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**Some Merchant Families in Constantinople Before,  
During and After the Fall of the City 1453\***

A social history of the transition from the Byzantine millennium to Turkish rule has not yet been written; nor is one likely to appear in the near future. Nevertheless, we can already safely assume that two of the most interesting and important areas dealt with in such a social history will be the business of change and merchants and the transition. These themes are of especial interest because the city of Constantinople was not only a centre of medieval and early-modern world politics, but it also functioned simultaneously as the hub of world trade; it is of especial importance because the alterations in trade and the adjustments made by the merchants in the metropolis on the Bosphorus can reveal much about the nature of the social changes related to the passage to the Turkish era.

Of course, Constantinople in the final one hundred years of Byzantine rule had long since ceased to be the city it had been at the zenith of Byzantine power and splendour, and a certain amount of time was naturally required before the extensive area of the conquered metropolis could be settled, built up and inhabited again to such an extent that it no longer had to fear comparison with its illustrious past. However, it should be emphasised at the beginning that the crisis in the city's Late Byzantine and early Ottoman period did not affect its commercial function in the same way that it did its political position and demographic situation. The actually logical and almost involuntary conjecture that the East-West trade routes during the latter period of the Palaeologan dynasty gave the city on the Golden Horn a wide berth because it was no longer attractive enough to either foreign or domestic merchants

\* This essay is based on a paper presented at a conference held at Princeton University in November 1994 on "The business of change - merchants and the fall of Constantinople". I would like to thank the organisers and in particular Professor Judith Herrin for enabling me to attend what for me was a very important gathering.

has been confirmed by research carried out over the past few years<sup>1</sup> —as has the thesis which sometimes seems even more certain that the trading currents in the early Ottoman era had to avoid the city because the important access for them through the straits remained closed, at least to foreign merchants<sup>2</sup>.

It has so far been more or less impossible to express newly discovered knowledge concerning Constantinople as an economic location and transit trading centre shortly before and after the change of power expressed in terms of precise figures of the volume of trade and the number of merchants present. However, in the meantime we are now in a position to describe the activities and fates of a few individual merchants before, during and after the conquest of 1453, which in addition to many discontinuities also highlight some surprising continuities.

I would like to begin with a merchant or rather a family of merchants of whom something has already been said and written. I refer here of course to a certain Choza/Chogia Is(s)e/Inse and his son Jachop/Jacob, who in 1437-38 were among the business partners of the Venetian merchant Giacomo Badoer in Constantinople and are therefore entered in his account book. The father is only mentioned in connection with a single transaction deal as the purchaser of a quantity of wax to the value of barely 250 hyperpers, which Badoer sold on behalf of the Venetian Piero Michiel and his compagni<sup>3</sup>. The son Jacob was probably only entered in the account book with regard to the receipt of a few bundles of cloth from Alexandria and passing them on to the linaropolo Chaloianni<sup>4</sup>. It is therefore not the amount of business which was recorded to have been done with Badoer which has focused the interest of research

1. Cf. N. Oikonomidès, *Hommes d'affaires grecs et latins à Constantinople*, Montréal - Paris 1979. A. E. Laiou, "The Greek merchant of the Palaeologan period: A collective portrait", *Πρακτικά τῆς Ἀκαδημίας Ἀθηνῶν*, 57 (1982) 96-132.

2. H. Ahrweiler, "Istanbul, carrefour des routes continentales et maritimes aux XVe-XIXe siècles" 1974, in: *Byzance: les pays et les territoires*, London 1976, no. V; M. Mollat, "Istanbul à la rencontre de la mer Noire et de la Méditerranée", *Association Internationale d'Études du Sud-Est Européen, Bulletin*, XII/2 (Bucharest 1974) 23-36. H. Inalcik, "The question of the closing of the Black Sea under the Ottomans", *Ἀρχαῖον Πόντου*, 35 (1979) 74-100.

3. *Il Libro dei conti di Giacomo Badoer (Costantinopoli 1436-1440)*, edd. U. Dorini - T. Bertelè [hereafter *Badoer*], Rome 1956, pp. 375, 382.

4. *Badoer*, pp. 178, 236.

towards the people, but rather their names, the forms of address and designations of origin used for them. M. M. Šitikov drew attention to the fact that Choza Ise is explicitly referred to as *turcho*<sup>5</sup>. N. Necipoğlu is particularly interested in the different forms of address for father and son. While Jacob appears as *chir = kyr*, which indicates a firm position in the orthodox Byzantine milieu, the father bears a title which Badoer frequently uses in addition to *haci* for his Ottoman-Muslim clients. It is this title enigma which has led to speculation that the person referred to as Choza Ise *turcho* was formerly a Byzantine who at an unknown point in time became an Ottoman subject and was converted to Islam, whereas his son adhered to the Christian faith and therefore could and had to be honourably and respectfully described by Badoer as *kyr (sir)*<sup>6</sup>. C. Kafadar recently expressed a similar opinion, with the proviso that the son may already have been a Moslem too and that he only bore the Greek title for convenience<sup>7</sup>. Kafadar was also especially interested in how this family history continued and what became of a family of such extraction two generations later —without, however, being able to answer this question himself.

Unfortunately, I do not have any new material pertaining to the descendants of Choza Ise at my disposal. However, I would like to refer to some source information which sheds further light on his family and which to a certain extent corrects previously expressed assumptions concerning its origin. In an essay written by the present author back in 1989<sup>8</sup>, I referred to a directive issued by the government of Genoa to the authorities of the Genoese colony of Caffa in the Crimea dated 28

5. M. M. Šitikov, "Константинополь и венецианская торговля в первой половине XV. в. по данным книги счетов Джакомо Бадоеера" (Constantinople and Venetian Commerce During the First Half of the 15th Century According to Giacomo Badoer's Book of Account), *Viz. Vrem.*, 30 (1969) 48-62; p. 57.

