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Konstantinopolis'in İaşesinde Devlet Kontrolü ve Ticaretin Etkisi

State Control and Commercial Influence in Provisioning Constantinople

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Öz

Bu makale, on birinci yüzyılın sonlarından şehrin düşüşüne kadar Konstantinopolis'in iaşe sistemini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bizans ekonomik yapısının geçirdiği dönüşümün izini sürmekle kalmayıp aynı zamanda Roma İmparatorluğu'nun uygulamış olduğu devlet kontrollü tedarik sistemi modelinden yabancı tüccarların, özellikle de İtalyanların etkisiyle merkezi idarenin etkisinin azaldığı bir sisteme geçişe odaklanıyor. Dahası, Geç Bizans Konstantinopolis'inin demografik dalgalanmalarını inceleyen bu makale, Komnenoslar Dönemi'ndeki nüfus artışını ve toprak kayıplarının yarattığı zorlukların ve değişimlerin altını çiziyor. Tüm bunların bir sonucu olarak, İtalyanlar başta olmak üzere şehrin iaşe sisteminde yabancı tüccarların oynadığı önemli rolü, lonca dinamiklerindeki değişimleri ve imparatorluk başkentinin ikmalinde devlet müdahalesi ile ticari faaliyet arasındaki değişen dengeyi incelemektedir. Theodosius Kanunnamesi gibi hukuki metinlere ve çağdaş anlatılara dayanarak, özellikle yedinci yüzyılda Mısır'ın kaybedilmesinden sonra, iaşe sistemi üzerindeki devlet kontrolünün kademeli olarak gevşediğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu analiz sayesinde makale, jeopolitik çalkantılar ve demografik değişimler arasında Konstantinopolis'in gıda tedarikinin sürdürülmesinde devlet otoritesi, ekonomik yapılar ve dış etkenler arasındaki karmaşık etkileşime ışık tutmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Konstantinopolis, İaşe sistemi, Bizans ekonomisi, Yabancı tüccarlar, Devlet Kontrolü

Abstract

This article aims to analyze the provisioning system of Constantinople from the late eleventh century to the city's fall. It traces the evolution of Byzantine economic structures, focusing on the transition from state-controlled supply under the Roman model to a more decentralized system influenced by foreign merchants, particularly Italians. The paper explores the demographic fluctuations of Constantinople, highlighting population growth during the Komnenian Period and the challenges posed by territorial losses. It examines the crucial role of foreign merchants, changes in guild dynamics, and the shifting balance between state intervention and commercial activity in supplying the imperial capital. Drawing on legal texts like the Theodosian Code and contemporary accounts, it reveals a gradual loosening of state control over provisioning, particularly after the loss of Egypt in the seventh century. Through this analysis, the article sheds light on the complex interplay between state authority, economic structures, and external factors in sustaining the food supply of Constantinople amidst geopolitical upheavals and demographic changes.

Keywords: Constantinople, Provisioning system, Byzantine economy, Foreign merchants, State control

Introduction

The economic thought of the Byzantines was substantially based on the Roman law and the ideas concerning self-sufficiency, trade, price formation, and profits, which derived from classical Greece, the edicts of Roman emperors and patristic pronouncements (Laiou, 2002, p. 1123). However, it is more important here to distinguish the milestones of the Byzantine state economy in the medieval period rather than to trace its origins. Nicolas Oikonomides gives a highly schematic periodization of the Byzantine state economy. He specifically recognizes two major periods, the first of which begins around 650 and the second around 1100. The first one could be defined as the command economy, in which the economy was strictly controlled by the state distributing and collecting money on the tax system. On the other hand, the second one, though not exactly, could be described as the free economy, which indicated a decentralization of the state economy and the penetration of the privileged individuals into the economic structure of the empire (Oikonomides, 2002, pp. 979-980). As Averil Cameron asserts, the period which started around 1100 indicates the beginning of a new and remarkable phase in the history of Byzantine Empire (Cameron, 2006, p. 40). From my point of view, the most significant alterations during the period were the changes in commercial structure of the economy. This period comprise the influx of foreign merchants, especially Italians, in the commercial life of the empire by granted trading privileges. As Oikonomides states, this is a feature of the period turning Byzantium into a part of a broader open economy. Furthermore, the demonetization of the state economy because of the privileges led to the liberation of the huge sums of money from the public economy, and made these sums available for the utilization by the free economy of exchange (Oikonomides, 2002, p. 1026). This transformation in the economy had a vital influence over the provisioning system of the capital, since Constantinople was substantially a consumer city and dependent on commercial activity. Here, therefore, I choose the latter period of the periodization of Oikonomides to study the provisioning of Byzantine Constantinople.

The needs of the capital Istanbul became a political and administrative priority for all emperors. The Byzantine provisioning system caused the city's food supply to run smoothly in periods when the central administration was strong, and caused serious problems in periods of weakness (Karataşer, 2017, p. 3). Still, it is safe to say that there was a highly developed set of controls aimed at ensuring the basic needs of Constantinople throughout Byzantine history (Uzun, 2015, p. 56). On the other hand, Oikonomides easily divided the period into two parts in terms of the fiscal system and the control of the state over the granting privileges. First section comprised approximately the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in which the state was powerful and able to hold absolute control over the privileges it granted shortly after the immediate recovery from the crises of 1081-91 and 1204. During the second section, corresponding the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the strict control on those to whom the state granted privileges by own its free will was lost (Oikonomides, 2002, p. 1026). Since the population of Constantinople was relatively small in the late Byzantine period, there was little need to resort to special efforts to provide basic goods (Uzun, 2015, p. 56). On the other hand, Ece Turnator prefers not totally but a bit different periodization for the provisioning system of the capital city. According to Turnator, between the tenth and the end of the twelfth centuries, although the state did not involve in every aspect of the provisioning of Constantinople, it retained its control on the regulations of the city, however, it lost its control over the transportation of the food items. This system, however, transformed into a new one that the supply of the capital depended on the Italian and Byzantine merchants with the Latin occupation of Constantinople in 1204-1261, and lived throughout the Palaiologan period to the very end (Turnator, 2000, p. 184). Whether the privileges were given by free will or not, the privileged merchants, especially foreign ones, dominantly invaded the economic and commercial structure of the empire, and played a vital role in the supply process, which was undeniably related with population, of the tremendously crowded capital city.

