

DIONYSIOS STATHAKOPOULOS

## To Have and to Have not: Supply and Shortage in the Centres of the Late Antique World

The period of ‘long Late Antiquity’, extending from Diocletian’s ascent to power in 284 to the eighth century, saw the Late Roman / Early Byzantine Empire gradually reaching its widest expansion and its highest population density only, subsequently, to experience a sharp decline in both.<sup>1</sup> As such, this period is quite rewarding for the study of supply, or the lack of it. It incorporates within the same system of production and distribution, at first a growing and then a declining phase, which can give us a clear picture of these mechanisms at work, both at their best and at their worst.

Grain and the chief product made from it, bread, were the staple foods of the Mediterranean world<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the main concern of the system of supply was directed towards bread. Villages and towns had to rely for their provisions on their immediate hinterlands. Larger cities, however, especially Rome and Constantinople, had to import grain – and other goods – from further away on a regular basis<sup>3</sup>. This was an extremely costly enterprise, which was only made possible through state financing. Since the time of the late Roman republic, the state imported and distributed a large quantity of bread to the citizens of Rome<sup>4</sup>. This measure was taken up by Constantine I for his new capital, Constantinople, and it continued to be practised up to the time of the loss of Egypt to the Arabs in the mid seventh century, as this province was the chief grain producing region of the Empire<sup>5</sup>.

It is a fact that social and economic standing directly affect both the quantity and the quality of food that is accessible to any individual<sup>6</sup>. This has been true for the whole human history and we need not give examples to illustrate this any further. The economically weaker strata of Late Antiquity were certainly “food short”, that is they were lacking absolute resources due to environment, politics or other socioeconomic factors.<sup>7</sup> Other parameters were also significant in the supplying of food or the lack of it. They affected not only those who were unable to purchase food, because of their economic situation, but they also had a negative effect on whole communities and regions, often breaking down the boundaries of social and economic standing. In short we will deal with those cases where the system of supply broke down.

<sup>1</sup> P. CHARANIS, Observations on the Demography of the Byzantine Empire, in: Thirteenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Main Papers XIV. Oxford 1966, 1–19; J. KODER, Der Lebensraum der Byzantiner, Nachdruck mit bibliogr. Nachträgen (*Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber, Ergänzungsband 1N*). Vienna 2001, 150–54.

<sup>2</sup> J. MCCORRISTON, Wheat, in: The Cambridge History of Food, eds. K. F. KIPPLE – K. CONEÈ ORNELAS, I. Cambridge 2000, 158–74; R. SALLARES, The Ecology of the Ancient Greek World. Ithaca, NY 1991, 313–72; J. KODER, Gemüse in Byzanz (*Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber, Ergänzungsband 3*). Vienna 1993, 15–25; P. GARNSEY, Food and Society in Classical Antiquity (*Key Themes in Ancient History*). Cambridge 1999, 12–21.

<sup>3</sup> P. HERZ, Studien zur römischen Wirtschaftsgesetzgebung: Die Lebensmittelversorgung (*Historia Einzelschriften 55*). Stuttgart 1988; B. SIRKS, Food for Rome: The Legal Structure of the Transportation and Processing of Supplies for the Imperial Distributions in Rome and Constantinople (*Studia Amstelodamensia ad Epigraphicam, Ius antiquum et Papyrologicam pertinentia 32*). Amsterdam 1991; J. DURLIAT, De la ville antique à la ville Byzantine: Le problème des subsistances (*Collection de l'école française de Rome 136*). Rome 1990.

<sup>4</sup> P. GARNSEY, Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis. Cambridge 1988, 208–17.

<sup>5</sup> G. DAGRON, Naissance d’une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451 (*Bibliothèque byzantine, Études 7*). Paris 1974, 518–41; C. MANGO, Le développement urbain de Constantinople (IVe–VIIe siècles) (*Travaux et mémoires du Centre de Recherche d’histoire et civilisation de Byzance, Monographies 2*). Paris 1985; J. DURLIAT, L’approvisionnement de Constantinople, in: Constantinople and its Hinterland, eds. C. MANGO – G. DAGRON (*SPBS, Publications 3*). Aldershot 1993, 19–33.