6. N. Necipoğlu, "Ottoman Merchants in Constantinople During the First Half of the Fifteenth Century", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 16 (1992) 158-169; 163. See also eadem, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, Ph. D. Harvard Univ., Ann Arbor 1990, p. 352f.

7. C. Kafadar, "A Death in Venice (1575): Anatolian Muslim Merchants Trading in the Serenissima", *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 10 (1986) 191-218; p. 193, note 8.

8. K.-P. Matschke, "Tuchproduktion und Tuchproduzenten in Thessalonike und in anderen Städten und Regionen des späten Byzanz", *Βυζαντιακά*, 9 (1989) 47-87; p. 65, note 67.

January 1425. It emerges from this directive that a certain Coaia Ysse de Camalia had received great wealth in this centre of Black Sea trade, but had recently expressed his aim to leave his long-standing domicile and to transport his assets to Constantinople. The colonial administration was instructed to halt this intention by granting particular financial securities and by having him read a special letter from the central government<sup>9</sup>. From a letter bearing the same date and written to the same addressees it may be seen that not only Coaia Ysse intended to migrate, but a whole group of Armenians and Greeks (including several who like Coaia Ysse had «greatly increased their assets» during their stay in Caffa) similarly wanted to leave the Black Sea colony, according to written and oral information received in Genoa. In the opinion of the central government, this project would have been harmful not only to the city of Caffa, but also to those wanting to leave, and therefore care was to be taken that at least the wealthier among them should not be allowed to implement their plans without the approval of the local authorities<sup>10</sup>. If this is the heralded statement which was to be presented to Coaia Ysse, neither the words designed to win him over nor the hidden threats contained therein seem to have distracted him from his intention. It is conspicuous that he was not described as a Turk as he was twelve years later; then again neither was he assigned to the Armenians and Greeks, who were mentioned in the second letter. In any case, the first letter from 1425 confirms that Isa and his son were certainly not entered in Badoer's account book by coincidence, but that they were actually successful merchants, and that at least the elder thus bore his title *hoca* with justification, as long as it was used to indicate commercial activity.

As far as the origin of the family is concerned, I originally linked the addition de Camalia when naming Isa to the locality Camali on the Asia Minor shoreline of the Dardanelles, which had already long been in Turkish possession, and which would thus have provided sufficient space and time for the supposed conversion of an originally Greek family to Islam<sup>11</sup>. However, I have since come across a text which further complicates the origin and descent of the family. On 25 February 1382, a

9. N. Bănescu, "Archives d'État de Gênes. Officium provisionis Romaniae", II, *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, 1-2 (1967) 235-263; no. XXXVII, p. 236f.

10. *Ibid.*, no. XXXVIII, p. 238.

11. Matschke, "Tuchproduktion", p. 65, note 67, with references.

certain Coia Isse, the son and sole heir of the late Aurami Camalia, an inhabitant of Surgat and olim burgensis of Caffa, transferred upon receipt of payment amounting to 80 sommi argenti to the notary public Bartolomeo di Sant'Olcese all claims which he had against the likewise deceased citizen of Caffa Andrea da Levanto stemming from the sale of cotton which his father had carried out in 1360, as the son was able to prove by presenting a contract which had been drawn up at the time by the notary public Rolandino de Francanis. Coia Isse swore on the Holy Gospel by touching the Holy Scripture that he was older than 18 (and thus fully competent to contract even though he had not attained complete independence). He made his decision in the presence of his uncle Michali de Camalia and Soleyman de Gibelleto eius consororii seu cognati, i.e. two of his closest and most respected relatives, as he explicitly explained, and both swore in the same way as their nephew<sup>12</sup>.

It is most important that the Coia Isse mentioned in the deed of 1382 was still a very young man, for only thus would it be at all possible for him to be the same person as the Choza Isse entered in Badoer's account book of 1437-38. The probability of this connection is increased if one regards the Genoese documents of 1425 as a connecting link. It also turns out that the commercial involvement of the family did not only begin with Isa, but that his father had already been active in the middle of the 14th century as a trader, and that therefore a continuity of commercial activity existed over at least three generations. Moreover, using the information about the first generation of the family also makes it possible to give more details concerning the extraction of the family, even if this question still cannot be comprehensively answered. The city of Surgat/Surchat/Solgat in the Crimea not far from Caffa, which had developed in the 14th century as the southern outpost of the Turkish-Tartar world and become a significant trading centre, is thus shown to have been another domicile of the family<sup>13</sup>. The surname and the designation of origin Camalia/de Camalia, which had been used in 1425 with reference to Coia Ysse and which are also to be found in connection with his father and his uncle, may still be based on a toponym.

12. G. Airdi, *Studi e documenti su Genova e l'Oltremare, I. Note sulla cancellaria di Caffa nel secolo XIV*, Genoa 1974, no. 44, pp. 93-95; cf. also Regest p. 42.