The population of Constantinople and its decline in Dark Ages of Byzantium, corresponding to the sixth and eighth centuries, are matters of discussions basing on guesses. Nevertheless, despite of the territorial losses and geographic changes, the demographic growth begun in the late eighth century continued during the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Laiou & Morrisson, 2007, p. 92). The removal of Bulgarian state, which was no more a threat to the vicinity of Constantinople, and the following loss of the huge territories during the latter decades increased the population of the city. Moreover, for the highest point of this demographic recovery of the city, we have an important contemporary estimate (Magdalino, 1995, p. 35). The chronicler of the Fourth Crusade, Geoffrey of Villehardouin, states that twenty thousand armed men conquered four hundred thousand men in the strongest and very well fortified city in the world (Marzials, 2007, p. 56). The number could be inaccurate, but it is a contemporary estimation, thus, it can be made more satisfactory one starting from this figure. The population of the city experienced several fluctuations until the very end. Its population was thirty five thousands in 1261, but, by the end of Michael VIII's reign, the population increased nearly to seventy thousands people (Madden, 2004, p. 113). Lastly, when the Ottomans captured the city in 1453, approximately fifty thousand people were dwelling in there (Nicolle, 2000, p. 32).

Accepting these figures about this fluctuating population of the city bring out several questions: How these people maintained their fundamental nutritional requirements, what were the supply zones of the city during the period, and was the supply process of the city conducted by state or was it purely commercial during the last centuries of the empire? Therefore, this paper aims to examine the provisioning system of Constantinople from the last decades of the eleventh century until the fall of Constantinople in accordance with partly the aforesaid periodization of Oikonomides, but substantially Turnator's. The first chapter of the paper, the supply zones of the city, the borders of the Byzantine Empire, the commercial privileges given to foreign merchants and mercantile activities to supply the city from the beginning of the Komnenian Period until the Latin Occupation of Constantinople, comprising the period between 1082-1204, are going to be analysed with a brief narration of background of the system at issue. The second chapter is going to cover the same issues during the Palaiologan Period, involving roughly the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

1. The Supply System of Constantinople From 1081 Until 1204

1.1. The Background: From 330 to the End of Eleventh Century

The famine, bad harvests, plunders, etc. caused the Roman state to take precautions and to establish a supply system first begun during the time of the Principate, and gradually increased until the third century. The supply system of Constantinople inherently adopted the Roman supply system, which was a perfect example of strict state control over the supply, transportation and distribution of food to the population of the capital. Supplying the imperial capital was the primary reason of the infrastructure of the agricultural territories. Therefore, the central feature of the Byzantine economy was to supply the provisioning system of the imperial capital with regular amount and with a wide range of fresh foodstuff (Frankopan, 2009, p. 114). The Theodosian Code reveals that the strict state control over the supply process functioned through the relationship between the state and the guild structure (Turnator, 2000, p. 1). In other words, the rulers of Constantinople were executives in the every aspect of the provisioning system of the city. The state intervention to the supply system of Constantinople, in which the relationship between the state and the guilds functioned on a compulsory obligations and exemptions, continued until the loss of Egypt in the seventh century to the Arabs.

The seventh century marks an important turning point in the process because decline in population, devastating invasions of Byzantine territories, transformation of socio-economic structure of the empire from Antiquity to Medieval period forced the governors to take more tolerant measures in their relations with the guilds, which were one of the most crucial elements of the supply system of Constantinople. The state gradually ceased to interfere in every aspect of the supply of Constantinople, and the guild structure progressively stopped to function on obligations and exemptions after the seventh century (Turnator, 2000, p. 184). According to Ece Turnator, the Book of the Eparch, which dates from the tenth century, provides us strong evidence in order to understand the transformation the supply system underwent after the seventh century. It is clear that after the seventh century the Byzantine provisioning system of Constantinople was far from 'the rigid, hereditary guild structure, the corpora (guilds), of Theodosian Code of A.D. 438' (Turnator, 2000, p. 2).

Concerning primarily the supply zones, Egypt was the most important grain supplier of the city of Rome, and later, of Constantinople. On the other hand, although Egypt was the most important grain supply zone of the city during the Byzantine Empire, it was not the only one. Several chroniclers such as Eunapius, Themistios and Prokopios mentioned Thrace, Black Sea coast, Cherson, Bithynia, Aegean Islands, Phrigia as the other supply zones of the capital until the seventh century. Nevertheless, these supply zones were merely supplementary. In normal times, these regions provide only the minor necessary amount of the capital. However, their contribution came to the fore when the times of bad harvests, military expeditions, etc. (Turnator, 2000, p. 67). Therefore, the loss of Egypt to the Arabs in the seventh century was the first important turning point for the provisioning of Constantinople.

During the period from the second half of the seventh century until the end of the eleventh century, the importance of the regions close to Constantinople increased, and the provisioning system begun to dominantly based on these regions. The western coast of Asia Minor, Bithynia, Macedonia, Thrace, Crete and the western littoral of the Black Sea were the main supply zones of the capital (Turnator, 2000, p. 78). For example, the Bithynian lands of the Opsician Theme were vital for the provisioning of Constantinople because as the biographer of Michael Maleinus reported Bithynia to be abundant in flowing water and in all good things and produced huge amount of grain. Moreover, the region had great numbers of vineyards, which able it to supply wine (Teall, 125). As Turnator claims vegetables were brought to the city from its immediate hinterland because vegetables were easily perishable. The Balkans and Asia Minor, especially beyond of Sangarios river, were the major pork and meat supplier zones. Concerning wine, almost all the Aegean and the Mediterranean coast were suitable to find it or

to transport it to Constantinople through the sea routes (Turnator, 2000, p. 72). It is clear that not only Bithynia, but also Macedonia, Thrace, Crete, the western coast of Asia Minor, especially Ephesos and the Meander valley were fertile and rich lands, which had a vital role in the supply of Constantinople.