<sup>6</sup> See P. GARNSEY, Food and Society, 113–43.

<sup>7</sup> According to the typology developed by the World Hunger Programme at Brown University; cf. P. UVIN, The State of World Hunger, in: P. UVIN, The Hunger Report 1993. Yverdon 1994, 1–48, esp. 1, 7, 10, 16 and E. MESSER, Hunger Vulnerability From an Anthropologists Food System Perspective, in: Transforming Societies, Transforming Anthropology, ed. F. MORAN. Ann Arbor 1996, 242–58; S. R. HOLMAN, The Hungry Body: Famine, Poverty, and Identity in Basil’s Hom. 8. *Journal of Early Christian Studies 7* (1999) 356–7.

We will set our investigation against two axes. The first one is spatial. It has to do with the way geography imposes limitations and creates inequality between more and less favourable locations. It divides the Mediterranean world in two parts: coastal and mainland; the first easily and swiftly accessible, which translates into less expensively supplied for. The second part, the cities of the mainland, demanded more effort, more technical means and more time to be supplied with food. The higher costs that ensued in this transaction were often responsible for the delay and sometimes the fallout of provisions altogether<sup>8</sup>.

The second axis is a social, or to be more precise an administrative one. Regardless of their position in space important political and economic centres were supplied with food at any cost. The most prominent position in this category is naturally taken by the capitals of the Empire: the Old and the New Rome. We will show how the need to furnish them with food constituted an absolute priority of the Imperial government, regardless of the possible shortages such a move would cause to the supplies for urban centres of lesser importance.

Moving in time through these two axes we can expect to view the system of food supply in a more fragmented but differentiated manner that will hopefully do justice to the reality of Late Antiquity.

In 368–369 a severe drought-induced famine ravaged Cappadocia and Phrygia, prompting Basil of Caesarea to deliver his sermon known as ‘Homily delivered in times of famine and drought’<sup>9</sup>. Although he describes the climatic conditions that led to the famine quite extensively, nevertheless this seems to have been a “market crisis”. His homily was destined to move the wealthy citizens of Caesarea to open their granaries and to give food to their poor and starving fellow citizens. The biographer of Basil, his close friend Gregory the Theologian, sums up the dire situation quite epigrammatically as follows: “There was a famine, it was the worst within living memory, and the city was hard-pressed, for there was neither aid from anywhere, nor was there a remedy for the evil. Now, the coastlands bear such scarcities with no difficulty, giving of their own and receiving [i.e., exporting their own products and importing others in exchange] by sea. But for us who live inland, both a surplus is unprofitable, and a need is unsatisfiable, not having the means to export what does exist, or to import what does not exist.”<sup>10</sup> To make this example even clearer it will suffice to look at what was happening in other cities during the same period.

In Carthage similar climatic anomalies had also probably caused a shortage of wheat in 368–369.<sup>11</sup> However, given the fact that North Africa was a grain producing province whose produce was collected at Carthage and from there shipped to Rome<sup>12</sup>, the *proconsul Africae*, Hymetius, decided to sell grain normally destined for Rome at a fairly low price to his citizens<sup>13</sup>. Although he was later punished for his act, the fact that the city had access to large quantities of grain saved its inhabitants from famine<sup>14</sup>. At the same time large numbers of people from the inner parts of Asia Minor took on a massive flight in order to escape starvation. The church historian Socrates informs us, with some pride, of the innumerable multitudes that arrived in Constantinople and had to be provided for: “For Constantinople, notwithstanding the vast population it supplies, yet always abounds with the necessaries of life, all manner of provisions being imported into it by sea from various regions; and the Black Sea which lies near it, furnishes it with wheat to any extent it may require.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>8</sup> A.H.M. JONES, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602*. London 1964, II 842, based on evidence from Diocletian’s price edict has calculated that it cost less “to ship grain from one end of the Mediterranean to the other than to carry it 75 miles”. See now also M. McCORMICK, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300 – 900*. Cambridge 2001, 64–115.