13. Cf. A. L. Jakobson, *Крым в средние века* (Crimea in the Middle Ages), Moscow 1973, pp. 105ff.

However, the suggestion that they refer to a locality in the Dardanelles becomes rather improbable, if not impossible. Things are much clearer in the case of Soleyman de Gibelotto = Gibelet/Dschubail/Byblos in the Lebanon, who was related by marriage, for he evidently belonged to the large number of Levantine immigrants who spread throughout the Black Sea area after the collapse of Crusader domination and even previously during its long-term crisis, and who gave perceptible impetus to the commercial development of the region<sup>14</sup>. A considerable proportion of these settlers were naturally Eastern Christians, but it has been proven they also included a proportion of Moslems, and the first name of Suleyman da Gibeletto indicates that he belonged to the latter. The first names of his relatives — Aurames (Avrames/Abraham), Michael and Isse (Isa/Isaak)— suggest by contrast an Eastern Christian, Armenian or even Jewish direction. In this context we are once again reminded of the Armenians and the Greeks who in 1425 wanted to migrate from Caffa and among whom Coaia Ysse may also have belonged. Mention may also be made in this connection of the fact that the city of Solgat, from where his father Aurames came to Caffa or whither he went from Caffa, owed its development in the 14th century in particular to its very active Armenian element<sup>15</sup>. However, great caution should be exercised when juggling with first names in this way, for M. Balard points out that especially in Caffa it is hardly possible to distinguish between the Greek, Armenian and Turkish-Tartar elements of the population by name alone<sup>16</sup>.

Thus it cannot be altogether discounted that we are dealing with Turkish-Tartar origin or even some other form of Islamic extraction. This is supported not only by the hoca title Isas, but also the name and origin of one of his uncles and perhaps even his father's links with the city of Solgat<sup>17</sup>. It is clear that in 1382 the young man could not as yet

14. For more details cf. K.-P. Matschke, *Bemerkungen zur Bedeutung des sog. Oriens Christianus für den spätbyzantinischen Staat und die spätbyzantinische Gesellschaft*, conference paper 1986, unpublished.

15. Jakobson, *Крым*, p. 105.

16. M. Balard, *La Romanie génoise (XIIe - début du XVe siècle)*, 2 vols., Rome - Genoa 1978, I, p. 272.

17. If Aurames moved from Kaffa to Solgat and not vice versa from Solgat to Kaffa, this could be linked to the development of relations between Genoese and Tartars. However, these relations only deteriorated at the beginning of the 1380s, cf. Balard, *La Romanie génoise*

have acquired his title as a result of his own commercial activity, and that therefore he must have inherited it, which in turn means that he must have originated from what was known as a hoca family<sup>18</sup>. In Caffa the bearers of the hoca title in the 15th century belonged almost exclusively to the Sarrazeni, i.e. to the very heterogeneously composed non-Christians as a whole<sup>19</sup>. However, the fact that there must also have been exceptions to the rule here may be demonstrated by the case of an Armenian inhabitant of Trebizond named Coagio Xamxadini de Arzenga, who in 1428 received the civil rights of Genoa<sup>20</sup>. This Armenian from Erzerum must have been a Christian despite his Middle Eastern name and his Islamic titles, otherwise it would hardly have been possible for him to receive his Genoese merchants' authorisation<sup>21</sup>.

Citizenship of Caffa, which Isa's father Aurami possessed, was certainly not of equal importance and was certainly not bound to the same condition<sup>22</sup>, but there can be no doubt that his son, his brother and his brother-in-law were Christians in 1382. It even appears as if the three had sworn in accordance with Latin rites before the Genoese consul in the town hall of Caffa, since no special mention is made to the

*I*, pp. 460f., and by this time Isa's father had already died, i. e. he can hardly have been among the Tartar subjects who at that time left (or were forced to leave) Kaffa.

18. For more details on this term cf. H. Inalcik, "Capital Formation in the Ottoman Empire", *The Journal of Economic History*, 29 (1969) 97-140; p. 109. E. Werner, *Die Geburt einer Großmacht - Die Osmanen*, Weimar 4 1985, p. 315.

19. Cf. M. Balard, " 'Infidèles' ou Comans? A propos des 'Sarraceni' de Caffa", *Bulletin d'Etudes Karaites*, 2 (1989) 83-90.

20. N. Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XVe siècle*, 2 vols., Paris 1899, I, p. 481 and note 4.

21. At any rate I am unaware of such cases; moreover, no such indications are mentioned by S. P. Karpov, who last dealt with the relations between Muslim merchants in the Black Sea area with Venetians and Genoese, *Итальянские морские республики и Южное причерноморье в XIII-XV вв.: Проблемы торговли* (The Italian Republics and the Southern Black Sea Region in the 13-15th Centuries), Moskow 1990, pp. 291-296. According to D. Jacoby, "Les Génois dans l'Empire byzantin: citoyens, sujets et protégés (1261-1453)", *Storia dei Genovesi*, IX (1989) 245-284; p. 270, it was impossible for non-Christians and Jews or for members of Eastern Christian communities to gain access to the Latin elite.

22. Cf. Balard, *La Romanie génoise I*, p. 329; D. Jacoby, "Les états latins en Romanie: phénomènes sociaux et économiques (1204-1350 environ)", *Actes du XVe Congrès International d'Etudes Byzantines* (Athènes, Septembre 1976) I, 1 (Athens 1976), and more precisely idem, "Les Génois", p. 262.

contrary<sup>23</sup> and even the witnesses of this legal act came exclusively from the Latin milieu. Whether the “Turkish” episode had already become family history by 1382 or whether it was still to come is thus difficult to state. Furthermore, judging by the chir title of Isa’s son Jacob in 1437, a changeover from Latin to Orthodox rites is also conceivable.