It could not be denied that the supply zones of Constantinople and the political situation of the empire bound strictly each other because the stability or the instability in the Byzantine territories had a direct influence over the provisioning system of the capital. Therefore, the system was mostly benefited from the themes system, which was the crucial element for the stability and the agricultural production (Turnator, 2000, pp. 77-78). In consideration of these evidences, it is obvious that Constantinople highly depended on its vicinity and immediate hinterland for the supply of grain, fish, vegetables, grapes, which were brought to the capital from close regions after the seventh century until the eleventh century (Turnator, 2000, p. 80).

1.2. Byzantine Borders and Supply Zones of Constantinople from 1081 until 1204

The sharp change in the supply zones of the capital from the late twelfth century until the end of the Latin Occupation in 1261 was strongly related with the drastic change in the borders of Byzantine Empire, the aims and the characters of its enemies beyond the borders, the political and military conditions within the empire and in the international sphere and the shift in the economic centres of the empire. The more the Byzantine Empire lost control over its territories and stability in its regions, the more the provisioning system of the capital became depended on the commercial activity. Moreover, the more the Byzantine state lost its political and military power and relied on this maritime trade activity to feed the capital, the more it bestowed privileges without its own free will. Therefore, the most important point in order to understand the provisioning system of Constantinople is to survey the change in the territories under the control of the Byzantine Empire and 'the geographical position of the enemies that threatened the empire' (Turnator, 2000, p. 82).

As Turnator says a huge part of Asia Minor, except for the coasts, Georgia and Armenia, southern Italy and Sicily, Bosnia and Dalmatia and Kherson were no longer the possessions of the Byzantine Empire at the dawn of the twentieth century. Furthermore, the east-west axis attacks of Turks and Latins replaced the previous north-south axis attack of Arabs and Slavs (Turnator, 2000, p. 82). Alexios I (1081-1118), the first of the Komnenian rulers, committed to verse some of his thoughts as advises about the imperial power. There, Alexios mentioned the barbarians who assailed on all sides and tried to confine the power of the Roman Empire, including the countless hordes of Scyths and bold-minded Italians, who devastated the lands stretching into the sunset, and the violence of Persians, who invaded the several important islands and coasts in the lands laying towards the rays of rising sun and the sea (Magdalino, 1993, p. 27). It is needed to explain that Alexios referred to Turks as Scyths and Persians (Magdalino, 1993, p. 29). In other words, between the last decades of the eleventh century and the beginning of the thirteenth century, the empire was threatened by the new enemies from the different directions from previous periods, and lost some of its vital territories to them, which was a crucial and permanent transformation of the supply zones of Constantinople.

The last decades of the eleventh century witnessed the appearance of the Turkic Seljuks, a branch of the Oguz, who had already established themselves as masters in the Caliphate, and whose energies were now directed northwards from Iraq into the Caucasus and eastern Asia Minor. In 1071, the Byzantine forces were defeated by the Seljuks at the battle of Manzikert. Although the losses following the battle were not great and unrecoverable in themselves, the civil war which broke up after the emperor Romanos was captured caused the exhaustion of the remaining military power of the Byzantine Empire (Haldon, 2005, p. 115). In other words, the army commanders immediately left their positions in Asia Minor to have a power in the capital (Gregory, 2010, p. 249), thus, the defence chance of Asia Minor were lost. As a result, the core lands of Byzantine Empire in Asia Minor lay open to the Seljuks, who occupied much of the territories and settled in it without any virtual opposition from the former masters of the land.

It is important to define the borders of the empire in Asia Minor after the inflow of the Turks in to Asia Minor and the establishment the Sultanate of Rum in Ikonion. Alexios I. Komnenos undertook the defence and the recovery of the empire. He, therefore, constructed fortifications and a canal just south of Nicomedia, which eventually became the frontier with the Turks (Treadgold, 1997, p. 644). Moreover, he cunningly benefited from the Crusades moving towards the Holy Lands through passing Asia Minor by making an agreement to save and secure the Byzantine territories. Eventually, Nicaea and some substantial districts around it were returned to the Byzantine Empire (Haldon, 2005, p. 147), and the security of the coastline through almost the Holy Lands was effectively provided by the arrival of the First Crusade. Furthermore, the Turks were temporarily driven back roughly to the central Anatolia (Haldon, 2005, p. 147). As Niketas Choniates wrote during the reign of John II Komnenos (1118 - 1143), Turks was still trying to penetrate into the Byzantine territories, and the lines of the Sangarios river became the Byzantine-Turkish border in the north-east because these territories were left defenceless against continues

attacks of the Turks (Choniates, 1984, p. 19). Although Manuel I. Komnenos (1143 - 1180) performed a great military and political struggle against the Turks, they could not be successfully stopped and continued to advance towards the west coast of Asia Minor. As Turnator says 'the limits of the empire at the south were set by the Meander River, the city of Chonai being at the very edge of this border' (Turnator, 2000, p. 90). It is true if the description by Michael Choniates, the former bishop of Chonia is taken into consideration:

> The town [Chonai] was almost the only place that remained uncaptured by the Turks. For they failed to overrun the whole of Asia only to the extent that they were unable to despoil Chonai, as long as it was fortified by the wall of his presence. For that nation, bursting forth from high in the east, flooded everything, but this town alone remained above water, since it had this most just and perfect Noah securing it inside and out. (Choniates, cited in Hendy, 1985, p. 51).

In a nutshell, although the Byzantine Empire lost most of its core territories in Asia Minor to the Turks, the empire continued to possess the coastal regions, which were contributing to the provisioning of Constantinople during the twelfth century.

