, and to redirect the profits entirely or in part into their own pockets. Among them were the caretakers of the imperial horses and pack animals, who could turn into grain dealers by acquiring feed grain either at no charge or at reduced prices. Among them was the overseer of the capital's fishing industry: he

[170] The author of the Black Sea account book from the second half of the 14th century published by Schreiner, *Texte,* 1:33ff, was surely a native wholesale merchant.

[171] A classic description of this form of commerce comes from Thomas Magistros: M. Treu, "Die Gesandtschaftsreise des Rhetors Theodulos Magistros," *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie,* suppl. 27 (1900): 14 (cf. G. Makris, "Ships," *EHB*). Its presence in the Black Sea is indicated in Laiou, "Byzantium and the Black Sea," 172, 174. Its existence in the region of the Peloponnese is emphasized in a letter to the author from E. Cupane and E. Kislinger with reference to J. Chrysostomides, *Monumenta Peloponnesiaca* (Camberley, 1995).

[172] H. Hunger, "Zu den restlichen Inedita des Konstantinopler Patriarchatsregisters," *REB* 24 (1966): 61f (no. 3).

transformed himself into a fish dealer by raising the dues in kind from Constantinople's fishermen. Among them were city governors and tax officials, singly or as a group. These sellers on the market or outside the market became dangerous competitors of the merchants, and they had a significant impact on the development of price mechanisms. They constituted a potent group at least as long as the late Byzantine state and the late Byzantine ruling élite still had a meaningful number of such functions and posts to distribute.

We find another type of seller on the late Byzantine market—a member of the local or regional landowning class of Thessalonike—in a recently edited account book.[173] He dealt chiefly in grain, wine, and other produce of the field and garden, but also with textile and silk products, silk cocoons, and raw cotton. Some of these goods unquestionably came from the production of his own land, some came most likely also from surplus produced by his and other peasants, which he bought at a preferential price to sell on the urban market for an additional profit. Those who bought his goods included urban shopowners who inserted themselves between him and the urban consumers, but not a few were also landowners like himself engaged in the same activity. The buyers presumably also included minor dignitaries and local functionaries, though we cannot find any indication that he gained access to his goods by way of these offices and functions. The activities of this man, who evidently also represents a certain type, were largely confined to the immediate hinterland of Thessalonike; of the neighboring cities, only Serres makes its appearance. Even more striking than this geographical limitation is the restricted circle of his business partners: there is nothing to indicate that he sold his grain and especially his textile raw materials to interested buyers from afar, let alone to foreigners, even though at least Venetian merchants had a strong presence in the city.

At least for the early Palaiologan period, there is concrete evidence that large landowners acted as suppliers of agrarian products, especially grain, to Venetian and Genoese exporters in the economic region of the capital.[174] A grain supplier to the Ragusans named Camblacus/Tzamplakon may very well have been from the greater Thessalonike region, various opinions to the contrary notwithstanding,[175] since the Adriatic republic sent its buyers into this very area on several occasions of grain shortage.[176] Perhaps what happened in and around Smyrna at the end of the thirteenth century also happened in Thessalonike: these magnates not only displaced an older, local landowning class from its holdings, but also pushed it out of the trade in grain and raw materials with the Latins. But perhaps around 1360 the great era of large-scale landowners who produced for the outside market was almost over, since by then the political and

[173] Schreiner, *Texte,* 79ff (no. 3). Is the Theodore Karabas mentioned by Laiou, "Agrarian Economy," 360–61, perhaps a similar type of merchant?

[174] Cf. Bertolotto, "Nuova serie," 526. Agents of the emperor and of the *vestiarion* also appear as grain sellers: ibid., 522f, 533.

[175] *Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum,* 1:159, 241; Krekić, *Dubrovnik,* 198f (nos. 212, 114); cf. ibid., 90 n. 3.

[176] Cf., for example, the instructions to Junius Bunić in 1377: Krekić, *Dubrovnik,* 216 (no. 321).

economic stranglehold on Thessalonike, first by the Serbs and then by the Turks, had long since begun.