In any case it is a very long road which led Choza Isse and his son to the Late Byzantine metropolis, much longer than it may originally have appeared. It took nearly a century or possibly even longer. It began in the Crusader fortress of Gibelet and another place which so far cannot be identified, and led via the Genoese outpost of Caffa and the Turkish-Tartar outpost of Solgat right up to the Golden Horn. However, this was by no means the only family to make this trek and others had certainly gone before since at the turn of the 14th century Middle Eastern settlers went to Constantinople on the same or a similar route and using identical or almost identical stations<sup>24</sup>. The economic foundation on which the family of Aurames Camalia moved is quite clearly trade —the same economic basis (if not quite so clear) upon which the Syrians and other people from the Middle East moved who entered the Byzantine commercial world in around the year 1300. The observation made at the beginning that the Byzantine capital Constantinople remained attractive right into the Late Byzantine period not only as the centre of the empire but especially as a trading centre (so attractive in fact that other businessmen who had been successful elsewhere tried to get a pitch in the city as little as 20 years before its fall and were disinclined to leave) is backed up and given more depth by the history of Choza Isse. The migration of active economic forces from the Middle East to the centre of the rest of the Byzantine empire has not yet been systematically studied. If one critically examines the examples known up to now, one cannot help but come to the conclusion that these forces really had the effect of mobilising and vitalising city society. That did not necessarily also mean simultaneous Orientalisation or Islamisation, since as indicated above those who came from the east included in particular

23. For the corresponding modalities cf. Balard, *La Romanie génoise I*, p. 326f.

24. Cf. G. Makris, *Studien zur spätbyzantinischen Schifffahrt*, Genoa 1988, pp. 256ff.; K.-P. Matschke, “Byzantinische Politiker und byzantinische Kaufleute im Ringen um die Beteiligung am Schwarzmeerhandel in der Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts”, *Mitteilungen des Bulgarischen Forschungsinstitutes in Österreich*, 2/V1 (1984) 75-95; pp. 80f.



people and groups who had been closely linked with Latin rule in the Levant and who had been released by the collapse of the Crusader states. The example of Aurami Camalia and his descendants is also more likely to indicate a variant of the convergence of Middle East/Muslim elements with the world of Orthodox and Latin Christianity. This variant was certainly no longer typical in the 15th century —the fact that at this time it was still possible is demonstrated by the different faces which Byzantine Constantinople had immediately before its fall and the various directions in which the city gazed until the end.

How the history of the family of Aurami Camalia continued is at present unknown, even if one assumes (as I did in my 1989 essay) that Isa's son Jacob is identical with Jachop/Jacop Paleologo, who is mentioned in Badoer's book in his immediate vicinity<sup>25</sup>. This positioning does not have evidential value and even if it did, it would only demonstrate the not completely impossible family connection between family of Middle Eastern settlers made wealthy by trade and the governing clan of the Late Byzantine period<sup>26</sup> —but no more since a Jakobos Palaiologos from this time is only known from Badoer's book, which means that not even he could provide more information about the family and its history up to 1453 or beyond.

Directly linked with the conquest of the city are the activities of a Greek merchant named Basilikos, which can be reconstructed from various contemporary sources of completely different origin and meaningfulness. What is known is that shortly before the beginning of the siege, the final attempts to achieve a political solution to the conflict between the Byzantines and the Turks which had already developed into a state of extreme tension were made, and that after the receipt of secret messages from the Grand Vizier Chalil Paşa, Emperor Constantine sent a legation to the young Sultan Mehmed of the Ottoman Empire with a

25. *Badoer*, pp. 105, 178. Both are business associates of the Armenian cloth merchant Chaloiani and appear in the same account book of Badoer; both are referred to as *chir*, but nevertheless all this is not of course sufficient to ascertain their identity.

26. It is not impossible, especially in view of just how extended the family was in the 14th/15th centuries. The Syrian in Planudes' letter studied by Makris and myself tries to gain his son access to court society; the degree of his success remains unknown. I addressed the possible integration of Chogia Ise, his ancestors and his descendants in a paper presented at the symposium BULGARIA PONTICA MEDII Aevi VI at the end of May 1995 in Nessebar.

request for peace and an offer to pay tribute in return<sup>27</sup>. According to the report by Ubertino Pusculus from the city of Brescia, a Greek merchant by the name of Basilicos was entrusted with sounding out the situation and determining the chances for peace on these terms. The merchant was especially suitable for this difficult mission, according to the words of the Italian scholar, because he lived in the Turkish camp and was well-known to the Sultan himself. Thus he was secretly given a message and the responsibility for peace was placed upon his shoulders, as it was put by the western informant somewhat dramatically but not inappropriately<sup>28</sup>. A. Pertusi surmises that these secret negotiations occurred at the beginning of February 1453<sup>29</sup>. They failed because Mehmed had already long since decided for to go ahead with the siege and the conquest of the city. The responsibility which been given to the merchant Basilikos soon proved to be too much for him to bear. In search of further traces of this evidently very interesting man (even if his importance was only short-lived), some time ago I came across various memos written by the Genoese notary public Lorenzo Calvi, published and evaluated by A. Roccatagliata. Notes made on 30 January 1453 include an entry that a certain Inofio Pinello in Constantinople in logia Catalanorum of the Vlach Georgici Impanus was made procurator in order to negotiate a business compromise with two Greek associates named Giovanni Vasilico and Tommaso Piroplo<sup>30</sup>. On the same day, but in the opposite Genoese colony of Pera, Dominus John Vasilico, Grecus de Constantinopoli, concluded this compromise in his name and on behalf of his business partner Pyropulos with the Vlach's representative, which was valid for 40 days and was to be supervised and guaranteed by three arbitrators named Fabrizio Aconerio, Bernardo Strolao and Nicolò Pollo<sup>31</sup>. On 8 March the contract was extended in Pera under the same

27. Cf. D. M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor. The life and legend of Constantine Palaiologos, last Emperor of the Romans*, Cambridge - New York - Port Chester - Melbourne - Sydney 1992, p. 65.

28. *Uberti Pusculi Brixienensis Constantinopoleos libri IV*, ed. A. Ellissen, *Analekten der mittel- und neugriechischen Literatur*, vol. III, Leipzig 1857, p. 54.