What cannot be doubted is that the twelfth century witnessed the shift in the economic centre of the empire and in the supply zones of Constantinople. The city in this century substantially depended on the western territories than before in order to feed the capital. Although the rich arable lands of the western littoral of Asia Minor and the river valleys (Hendy, 1985, p. 46) were still the in the possession of the Byzantine Empire and were the supply zones of the capital, the general picture reveals that the arable and very rich lands in the Balkans producing the cereal corps, comprising Thracian, Thessalian, Macedonian and the Danubian Plains (Hendy, 1985, p. 45), played an gradually increasing role in the provisioning of Constantinople. In addition to these territories, the Aegean Islands and central Greece had a contributory function to the supply of the capital in a wide range of food items (Turnator, 2000, p. 84). As cited in the account of Bartolf of Nangris, a participant in the First Crusade, who was in Byzantium in 1096-97:

> The citizens [of Constantinople] are continually plentifully provided by busy shipping traffic, with what they need. Cyprus, Rhodes, and Mytilene and Corinth and very many islands serve this city. Achaia and Bulgaria and Graecia take trouble to provide for this city, and send precisely their best to it (Bartolf of Nangis, as cited in Turnator, 2000, p. 84).

Turning to the bounders of the empire in the west, it is directly stated in Anna Komnena's the Alexiad that the neighbouring Bosporus on the cast and Adrianople on the west drawn the boundaries of the Roman sovereignty before the reign of Alexios I, however, he 'enlarged the circle of his rule' by fighting against the barbarians, and 'made the Adriatic sea his frontier' (Anna Comnena, 2000, p. 113). Despite of several conflicts over who controlled the region, the Danubian River could be accepted as the border of the Byzantine Empire (Haldon, 2005, p. 143). Although numerous attacks of Turkish tribes and the Hungarians and the rebellions of the inhabitants, The Komnenian emperors, especially Manuel succeeded to 'restore and consolidate the external Balkan frontier' (Magdalino, 1993, p. 134). Moreover, not only the great efforts were made to keep Serbia under control, but also a client kingdom status was imposed on the Hungarian Kingdom, which 'remained an ally of the Byzantine emperors with some minor disagreements over Serbia until the Fourth Crusade' (Haldon, 2005, p. 143). In other words, the Byzantine emperors carefully and in a planned way worked 'to keep at least the northern part of this zone Danubian zone] uninhabited and uncultivated in order to deter invaders' (Magdalino, 1993, p. 134). As Turnator says confirmed by Odo of Deuil, the chaplain of Louis II in the Second Crusade: 'The country [Belgrad, Bulgaria] is wooded meadow fodder growing woodland... It abounds in good things which grow of their own accord and would be suitable for other things if the region had cultivators' (Odo of Deuil, as cited in Turnator, 2000, p. 84). As Niketas Choniates wrote that the emperor [Manuel II] ordered to rebuild the walls of Zevgminon (along the Istros River) (Turnator, 2000, p. 87), and 'showed the greatest concern for the fortifications of Belgrade, built walls around Nis, and colonized Branicevo' in his way return to the 'Roman borders' in 1166 (Niketas Choniates, 1984, p. 77). Furthermore, while the imperial rule over Dalmatia was tried to be continued, Bulgaria was firmly in the possession of the Byzantine Empire until the end of the twentieth century (Haldon, 2005, p. 143). Therefore, it could be positively claimed that the Danubian zone marks the western borders of the Byzantine Empire in the twelfth century, and within these boundaries 'Byzantium remained slightly stronger than any of its neighbours' (Treadgold, 1997, p. 650).

These arable and fertile territories within the western boundaries of the Byzantine Empire regularly supplied the Constantinople throughout the twelfth century. As Turnator claims 'after passing through the uncultivated area in the north', the Crusaders could be exceedingly supply themselves in these rich Byzantine territories (Turnator, 2000, p. 87). Odo of Deuil's own words can be considered as a support for the previous statement. He wrote that:

> [F]rom the time when we entered Bulgaria, a land belonging to the Greeks, our valor was put to the test and our emotions were aroused... But we crossed the wasteland and entered the exceedingly beautiful and rich territory which stretches forward without interruption all the way to Constantinople (Odo of Deuil, as cited in Turnator, 2000, p. 87).

Furthermore, the chronicler of the Fourth Crusade Geoffrey De Villehardouin gave a brief account of the regions around Adrianpole and Christopolis as 'very strong and very rich' and 'very full of people' (Marzials, 2007, pp. 63, 79). He also described Abydos, located at the entrance of the Dardanelles, as 'well furnished with good things, with corn and meats, and with all things of which man has need' (Marzials, 2007, p. 70) and Adramyttium as 'well supplied with corn and meats, and other goods' (Marzials, 2007, p. 72). According to the author of the Gesta, Bartolf of Nangis and Benjamin of Tudela, this abundance could be attested in central Greece, Graecia, Achaia, Macedonia and many different parts of the region (Marzials, 2007, p. 88). In addition to that these regions were fascinatingly rich in cereal production and viticulture, since the regions had wide pastures, animal breeding was a vitally important occupation there. Moreover, daily products of the region and some of local monasteries, like cheese and lard, in addition to vegetables and fruits, were sent to the capital in abundance (Turnator, 2000, p. 87). Therefore, despite of the lack of more accurate and certain quantitative information about the productivity and the amount of production, it could be claimed that the fruitful and prosperous territories of the Byzantine Empire in the European part of the empire constituted the major supply zones of the provisioning system of Constantinople throughout the twelfth century.