However, it was not only owners of larger and very large estates who acted as suppliers of agrarian products to domestic and foreign buyers.[177] Small farmers, too, played that role, and there is good documentation that western merchants sent their buyers also to peasant farms and took delivery of peasant goods at numerous landing sites.[178] Much more difficult to answer is the question whether late Byzantine villagers also sold their neighbors' harvest along with their own, whether they journeyed to fairs and into the cities with their own products as well as those of others, and whether they remained in the cities temporarily or even permanently to establish themselves in commerce. The peasant who trades ("che faza mercandantia") was certainly a familiar figure in the Latin territories of the Romania.[179] If such peasants also existed in the late Byzantine period, they were presumably not as numerous. Yet we do have some weak indications of such activity by rural folk. For one, many rural registers of property and dues (the *praktika*) list, alongside or in addition to the fair, other dues that indicate commercial activity. In the village of Doxompous at Lake Achinos, for instance, we find one sum in the amount of 50 hyperpyra.[180] It was made up of the *kommerkion,* the *gomariatikon,* the *opsonion,* and the *katagogion;* this means that, in addition to a commercial tax, it included a ship freight or cargo bale tax,[181] a provisioning or fish tax,[182] and an accommodation fee.[183]

In the villages of Thermon and Lulon, we find a list of dues[184] that include, alongside the *kommerkion,* also a *poron* (a fording fee)[185] and a *topiatikon,* which comprises a host of dues that could also be commercial in nature.[186] In addition to landing sites along the seashore, it appears that fording sites at rivers and inland lakes, as well as inns and hostels at these locations, could also become the starting point for peasant commercial activity. There were also a number of *paroikoi* of the monastery of Lavra who resettled into cities from their original villages, most likely in connection with artisanal and

[177] On the commercialization of the production of the large estates, see Laiou, "Agrarian Economy," 347–48.

[178] On peasant production for the market, see Laiou, "Agrarian Economy," 351–52.

[179] Cf. D. Jacoby, "Les états latins en Romanie: Phénomènes sociaux et économiques," *Actes du XVe Congrès international d'études byzantines* (Athens, 1976), 1.1:40.

[180] Lemerle et al., *Actes de Lavra,* 2:170 (no. 104).

[181] Cf. P. Schreiner, *Studia Byzantino-Bulgarica* (Vienna, 1986), 170, note to line 30.

[182] Cf. ibid., 160, note to line 20; D. Jacoby, "The Venetian Presence in the Latin Empire of Constantinople (1204–1261): The Challenge of Feudalism and the Byzantine Inheritance," *JÖB* 43 (1993): 179 n. 124.

[183] Perhaps this levy is close to the κατάβολος; on the latter, see E. Schilbach, *Byzantinische metrologische Quellen* (Thessalonike, 1982), 159f; on the Latin counterparts, see Jacoby, "The Venetian Presence," 179f and n. 131.

[184] I. Sakkelion, "Μιχαὴλ Παλαιολόγου ἀνέκδοτον χρυσόβουλλον περὶ τῶν παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ τῇ Μ. Ἐκκλησία δωρηθέντων κτημάτων," Πανδώρα 15 (1864): 29.

[185] Cf. Dölger, *Regesten,* 3:52f (no. 1956).

[186] Cf. Ch. DuCange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae graecitatis* (Lyons, 1688), entries: τοπική, τοπιατικόν; K.-P. Matschke, "Bemerkungen zum spätbyzantinischen Salzmonopol," in *Studia byzantina* 2, ed. J. Irmscher and P. Nagel (Berlin, 1973), 45f.

commercial activity. Among them was the son of a butcher or agent for business deals involving meat.[187] In Doxompous, too, we find in 1317 a *paroikos* who was a trader,[188] though it is unclear whether he plied his trade locally or outside the village. It is also unclear where the many local fishermen sold their catches, whether at home or possibly even on the market of Serres. The step from being a local meat producer or fisherman to being a meat and fish dealer who maintained contacts with his native village and used them in his new line of work would have been an entirely logical one, but it remains quite unclear whether it really happened this way and how many may have taken this or similar steps.