29. A. Pertusi, *La caduta di Costantinopoli*, 2 vols., n. p. 1976, I, p. LXIX.

30. A. Roccatagliata, *Notai genovesi in Oltremare. Atti rogati a Pera e Mitilene, Part 1: Pera 1408-1490*, Genoa 1982, no. 25, pp. 92f.

31. *Ibid.*, no. 26, p. 93.

conditions until the end of the month<sup>32</sup>.

The precise subject of this arrangement and who the associates of the two Greeks were can unfortunately not be determined. However, we do have more information about the three arbitrators. Roccatagliata has already conjectured that Fabrizio Aconerio was the same person as Fabruzzi Corner, a Venetian from Crete, who had been requested in vain by the Venetian bailo in Constantinople, Girolamo Minotto, to intervene with Sultan Mehmed on behalf of the Venetian Antonio Erizzo, a protagonist in the defence of the Byzantine capital<sup>33</sup>. However, she must have inadvertently made an error since it was not Erizzo, but Corner himself who together with the Byzantine Bryennios Leontares defended the Charisios Gate in the northern section of the wall of Constantinople during the siege<sup>34</sup> while Erizzo was already dead at this point, for his ship had been sunk by Turkish cannon at the end of 1452 during an attempt to break through the Turkish blockade of Rumeli Hissar in the Bosphorus, and the Venetian captain had to pay for his plan by death at the stake in Didymoteichon, where the Sultan was temporarily residing<sup>35</sup>. Corner's trade links with Constantinople were not new and did not occur by chance. The Cretan had already been one of Badoer's business associates in the 1430s<sup>36</sup>. At the end of 1452 he returned with two galleys under the leadership of Gabriele Trevisan and Zaccaria Grioni from Tana to the Byzantine capital when the request from the Venetian official reached him<sup>37</sup>. Hence not only the Byzantines but also the Venetians used merchants as intermediaries for diplomatic missions in the dramatic weeks before the beginning of the siege, and Corner must also have been known at the Turkish court, otherwise the assignment given to him by the most supreme Venetian official in the Romania would not have made sense.

A second arbitrator also appears to have been a Venetian on the island of Crete, namely Nicolò Pollo, who is almost certainly none other

32. *Ibid.*, no. 34, p. 107. Cf. also eadem, "Con un notaio genovese tra Pera e Chio nel 1453-1454", *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, 17 (1979) 219-239, p. 220.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 220, note 7.

34. Pertusi, *La caduta*, p. LXXI.

35. Cf. S. Runciman, *Die Eroberung von Konstantinopel 1453*, Munich 1966, p. 71.

36. Badoer, p. 798.

37. Pertusi, *La caduta*, p. LXVI.

than Nicolò Paolo de Candia, a person mentioned in a Venetian document from the year 1453. This Candiot lost the majority of his assets during the siege of the Byzantine metropolis and was ultimately personally taken prisoner cum uxore et familia sua, freedom only being obtained for him and his relatives upon the payment of a large ransom. Having returned to Crete, he tried unsuccessfully to re-establish himself in commerce and he was threatened with total impoverishment. During the conquest of Constantinople, part of his money was kept elsewhere —at his brother's place of residence in the Black Sea town of Moncastro/Akkerman. The money was to be transferred via a mediator to Crete, but also got lost when it fell into Turkish hands<sup>38</sup>. If this Nicolò Paoli was the son of a certain Zuan/Giovanni Pauli, then he may also have been doing business in or via Constantinople at the same time as Badoer as a bill business recorded in his account book shows<sup>39</sup>.

No further information is known to me concerning the third arbitrator, Bernardo Strolao. Should his surname more correctly be Storlado, then he is presumably of Genoese origin, like Inofio Pinello, the procurator of the Vlach Inpano<sup>40</sup>. As far as the two Venetians are concerned, they evidently belonged to the Cretan connection in the Late Byzantine metropolis —merchants from Crete of both Greek and Latin origin who had been extraordinarily active traders in greater Constantinople since the middle of the 14th century<sup>41</sup>, the majority of whom in view of the imminent Turkish threat around the middle of the 15th century committed themselves to the Byzantine side and incurred considerable personal and material losses when the city fell into Turkish hands<sup>42</sup>. This pro-Byzantine attitude did not of course exclude contact

38. H. Noiret, *Documents pour servir à l'histoire de la Crète sous la domination vénitienne, 1380-1485*, Paris 1892, p. 486. F. Thiriet, *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Roumanie, vol. III*, Paris-The Hague 1961, no. 3176, p. 248. Cf. M. Berindei, "L'Empire ottoman et la 'route moldave' avant la conquête de Chilia et de Cetea-Alba (1484)", *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 10 (1986) 47-71; p. 62, note 53.

39. Badoer, pp. 696, 783.

40. Balard, *La Roumanie génoise*, "Index".

41. Cf. K.-P. Matschke, "Griechische Kaufleute im Übergang von der byzantinischen Periode zur Türkenzeit", *Die Kultur Griechenlands in Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, ed. R. Lauer - P. Schreiner, Göttingen 1996, 73-88.

42. Idem, "Familiengeschichten und Lebensschicksale am Bosphorus um 1453", forthcoming, paper held on 29 November 1991 at a conference of the Greek-German Initiative

with the Turks, as the assignment given to Fabruzzi Corner by the Venetian bailo makes clear.