Among these important supply zones of Constantinople, the capital also derived its provision from the Byzantine islands. Firstly, the islands in the Propontis or in the vicinity of Constantinople had a significant role in the provisioning of the capital. According to Villehardouin, 'there are islands close by [Constantinople] which you can see from here, and these are inhabited, and produce corn, and food and other things' (Marzials, 2007, p. 27). Furthermore, the territories around the capital, especially Chalcedon and Scutari, were described as fair and rich by him (Marzials, 2007, p. 28). Apart from these islands in the Propontis and in the vicinity of the capital, the Aegean and the Mediterranean islands were also important to supply the capital. According to Elisabeth Malamut, depending upon their size, the Byzantine islands are divided into three categories as small, medium and big. On the big islands such as Rhodes, Euboea, Crete and Cyprus had a great range of diversity in agricultural products, and were much more vital role than the small and medium ones for the supply of the capital because they were able to produce the surplus to export. For example, Rhodes was famous for its fertility, the quality of its wine and both the capital and the crusades were provisioned by it (Turnator, 2000, p. 84). On the other hand, even though less than the big ones, many other small and medium-sized islands in the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean played an undeniable role in the supply of the capital. While the small islands sometimes could be left uncultivated or totally abandoned, the medium-sized ones was never did during the Byzantine period. Wine was exported from Chios, 'Mytilene was abundant in wheat and vineyards and very suitable for animal husbandry' (Turnator, 2000, p. 84). Moreover, Corfu and Samos were the major olive oil production centres in addition to grape and wheat cultivation and animal husbandry. Fruits, wheat and wine were provided by Andros and Naxos (Turnator, 2000, p. 85). The Byzantine islands in the Propontis, the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean continued to supply the capital simultaneously with the Balkans and Asia Minor in the twelfth century.

The essential function of the land was a source of produce to supply the population of the empire, especially the inhabitants of Constantinople (Frankopan, 2009, p. 114). Although the population of the city significantly reached 'a second climax' (Turnator, 2000, p. 90) during the age of accelerated growth, comprising eleventh and twelfth centuries (Laiou & Morrisson, 2007, pp. 90-115), the Komnenian period never experienced a recorded food shortage in the capital (Turnator, 2000, p. 90) because the hinterland of the capital was able to abundantly supply it. According to contemporary accounts, the capital was rich, prosperous, very large and populous, and the merchant ships tremendously occupied the harbours to bring provision to the population of Constantinople (Turnator, 2000, p. 90). Michael Choniates, the archbishop of Athens (1175-1204) recognised and defined the land-use in the southern Balkans to supply Constantinople in the twelfth century in the following passage:

> For what do you [in Constantinople] lack? Nor the wheat-bearing plains of Macedonia, Thrace and Thessaly, which are farmed by us; nor the wines of Euboia, Ptelion, Chios and Rhodes, which are pressed by us; nor the fine garments which are woven by our Theban and Corinthian fingers; nor all of the moneys which, just as many rivers flow into one sea, flow into the Queen City [Constantinople] (Choniates, cited in Hendy, 1985, p. 51).

In addition to the list, local merchants exported the fish of the Black Sea to Constantinople from its northern littoral, 'the passage to which was yet under the control of Byzantine rulers' (Turnator, 2000, p. 91). Thus, it could

be claimed that the Balkans, Asia Minor and the Byzantine islands in the Propontis, The Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean, together with the northern littoral of the Black Sea, continued to supply Constantinople with a great diversity of foodstuff in the twelfth century.

1.3. Privileges to Foreigners from 992 until 1204

The privileges, particularly economic ones, were cautiously bestowed to foreigners, especially Italians, 'as a consequence of the political situation' (Turnator, 2000, p. 95). These privileges to foreigners will gain a vital role in the Palaiologan Period. Therefore, this part of the first chapter is intent to analyse firstly the origins of the foreign involvement in the Byzantine commerce, secondly, the privileges granted during the Komnenian Period because of the political requirements.

In 945, the Byzantine emperor endowed to the Russians the right to send ships with the agendas and merchants while they had the official certificate of the Russian ruler. A place in St. Mamas is given them, however, they had to enter the capital from one gate in groups of fifty without weapons, and they had to depart immediately after made their sells. Despite of the existence of kommerkiario, which were authorized imperial officers for customs affairs (Oikonomides, 1986, passim), any exemption from the fee were accorded to the Russians at the entrance to the Bosporus (Turnator, 2000, p. 94). On the other hand, in 992, each Venetian ship had to pay more than thirty solidi based on imperial kommerkiario on the Dardanelles at Abydos to enter the straits. Nevertheless, after the intercession of the Venetian Doge and the senate, the charge was reduced to two solidi on entrance and fifteen on leaving the straits (Hendy, 1985, p. 592). Additionally, The Logothete of the Dromos was employed as the sole inspector of Venetian commercial affairs, both the examination of the cargo and the determination of the amount of the tax. 'In return, the Venetians agreed to become subjects of the empire, to help the Byzantine troops and to transport them to Longobardia on their ships' (Turnator, 2000, p. 94). By comparing these to agreements, it could be easy to understand the importance of the privileges to the Italians, especially Venetians (Turnator, 2000, p. 94).

During the Komnenian Period, the Byzantine Empire had to face two dangerous threats: Turks from the east and the Normans from the west. While the Turks mostly occupied Asia Minor, the Normans succeeded to invade the western territories of the Byzantine Empire, including several islands. During the time, the Byzantine Navy was incapable to resist the Norman power in the sea. Therefore, finding allies against these threats was a vitally important aim of the Byzantine policy.

The concessions to the Venetians, which was a might sea power, could be seen in this light. In 1082, a quarter at Perama and three landing sites in the capital were given to the Venetians in addition to the right to trade in thirty-two cities including Laodicea, Ephesus, Corinth and Adrianople, but except for the islands and the Black sea. Furthermore, the Venetians were freed from to pay all taxes on economic transactions, on sales and purchase, and from the kommerkion, the native Byzantines had to pay its full rate of 10% (Turnator, 2000, p. 95). These concessions gradually increased as a result of several conflicts and wars. After the Venetians devastated Rhodes, Samos and Lesbos in 1124, John II Komnenos were obliges to recognise all the privileges given by Alexios I. Komnenos, and to give the Venetians the right to enter Cyprus and Crete, too. Moreover, Manuel I Komnenos were compelled and to enlarge the Venetian quarter in Constantinople in 1147, and to return the Venetians goods, which were confiscated in 1171 (Heyd, 1975, p. 240).