Just how strongly the market economy and free-enterprise thinking had pervaded at least the regions close to the cities during the late Byzantine era is revealed by the account of the tough bargaining over wine and other provisions between a traveling party from the capital and one resident of a village near Rhaidestos: the seller tried to drive up the price he was offered by reminding the buyers of prices in the nearby city.[189] It is striking that all information about peasant commercial activity and participation in the markets dates from the period prior to 1340, another indication that the conditions of peasant life deteriorated markedly around the middle of the fourteenth century.[190]

At around the same time, however, we can observe the emergence of another group that was important to late Byzantine trade. This group is most appropriately described as one of aristocratic entrepreneurs: aristocratic because it was clearly rooted in the late Byzantine upper class and also drew most of its members from it; entrepreneurs because its members did not confine themselves to commercial activities. Instead, they combined them with financial and even some manufacturing activities and pursued it all on a scale that went clearly beyond the average scope in Byzantium. Moreover, on various occasions—for example, ransoming the prisoners of Nikopolis in 1396, provisioning the capital besieged by the Turks between 1394 and 1402, and possibly when it came to formulating its own policies in the events surrounding the crusade of 1443/44—this group sought out and made contact with non-Byzantine business circles in the Romania, and this allowed it to move into certain realms of political finance. The history of the Notaras family is especially characteristic of this development,[191] though many other aristocratic families were in some way or other affected by it. These entrepreneurs, too, owned land and made use of state benefices, but only on the modest scale that was left to the Byzantine state after the mid-fourteenth century, which is why these two aspects were not decisive for the economic profile of the group.

[187] Lemerle et al., *Actes de Lavra,* 2:234, 225 (no. 109); cf. K. V. Khvostova, "Nekotorye voprosy vnutrennei torgovli i torgovoi politiki v Vizantii XIV–XV vv.," *VizVrem* 50 (1989): 41f.

[188] Lemerle et al., *Actes de Lavra,* 2:167.

[189] Ahrweiler, "Le récit," 24.

[190] I am indebted to A. Laiou for pointing out this fact.

[191] Cf. K.-P. Matschke, "Personengeschichte, Familiengeschichte, Sozialgeschichte: Die Notaras im späten Byzanz," in *Oriente e Occidente tra Medioevo ed età moderna: Studi in onore di Geo Pistarino,* ed. L. Balletto, 2 vols. (Genoa, 1997), 2:787–812.

Centered in the capital of Constantinople, the group was formed substantially by an influx from the Byzantine province, from various cities, and especially from Monemvasia. Of great importance to the character of this group were also the impulses that emanated from Greek commercial and entrepreneurial forces in the Latin colonies. These forces took shape in the Genoese and Venetian colonial milieu on the islands of Chios and Crete, in the southern Peloponnese, and possibly also in the Crimea, and they had not yet lost the traditional ties to the Byzantine world, in fact they may have revived them. They became important intermediaries between the western and the Byzantine world of commerce. They made it easier for the Byzantine aristocrats who were pushing into this world to gain access to the economic and trading system the Latins had created in the eastern Mediterranean, and they established personal and material contacts with the most important Byzantine representatives of this system. In so doing they played a big part in keeping the late Byzantine economic system from falling even further behind that in the West; in fact, the gap between the two may have even narrowed somewhat. These multifarious economic contacts also made it possible to dismantle, at least in part, the mental barriers that Byzantine society had erected against business involving goods and money, barriers that were handed down into the late period. They made room in Byzantine economic circles, and in the educated classes affiliated with them, for suggestions that it was not only the rulers and their officials, but merchants and artisans, too, who were open to scholastic knowledge and the wisdom of teachers.[192] They allowed the articulation of the belief that the mint and the ship's deck were perhaps more important to the survival of Byzantium than the farmland and the battlefield, the traditional proving grounds of the Byzantine élite.[193]