The circumstances surrounding the Greek merchant and Byzantine subject Basilikos could have been very similar. If he is identical with the high-ranking John Vasilico, he was nevertheless not permanently based at the court of the Sultan in Adrianople/Edirne or Didymoteichon/Dimotika in the weeks leading up to the siege of Constantinople, but sometimes also stayed in the Byzantine capital and in the Genoese suburb on the other side of the Golden Horn. The dates also seem to coincide: at the end of January he stopped in Constantinople/Pera, at the end of February he stayed at the court of the Sultan in Adrianople, and at the beginning of March he was at the Golden Horn again. If this calculation is correct, then Basilikos overtook the advance guard on his return journey which was transporting the large cannon made by the gun caster Urban to shell the wall of Constantinople, and on his way and in front of the metropolis he was also able to find out about the Turks' other preparations for the siege. Contacts with merchants, who on the eve of the siege were very active, and via whom contacts with the Turks took place (or were supposed to do so) do not however provide sufficient proof of these personal identities.

However, the identity hypothesis still receives backing from another quarter, namely via the Greek associate of Basilikos, Thomas Pyropulos. In a recently published essay I tried to present proof that the two business partners of 1453 must have been identical with the similarly-named recipients of an argyrobullon from the despot Constantine, via which the tax incomes of the village of Potamia in the area of Lankada on the southern Peloponnes were transferred to them<sup>43</sup>. The deed must have been drawn up before 1448. It shows that Basilikos and his partner actually numbered among the acquaintances and perhaps even the confidantes of the last Byzantine emperor. Moreover, it shows that both of them were economically and politically active not only in the capital but also in the most important Byzantine province in the late period, that they sometimes stayed there, and that in the case of Pyropulos other

in Würzburg.

43. Idem, "Zum Anteil der Byzantiner an der Bergbauentwicklung und an den Bergbauerträgen Südosteuropas im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert", *BZ*, 84-85/1 (1991/92) 49-71; pp. 67ff.

factors indicate that he even originated from the Peloponnes. The most interesting information can be found in a note in the margin in this argyrobullon, i.e. that Thomas Pyropulos was married to the sister of one Mesih Paşa from the provincial capital of Mistra, and that this Turkish dignitary can be none other than the brother of the same name of Chass Murad Paşa, who during his service of Mehmed II and Bayazid II became Qapudan Paşa, Beglerbeg and ultimately even Grand Vizier<sup>44</sup>. Both Byzantine and western sources agree that the two brothers were of Greek origin and even came from the Palaeologan clan<sup>45</sup>. This makes likely the early connection of Thomas Pyropulos to a family of Byzantine renegades, thus also enabling him to have originated from the centre of the Byzantine possessions on the Peloponnes. If one also assumes his being related to the doctor and author Antonios Pyropulos, then in addition to the Byzantine town of Mistra, the Venetian town of Modon could also be possible as a place of origin or temporary residence, since this Antonios names Modon as his birthplace and hometown, and he went from there to Constantinople in order to begin studying medicine and to work on the famous Xenon of the kral (Milyutin) as a doctor<sup>46</sup>. All these factors thus indicate that the family, or at least a Pyropulos family which included the pensioner Thomas and the doctor Antonios, were established in society's mixed milieu on the Peloponnes and had both family and material connections to the Latin Christians and even the Turks, so that Thomas already took up private commercial activity in his hometown, perhaps also travelling on business as an intermediary of the despot Constantine between his seat of government and the

44. Cf. F. Babinger, *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen zur Geschichte Südosteuropas und der Levante*, vol. I, Munich 1962, pp. 346ff.

45. For more details, cf. Matschke, "Familiengeschichten". According to Theodoro Spandugnino, "De la origine degli imperatori ottomani", ed. C. N. Sathas, *Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de la Grèce au moyen-âge*, vol. IX, Paris 1890, Appendix, p. 164 the young Palaeologan fell together with two of his brothers into Turkish captivity during the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. In a decree issued by Chass Murad Paşa in 1471/72 (published by Babinger, *Aufsätze*, pp. 350ff.), the Ottoman dignitary calls himself Murad ibn Abdullah. It may be assumed from this that his father was probably also a Muslim, and perhaps this is even an indication that the family established (voluntary) contact with the Turks in 1453.

46. The biographical material about him is compiled in: *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, vols. Iff., Vienna 1976ff.; X, no. 23919, p. 86.

Venetian trading centre, and that he finally relocated together with his distinguished patron and in conjunction with his associate Basiliko to the Byzantine capital or just nearby.

The hypothesis of the identity of John Basilikos and the Turkish intermediary Basilico is without any shadow of a doubt lent additional weight by the close contacts of his business associate to the Turks. In contrast to Basilikos, his partner Pyropulos appears not to have personally stayed in Constantinople or Pera at the beginning of 1453, since Basilikos acted in all three of the deeds drawn up by the notary public Lorenzo Calvi in both his own name and that of his partner. The fact that Pyropulos had better links to the Turks and even settled directly in the Turkish milieu can also be seen from the business correspondence of judge Nikolaos Isidoros published by J. Darrouzès, the judge being himself an important Greek businessman in Mehmed II's Ottoman state, and who in 1453 had his seat in the Turkish capital Edirne. This holder of a Turkish office was informed in the second half of this fateful year by one of his members of staff that kyr Thomas Pyropulos, who was evidently one of the partners of the judge in the exploitation a salt-works in the area of the Black Sea town of Mesembria, had better organised the use of his share and had more skilfully made contacts with the Turkish administration —so cleverly, in fact, that in the opinion of his correspondent the judge wanted to make an example of him<sup>47</sup>. There is thus evidence that Pyropulos had already firmly established himself in the commercial circles of the Turkish capital Edirne before 29 May 1453 and that he was one of Basilikos contacts during his trips to the court of the Turkish Sultan.