The fiercely competitive Constantinopolitan market included not only the Venetians, but also the Pisans and especially the Genoeses, who 'were the later-comers to the Byzantine market' (Turnator, 2000, p. 96) and the chief rival of the Venetians. Firstly, the Pisans gained the same but less beneficent privileges with the Venetians and a quarter with a landing site in Constantinople (Heyd, 1975, p. 210). On the other hand, the Genoese merchants, who tried to take place in the competition in the capital for the first time in 1142, were granted commercial privileges, a landing site in the capital and the decrease of the kommerkion into 4% in 1155 (Turnator, 2000, p. 96).

The Byzantine rulers always tried to balance the power between these foreign existences and influences in their territories by using the conflicts among them and by granting privileges to other Italian cities when it was a necessity. However, the people of Constantinople fiercely reacted to the growing foreign influx into the capital at a tremendous rate, which caused the Latin massacres of 1171 and 1182. As a result, during the twelfth century, these Latin colonies, which were established in the Byzantine territories and the capital, had not the effect on the provisioning of Constantinople on a large scale (Turnator, 2000, pp. 97-99).

2. The Supply System Of Constantinople During The Palaiologan Period

2.1. Background

The Latin Occupation of Constantinople in 1204 totally changed the commercial structure of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea, where the East and the West came together. While the Black Sea was integrated to the commercial system of the Mediterranean, the western merchants, especially the Italians, succeeded to extend their commercial zones to a great extent. Thus, the western merchants easily accessed to the rich Far East markets, and transported diverse agricultural products and other food items, including spices, silk, slaves etc. to the west. This trading system, which was dominated by the Italians, contained the food trade, and after the Latin Occupation of Constantinople, these western merchants had a vital role in the supply of not only local and western markets, but also the capital city of the Byzantine Empire (Turnator, 2000, pp. 99-100) The fragmentation in the political space, which started long before the Latin Occupation and accelerated with it, remained until the Ottoman unity in the fifteenth century. However, the economic unity in the area was provided under the control of the Venetians and the Genoese in order to serve their own interests (Laiou, 2008, p. 282).

After the Re-Conquest of Constantinople by the Byzantine Empire under the Palaiologan dynasty, the empire had to follow a completely different method, which was partly a continuation of the Latin Period, from the previous centuries to feed its capital city because of the 'increased foreign penetration, particularly Ottomans, into Byzantine lands', and the influx of the foreign merchants in the Byzantine economy, especially commercial system. According to Turnator, if the whole period is considered, 'the most important turning point was the middle of the fourteenth century' because 'the empire shrank almost to the immediate vicinity of Constantinople' and the foreign merchants took control these lands after the middle of the fourteenth century (Turnator, 2000, p. 92).

The provisioning system of Constantinople under the Palaiologan rule was affected by the enhanced acts of the foreign merchants and the territorial losses. Firstly, the market rules became the dominant element in the transportation of the foodstuffs into the capital during the Palaiologan Period, in which the foreign traders, particularly Italians, turned into the main actors of the provisioning. Secondly, the territorial losses of the Byzantine Empire and the Italian penetration into these lands made the Black Sea the most vital supply area for the provisioning of the capital during the Palaiologan Period (Turnator, 2000, p. 92).

2.2. Byzantine Borders and Supply Zones of Constantinople during the Palaiologan Period

The capital of the Byzantine Empire transformed into just one of the cities in the region, and had to be fed just like an ordinary urban centre because 'neither the Black Sea nor the other Byzantine lands were reserved for the demand exclusively of Constantinople.' In other words, although Constantinople was still an important commercial centre, it had no anymore the primary status. Its provisioning was significantly 'determined by the rules of demand and supply' rather than interfere of the Byzantine state to the merchants. During the Palaiologan Period, the Black Sea and the Aegean were suitable places for the western merchants to replace 'the partial loss of the regions that was under Muslim threat' because of their 'rich soil and proximity to luxury goods of the far east' (Turnator, 2000, pp. 125-126).

The Byzantine Empire tried to regain their territories in Asia Minor after the empire recaptured Constantinople in 1261. Before the fourteenth century, the Sangarios River was the border between the Byzantine and the Turkish territories towards the end of the reign of Michael VIII Palaiologos (Turnator, 2000, p. 131), who 'lost nothing but some border outposts in Anatolia' (Treadgold, 1997, p. 745). While the Byzantine Empire struggled to survive in north-western parts of Asia Minor, the Turks expanded their territories towards to Aegean Sea in south-western parts of the peninsula. In 1291, the emperor Andronikos Palaiologos [1282-1328], checked both the Sangarios frontier and Nymphaeum, which was a border fort after the loss of the Meander valley (Treadgold, 1997, p. 749). According to Doukas, during the reign of Andronikos Palaiologos,

> Ephesus, the metropolis of Asia, and the province of Caria fell to Menteshe. Lydia, as far as Smyrna, was taken by Aydin. Magnesia as far as Pergamon and the entire province of Magedon fell to Saruchan. All Phrygia fell to Germiyan. Phrygia, Magna extending from the city of Assos to the Hellespont, fell to Karasi. All Bithynia and part of the land of the Paphlagonians fell to Othman. All were Turkish leaders (Doukas, 1975, p. 59).

The aim of the severe advance of the Turks in Asia Minor was not plunder and looting by raids, but to settle permanently there. Ibn Battuta, who visited the region in 1331-1332, mentioned the Turk rulers and their possessions in Anatolia such as Menteseogulları and Aydınogulları (Ibn Battuta, 2000, pp. 411-426). Moreover, he wrote that Orhan, who was the ruler of Brusa, was the greatest and the richest among the other Turkish rulers (Ibn Battuta, 2000, p. 430). The Ottoman Turks

continued their advance, and conquered Nicea in 1329. The Civil War in the Byzantium in the mid of the fourteenth century facilitated Turkish expansion, therefore, during the time, the Byzantines almost totally lost their control in Asia Minor except for Philadelphia and a few coastal towns. In other words, the Byzantine sovereignty over the Asia Minor practically ended up by this time. After the fall of Philadelphia to the Turks in 1391, it became certain that Asia Minor was 'foreign territory' to the Byzantine Empire (Turnator, 2000, p. 135).