The progressive territorial shrinkage of the late Byzantine Empire did not necessarily cause this development, though at the very least it influenced and promoted it. The realization that the sea was still strong while the land was increasingly breaking away was expressed on numerous occasions from the mid-fourteenth century on, and evidently it did not fail to have some specific internal consequences. The protagonist of the late Byzantine turn toward the sea was a self-made man from the civil war period of the early fourteenth century, Alexios Apokaukos—salt mine operator, tax administrator, banker, financial chief, fleet captain, governor of the capital, and *spiritus rector* of the imperial regency between 1341 and 1345. If we set the successful activities of Byzantine merchants in the Black Sea region, of Byzantine financiers in the capital, and of Byzantine seamen in the Aegean against the backdrop of his efforts to control the Bosphoros and create an economic triangle between Constantinople, Thessalonike, and Chios, one might conclude, after all, that one root of the aristocratic entrepreneurship of the late period can be found in these conflicts and their results. At the same time, it remains true that there is no direct connection to the representatives of this

[192] Michael Apostoles, salutation to his teacher John Argyropoulos, ed. Sp. Lambros, Ἀργυροπούλεια (Athens, 1910), 230.

[193] This is my interpretation of a passage in the consolatory speech of John Argyropoulos to Emperor Constantine XI on the death of his mother; ibid., 59.

entrepreneurial class in the fifteenth century. The reason is that the protagonists of the turn toward the sea around the mid-fourteenth century suffered a serious defeat, and the victors were unable and unwilling fully to grasp the significance of this change of course; it was only the subsequent events that drove it home to them.

As we have seen, late Byzantine trade and commerce involved many people and various groups. The nature of their commercial involvement and the intensity of their commercial integration were decisive in shaping the character of the late Byzantine market economy. Only a minority of those involved were professional merchants. However, lest this fact give rise to one-sided and overdrawn conclusions, one should point out that only a minority of those who had resettled from the northern Italian cities to the Romania earned their livelihood exclusively or even predominantly from commercial activity. In the Latin colonies we find military colonists from the nobility who focused their activities explicitly on the production and sale of grain. Officials with a humanistic education were busy to varying degrees with commercial deals on the side. Finally, the peasant merchant was no rarity in these colonies, even if the peasants who made the switch to commerce and trade belonged chiefly to the local population.

Only the aristocratic entrepreneurs were a novelty in the late Byzantine period; the other types and groups are also found in other periods of Byzantine history, though in different variations and with different characteristics. But even this entrepreneurship was a manifestation of the declining Byzantine society much more so than a sign that this society was being transformed. It was not the creation of a rising middle class but the result of the forced break by various Byzantine upper strata and élites with traditional social standards and ways of life. Though it adopted many impulses from the West, it did not become a Byzantine version of early capitalist entrepreneurship. It lacked not only the commercial and financial caliber of western entrepreneurs, but also the industrial basis on which this entrepreneurship had arisen in the late medieval West; it was that basis that allowed western merchants to extend their commercial expansion into the Romania.

Conclusion

At the beginning of late Byzantine economic development were the visible efforts of the Palaiologan emperors to revive traditional forms of political supervision and guidance of the economy. However, it was soon apparent that these efforts were not very successful, since the late Byzantine state was unable to gain full control of either the foreign or domestic economic forces. Gradually the state lost its influence on the modalities of trade and the price mechanisms, and its control over the outflow of precious metal and perhaps even over the minting of coins. Late Byzantine officials, who were supposed to implement this regulatory policy, used the state prerogatives placed into their hands to pursue their private business. The social norms that forbade the aristocracy, the military, and the civil servants outright from engaging in business, or permitted it only to a limited extent, gradually lost their binding force. But private commercial activity was also affected and impeded by the crises in foreign policy and the

internal erosion of the empire. The commercially active official, and the landowning and the peasant trader, who are more or less clearly discernible in the early Palaiologan period, gradually disappear after the mid-fourteenth century and make room for an aristocratic entrepreneurship. This entrepreneurship had only weak ties to agriculture and landholdings and had lost its interest in state offices. It used its improved contacts to the western business world to accumulate substantial sums of money and to establish a variety of commercial connections. But for all that, it was no longer able to reach the western level of early capitalist entrepreneurship.