The question of whether John Basilikos also managed to leap across to the new shore of deliverance after the changeover of power in Constantinople and achieve long-term access to the economic world in the other state must remain unanswered. He was perhaps more firmly established than his partner in the Byzantine milieu and more closely linked with Byzantine politics. He may even have been identical with Chaloianni Vasilicho, who 15 years previously had numbered among the

47. J. Darrouzès, "Lettres de 1453", *Revue des Etudes Byzantines*, 22 (1964) 72-127; no. 3, p. 86.

business associates of Giacomo Badoer in Constantinople<sup>48</sup>. However, this Basilikos was evidently only a minor cloth dealer, and links between him and Turkish merchants in and outside Constantinople are not to be observed, even though the Turkish share of business life in this area is very conspicuous in Badoer's account book and according to new research even the Turkish Grand Vizier Chalil Paşa appears in his accounts<sup>49</sup>. These developments seem to have been missed by Basilikos in the late 1430s, whereas in 1453 Basilikos appears without doubt to have belonged to an important group of Latin, Greek, "Walachian", Middle Eastern, Turkish and other merchants of the area, all of whom maintained intensive commercial contacts across political boundaries, who in several cases changed from one group of subjects to the other and from one religious group to the other, and who despite some differences and even opposing interests were essentially interested in preserving the status quo of the early 15th century and were even directly engaged in its maintenance, and who, forced first by circumstances and then as a result of the struggle for existence between Byzantines and Turks took political and military sides, and thus after the Turks' final victory did well or badly out of it depending on their prior attitude<sup>50</sup>.

The fact that the option to side with the Latin Christians and adherence to Christian belief did not necessarily mean exclusion from the commercial life of the Ottoman Empire (which had become politically stronger and economically consolidated as a result of the fall of Constantinople) is demonstrated by the example of the Greek Spantunes family, which may have been thoroughly characteristic of certain developments in the second half of the 15th century, but which will only be briefly referred to here since independent knowledge exceeding the current state of research<sup>51</sup> cannot be presented. Hardly anything is known

48. *Badoer*, pp. 404, 412, 413, 484, 511, 521, 540, 541, 570, 714, 744.

49. Cf. Kafadar, "A Death in Venice", pp. 193f.; Necipoğlu, "Ottoman Merchants", pp. 162f.

50. For more details, cf. my case study: "Italiener, Griechen und Türken im Umfeld des Kreuzzuges von 1444", which is due to be published in *Il Mar Nero*, vol. 3.

51. Ch. Bouras, "Τὸ ἐπιτύμβιο τοῦ Λουκά Σπαντούνη στὴ βασιλικὴ τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου Θεσσαλονίκης», *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς τῆς Πολυτεχνικῆς Σχολῆς Θεσσαλονίκης. Τμῆμα Ἀρχιτεκτόνων*, 6 (1973) 1-63. My attention was drawn to this work by A. E. Laiou. I have already used it for an essay on the Italian connections of the Notaras family, "The Notaras Family and its Italian Connections", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 49



from the Byzantine era apart from a few names of members of a Spantunes family and its economic activities. It may be regarded as certain that the family (or at least its most well-known branch), originated in the Byzantine capital. There is some evidence to suggest that in view of the dark clouds on the political horizon, as of the early 15th century various members of the family had begun successively retreating from the centre of the rest of the Byzantine Empire to the Byzantine periphery and to adjacent territories<sup>52</sup> and that they were even ultimately successful in establishing themselves in Venice, perhaps partly because various members of the Spantunes family had already gone to Italy in the 14th century<sup>53</sup>. Possibly while still in Constantinople, or perhaps only during one of the many stopovers of their migration, the Spantunes managed to establish links with some influential and highly-placed families in Late Byzantine society, even the Palaeologans and the Kantakuzenoi (although presumably not with the core of these two royal families, but at least with the especially active and flexible collateral lines). The married couple Matthaios Spantunes and Eudokia Kantakuzena lived in the Adriatic metropolis from the 1450s at the latest, and at least one of their three sons was born on the Rialto at this time. Named Theodoros Spantunes Kantakuzenos, he and perhaps also his brother Alexander accompanied their father when they were very young on his journeys to the east of Turkey. The destinations of this travelling activity were the estate near Serres where Sultana Mara and her sister Katharina of Cilly spent their old age. They belonged to the Serb branch of the Kantakuzenos family and were thereby closely connected with the Spantunes, and also the new Ottoman capital, where Mesih Paşa, an uncle or great-uncle of Matthaios Spantunes and his sons, played an important role, as well as being commercially active<sup>54</sup>. These family contacts must have greatly eased the efforts of the father in the

(1995) 59-72.

52. Theodoros Spantunes from Constantinople is of interest, *ad presens* (d. i. 1452/53) *habitoris Mothoni in the Venetian Peloponnese*, Bouras, "Τὸ ἐπιτύμβιο", p. 15, because judging from his name he may have been the grandfather of Theodoros Spantunes Kantakuzenos, who is discussed below in more detail.

53. For more details on them, cf. *ibid.*, p. 14f.

54. His commercial commitment is indicated by the appointment of Hvacce/Hoca Mesih Paşa in a document from Brussa, Kafadar, "A Death in Venice", p. 194 and note 10; unfortunately I am unable to access the sources listed there.

organisation of extensive trade transactions between Venice and the Ottoman Empire and even enabled his son to firmly establish himself more or less permanently in various areas of the empire<sup>55</sup>, to learn not only Greek but also Turkish, to act as resident in his father's business undertakings, and even to establish political links with the Sultan's court and perform diplomatic missions on behalf of the Sultan<sup>56</sup>. Theodoros Spantunes appears to have lived for a protracted period of time in the Macedonian city of Thessaloniki/Salonika in the 1470s and early 1480s and to have worked locally with a close relative. When this Lukas Spantunes died in 1481, Theodoros had a splendid tomb erected for him in the city's Demetrios church, thus displaying the wealth and the self-confidence of the family<sup>57</sup>. However, Theodoros does not appear to have been a subject of the Ottoman Empire, and Lukas was also a Christian and a "frenḡ", although not a Gebran (i.e. Orthodox Greek inhabitant of the empire), when he died since in the tahrir defter of the province of Salonika of 1478 made famous by H. W. Lowry, a Greek householder of his name is not to be found in the Mahalle-i Ayo Dimitri, in which the church of H. Demetrios stood which remained Christian until 1492<sup>58</sup>.