Turning to the west, Serbians and Bulgarians begun to threaten the borders of the Byzantine Empire again, thus, the empire had to face these strong and ambitious enemies in Macedonia and Thrace. The Black Sea coast of Thrace and the Propontis coast could not be defended very well, and were plundered by 'a joint Bulgar-Mongol expedition until the territory in the vicinity of Constantinople.' Although the Byzantines tried to strengthen their position in the Balkans by expeditions and possible alliances, these territories was under constantly increasing threat in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. During the reign of Michael VIII Palaiologos, while the area around Mesembria was the border between the Byzantine Empire and its northern neighbors, the border between the empire and Serbia seems to have stood around Pristina (Turnator, 2000, p. 130).

The western Black Sea littoral experienced long and fluxional period of struggle among the Byzantines, the Bulgarians and the Turks during the fourteenth century. However, it is clear that the Byzantine Empire, Serbian and Bulgarian kingdoms were all the tributary states of the Ottoman Turks, and the Byzantines possessed 'all the land north to Mesembria on the Black Sea coast as the grant from the Ottomans. Although the borders and the possession very frequently changed in the region throughout the first half of the fifteenth century, 'the Byzantine border along the Black Sea coast could not have exceeded a few isolated cities in 1420s'. On the other hand, if the Propontis coast is considered, according to several contemporary accounts, 'the towns between Selymbria and Constantinople' were the possessions of the Byzantine Empire. According to Bakalapulos, the border between the Byzantine Empire and the Ottoman Turks was drawn by the city of Heraclea after 1410s (Turnator, 2000, pp. 138-139).

According to Hendy, the Propontis and the Black Sea ports were the major cereal suppliers for the capital in the fourteenth century. Furthermore, he claims that the Danubian plain started to be fully exploit in the fourteenth century(Hendy, 1985, pp. 47-48). It could be confirmed because the loss of the Byzantine rule over the hinterland of Constantinople was one the reasons of the increased role of the Black Sea in the food supply of the capital during the Palaiologan Period (Turnator, 2000, p. 139). Although Constantinople continued to import provision from western Asia Minor, the Aegean islands, the Thracian and Thessalian plains, southern Greece, during the period, the major supply zone of Constantinople was the Black Sea because the Turkish invasions in Asia Minor, the upheavals in the Balkans, which forced to state left the hinterland of the capital uncultivated, and the internal economic and political problems caused disruption in the regular flow of foodstuffs into the capital. According to Turnator, when the sieges of Constantinople is considered, changes in cereal prices were the most important evidences for that the Black Sea is a vital zone for the provisioning of Constantinople under the Palaiologan Period (Turnator, 2000, pp. 143-144).

The importance of supplying Constantinople through the straits could be observed when the sieges of Constantinople and the cutting of food supplies which the Ottomans used in their sieges are considered. In other words, as Nevra Necipoğlu clams 'the Ottomans were primarily responsible for the shortage of provisions and other economic problems that afflicted the inhabitants of Constantinople in varying degrees' (Necipoğlu, 2009, pp. 157). Doukas mentioned 'a terrible dearth of grain, wine oil and other provisions within the city' and the lack of wood in order to make bread or cook food during the siege between 1384 and 1402 (Doukas, 1975, p. 83). Furthermore, during the last siege of the capital by the Ottomans, Firuz Aga, one of Mehmed II's commanders, ordered the army that

> Do not allow ships sailing from the Hellespont to the Black Sea or from the Black Sea to the Hellespont, no matter under whose flag they may be sailing-Genoese, Venetian, Constantinopolitan, Kaffatinian, Trapezundian, Amisinian, Sinopean, or even under my own flag, and no matter what class they are, triremes, biremes, barques, or skiffs (Doukas, 1975, p. 199).

Although Constantine XI especially attended to supply the city with provisions, gathering the wheat and other foodstuffs from the islands and the Morea, his efforts were not successful since Nicolo Babaro, who was a Venetian present in the city during the siege, noted that 'growing lack of provisions, particularly of bread, wine and other things necessary to sustain life' (Necipoğlu, 2009, pp. 222-223).

When the origins of the foodstuff that were consumed in the capital of the Byzantine Empire during the Palaiologan Period are considered, it is easy to understand the supply zones of the city during the period.

Turnator gives following information about the origins of the foodstuffs consumed in Constantinople during the Palaiologan Period. When the subject was wheat:

> Rudisito (Rodosto- Propontis/Thrace), Caffa (Black Sea), Lifetti (Black Sea), Asilo (western coast of the Black Sea), Maocastro (Akkerman- Black Sea), Varna (Black Sea), Zaorra (Zagora?- Black Sea), Vezina (Vicinia- Black Sea), Sinopoli (Black Sea) were the major ports which exported wheat to Constantinople. Additionally, Rodosto, Caffa and Varna exported barley to the capital (Turnator, 2000, p. 144).

On the other hand, the people of the capital consumed enormous amount of meat and fish, which were transported from the mouth of the Danube, Kilia and the Sea of Tana. Moreover, the Black Sea ports were the main supplier of a luxury food, caviar (Turnator, 2000, pp. 144-145). The wine consumed in Constantinople under the Palaiologan rule was imported mostly from southern Italy, Greece and the islands. Moreover, while Marsailles exported wine to the Byzantine Empire, Cretan wine, too, was sold in Constantinople. Moreover, the Blacks Sea and the Propontis ports were the main wine suppliers of the capital. Thrace, Asia Minor, Italy, but especially the Aegean Islands were the dominant producers and exporters of oil consumed in the capital. The merchants of Monemvasia had the great portion of olive oil trade from Morea to Constantinople (Turnator, 2000, p. 146). In addition, while honey was transported from the west to Constantinople and to Tana, salt exported from the Sea of Azov and Caffa (Turnator, 2000, p. 147). In nutshell, the provisioning of the capital begun to base on the immediate vicinity of it, but substantially the Black Sea trade, in which the western merchant were dominant, after the Byzantine Empire lost the hinterland of Constantinople in Asia Minor and the European part of the empire.

2.3. The Italian and the Byzantine Merchants in the Food Supply of Constantinople during the Palaiologan Period

The gradual losses of the Byzantine territories throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the Balkans to the Serbs and Bulgarians, in Asia Minor to the Turks were firmly related to the increasing importance of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean commercial activity to feed the population of Constantinople. However, the existence of the Italian merchants in the commercial activities within the Byzantine territories became dominant, and their quarters in Constantinople transformed into a widespread and permanent settlements after the Latin Occupation in 1204 (Matschke, 1980, p. 772). The Italian merchants had an important role in trading within the Byzantine Empire and in provisioning of its capital through their better commercial connections than the Byzantine merchants with the Black Sea. In other words, a very rapid invasion of the Byzantine market by foreign, especially the Venetian and the Genoese, merchants through their economic privileges granted by the Byzantine emperors followed the almost continuous territorial losses (Turnator, 2000, p. 147). The more the empire lost its territories, the more Constantinople depended on imports for supplies in foodstuffs and other items. Although the Italian merchants dominated the Byzantine market and the food supply of Constantinople after the opening of the Black Sea, the Byzantine merchants played a secondary role in the supply of the capital with 'minor trading capacity which very often did not extend to regions beyond Constantinople/Pera' (Turnator, 2000, p. 148). The food need of the market and the people of Constantinople were significantly supplied by these two important merchant groups in the Palaiologan Period.

The Italian influx into the Byzantine Empire and its economy started in the tenth century, and increasingly continued. In the thirteenth century, the Italian dominance in the Byzantine economy became firm through the economic concessions and privileges, which they used to extend their influence in the Byzantine trade. As Laiou claims the western influence in the economic life of the empire was dominant strikingly after 1320s, and 'Byzantium became a hinterland to Italian-dominated markets, and its economy cannot be discussed except in connection with the activities of the Italian merchants in the Eastern Mediterranean' (Laiou, 1980-1981, p. 179) The commercial activities in the Black Sea included the food trade from which both Byzantine and western ports benefited. The Italians, especially the Venetians and the Genoese, had the most important and vital role for the transportation of the foodstuffs from western ports to the Byzantine Empire and from there to the western ports (Turnator, 2000, p. 150).

The Byzantine merchants, unlike the long distance, high capacity of the Italian merchants, were essentially active in a short distance, low capacity trade in the Black Sea and the Aegean. Their limited scopes of activities were contained within the retail markets of the Byzantine cities. Although their secondary roles in the commercial activities, the Byzantine merchants, who were components of the commercial system, transported significant amount of goods and foodstuffs between the Black Sea, the Aegean ports, and Constantinople-Pera (Turnator, 2000, p. 162). Furthermore, it is a necessity two state that there were two groups of Byzantine merchants. While the first group were consisted of smaller merchants and retailers in local trade, the second group contained bankers and merchants with larger capital, whose most 'prominent members were the Constantinopolitan elite, high officials of the court and the members of the imperial family.' According to Turnator, the main

reason behind the involvement of the aristocracy into the trade for survive was the loss of their lands (Turnator, 2000, pp. 162-166).

The trade in Medieval Period essentially included sales, loans and exchange contracts, however, mainly the commenda contract, which was a basic legal method to pool money and to bring together investors and managers, made the expansion of trade possible (Lopez & Raymond, 1955, p. 174). The unilateral commenda could be described like that:

> [O]ne party entrusts capital to another party, who is to use it in an overseas commercial venture and to return it together with a previously established share of the profits and the travelling party receives one fourth. Any loss on the capital is borne exclusively by the investor; the traveling party in return, loses the reward for his labour if no profit is made (Lopez & Raymond, 1955, p. 175).

On the other hand, the proportion of the investment and the profit could be different in the bilateral commenda, in which 'the investing party who remains at home contributes two third of the capital whereas the travelling party contributes one third in addition to his labour' (Lopez & Raymond, 1955, p. 175). In this kind of commenda, while 'the profits are divided by the half according to original investments, losses are borne by both investors according to their respective contributions to the capital' (Lopez & Raymond, 1955, p. 175). The Byzantine merchants constituted commenda contracts sometimes with among themselves, but sometime with the Italians to decrease the economic risks or to afford to join probably more profitable ventures. Although the activities of the Byzantine merchants as secondary compared to the Italians, the food supply of Constantinople vitally depended on both of these merchant groups.

Conclusion

Throughout its history, Constantinople's provisioning system evolved in response to changing geopolitical landscapes and economic dynamics. Initially rooted in the strict control mechanisms of the Roman Empire, the Byzantine capital inherited and adapted these practices to suit its own needs. Under Byzantine rule, Constantinople became not only a political and cultural center but also a bustling hub of trade and commerce, necessitating a sophisticated system to ensure its sustenance.

The loss of Egypt to the Arabs in the 7th century dealt a significant blow to Constantinople's traditional grain supply, prompting Byzantine rulers to explore alternative sources closer to home. Thrace, Bithynia, Asia Minor, and the Aegean Islands emerged as vital hinterlands, providing essential foodstuffs to sustain the capital's burgeoning population amidst regional upheavals and invasions.

The transformative events of the Latin Occupation in 1204 marked a pivotal shift in Constantinople's provisioning system. Italian merchants, particularly Venetians and Genoese, seized control of key trade routes, leveraging their commercial prowess to dominate the supply chain. The Palaiologan Period witnessed the consolidation of Italian influence, especially in the lucrative Black Sea trade, where colonies were established to exploit its abundant resources.

Amidst these changes, Byzantine merchants found themselves relegated to secondary roles, their once-thriving trade networks overshadowed by Italian dominance. Despite this, Constantinople remained a vital node in the medieval trading network, its provisioning system intricately intertwined with commercial activities and market dynamics.

In conclusion, the provisioning of Constantinople evolved from its Roman origins to reflect the shifting geopolitical and economic realities of the Byzantine Empire. While state control waned over time, the city's resilience and adaptability ensured its survival as a vibrant center of trade and commerce, sustained by the strategic ingenuity of merchants navigating the complexities of medieval economics.

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Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Beyanı

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