In the second half of the 15th century, the Greek colony in Venice also included even more well-known families and families with greater commercial traditions than the Spantunes/Spandugnino family, such as the Notaras, who however according to present knowledge appear not to have managed to return from Italy to business life in the Romania—either because they lacked the suitable people or because they did not have the right connections, or because their active people in the Ottoman Empire were undesirable persons. The letters of safe conduct which Jakobos Notaras received in the year 1468 from the Genoese and which also included business activities in the Black Sea colony of Caffa<sup>59</sup>

55. In addition to the Ottoman capital, Gallipoli and Adrianopol/Edirne are also mentioned by Theodor Spantunes/Spandugnino, *De la origine*, p. 161.

56. In this connection see in particular Babinger, *Aufsätze I*, p. 214, note 1; idem, *Das Ende der Arianiten*, Munich 1960, p. 7, note 1; idem, *Johannes Darius (1414-1494), Sachwalter Venedigs im Morgenland, und sein griechischer Umkreis*, Munich 1961, p. 62, note 2.

57. For more details, cf. Bouras, "Τὸ ἐπιτύμβιο".

58. Cf. H. W. Lowry, "Portrait of a City: the Population and Topography of Ottoman Selânik (Thessaloniki) in the Year 1478", *Δίπτυχα*, 2 (1980-81) 255-293; pp. 284ff.

59. Cf. K.-P. Matschke, *Die Schlacht bei Ankara und das Schicksal von Byzanz*, Weimar 1981, pp. 187f. M. Balard recently drew my attention to an archive document indi-

may have been partly limited in its value because the son of the last Byzantine chief minister had after the death of his father and brothers at the hands of Mehmed II's executioner and his release or escape from Turkish captivity been afraid for his safety during his return to Constantinople and a stay in the Ottoman Empire. Attempts to re-enter business life in the area now controlled by the Turks with the help of a Genoese letter of safe conduct were also made in 1470 by a noble merchant from Florence named Michael Alighieri, who had spent a longer period in Trebizond before 1460 and who had commercially speaking been very active in the Black Sea area, but he also appears not to have been successful<sup>60</sup>. Genoese or Venetian patents no longer sufficed in the second half of the 15th century to reactivate former economic positions and to resume inherited and familiar activities. One needed more, namely direct protection in the points of co-ordination and from important supporters of Ottoman power, which the Spantunes evidently had at their disposal. But not even their trading fortune lasted for long —it ceased at the latest with the Venetian-Turkish war at the turn of the 16th century, in which their assets in the Ottoman Empire and even their connections to the supporters of Ottoman power were lost<sup>61</sup>.

Commercial activity thus took place in and around Constantinople both directly before and immediately after the secular changeover of power on the Golden Horn —and even during the change of power itself. The history of the traders as it is so far known and as has been presented here, ends either on the eve of the fall of Constantinople or only begins in the years following, or else it lasts for a short period immediately before and after the conquest. Constantinople was thus for merchants and entrepreneurs too evidently not only a centre putting one on the road to success, but also a dangerous place —no less so in Byzantine times than in the Turkish era. According to my present knowledge, the

cating that Nikolaos Notaras had a stake in the Genoese public debt in Kaffa, strengthening the circumstantial evidence that the Notaras had been very active in the Genoese Black Sea colony since the beginning of the 15th century at the latest.

60. For details of his history, cf. L. Michaelsen, "Michael Alighieri, Gesandter Kaiser Davids von Trapezunt, am Hofe der Herzöge von Burgund (1461-1470)", *Ἀρχαῖον Πό-  
ντου*, 41 (1987) 175-193.

61. Cf. Bouras, "Τὸ ἐπιτύμβιο", pp. 17ff.

largest degree of stability in trade on the Bosphorus was exhibited by the family Koreses/Coressi. This family belonged up to the middle of the 14th century to the so-called Pentade of Chios, comprising the five most influential families on the Byzantine Aegean islands. After the occupation of Chios by the Genoese in the year 1346, representatives of the family built up commercial activities very quickly and on a very large scale, and they also became firmly established in the business life of greater Constantinople/Pera as of the end of the 14th century at the latest. This engagement can be followed throughout the whole of the 15th century and until at least the middle the 16th century, whereby the core of the family and its activities in all phases appear to have remained the island of Chios. Representatives of the family had commercial relations with Genoese, Venetian and other Latin Christians, with Greeks from Constantinople, Trebizond and elsewhere, and increasingly also with Turks. They represented their own commercial interests and those of their business partners before the Patriarchal Court in Byzantine Constantinople and before the Kadi of Pera in the Turkish era<sup>62</sup>. The commercial city of Constantinople in late-Byzantine essentially thrived on the business activities of the Romania, and the province appears also to have been crucial in the recovery of the city from the demographic collapse and economic crisis brought about by its downfall.

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62. Although there is plenty of material on the history of this family, it has not yet been systematically collected and analysed. To name but two texts which are of importance for the history of the Koreses and in particular the cited legal dispute: F. Miklosich - J. Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi, vol. II*, Wien 1860, no. 675, pp. 546ff.; Roccatagliata, *Notai genovesi I*, no. 123, pp. 271ff.