<sup>9</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Homilia dicta tempore famis et siccitatis*, PG 31, 303–28. See now: S. R. HOLMAN, *The Hungry Are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia*. Oxford 2001, esp. 64–98; this chapter in Holmans book is a reworking of her article in the *Journal of Early Christian Studies* (see n. 7) with some changes.

<sup>10</sup> Gregory of Nazianz, *In laudem Basilii* 34–7. PG 35, 541C–44A. Translation: M. F. HENDY, *Economy and State in Late Rome and Early Byzantium: An Introduction*, in: Idem, *The Economy, Fiscal Administration and Coinage of Byzantium*. Northampton 1989, 7.

<sup>11</sup> P. DE JONGE, A curious place in Ammianus Marcellinus dealing with scarcity of corn and cornprices. *Mnemosyne* 4. ser. 1 (1948) 73–80; Durliat, *Ville* 386–9.

<sup>12</sup> SIRKS, *Food* (as in n. 3) 146–92.

<sup>13</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. W. SEYFARTH, 2 vols (Leipzig 1978) XXVIII 1, 17–23 (II 63–4).

<sup>14</sup> See the honorary inscription put in honour of Hymetius = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, vol. VI 1, ed. W. HENZEN *et alii*. Berlin 1876, 381.

<sup>15</sup> Socrates, *Church History*, ed. G. Ch. HANSEN (GCS, NF 1). Berlin 1995, IV 16, 7–17, 1 (245–6).

Three cities, unequal both in their location in space, and in their administrative importance show us how the co-ordinates that an area occupies on the axes we have mentioned, pre-shape the quantity and quality of supplies they will receive. But the limitations of geography are not merely as simple to define as what we have viewed from the previous example; rather they can work themselves into more categories.

We have already mentioned that villages and towns were dependant on their immediate hinterland for supplies. This becomes tragically obvious in the case of the two-year crisis in Edessa, in 500–502<sup>16</sup>. Edessa was a fairly rich city, the capital of the province of Osroene and an important commercial centre<sup>17</sup>. After a lasting epidemic of smallpox had worn down its citizens the city found itself in the middle of a vicious circle of catastrophes: first a devastating locust plague ravaged the grain, fruit and vegetable crops of the entire territory. Starving multitudes from the hinterland swarmed to the city in search of food thus aggravating the market situation therein. There followed renewed bouts of pestilence and an uncommonly frosty winter, resulting to a bad harvest. Both the following vintage and grain harvest were also destroyed this time by an extremely hot wind. Throughout this period of two years there was scarcely any aid from outside, apart from a minor amount of money donated by the emperor Anastasios, and some short-term distribution of bread to a selected group of suffering citizens. Edessa as an inland city had only the production of its hinterland to rely on. The fluctuations in production and supply due to climatic and other natural causes, or due to human-induced causes (warfare par excellence) had to be endured, as no external aid could be expected.

We can observe a similarly structured episode regarding a subsistence crisis in Myra during the first wave of the Justinianic Plague in 542. Myra was a coastal city, an important intermediate port for the grain shipments from Egypt to Constantinople. In 542 the plague broke out in the city and decimated its population. The farmers of the hinterland feared to enter the city saying, “if we give the city wide berth then we will not die of this disease.”<sup>18</sup> As a result no grain, wine, flour, wood or anything else was brought to the city’s market, and a severe shortage added up to the ravages of the plague. The city’s dependence on its hinterland was complete, at least as far as short-term crises are concerned. It is quite unlikely that any state-financed help would have been sent to Myra, even if the outbreak of the plague had not interrupted the usual course of the system of supplies. It seems more plausible that the citizens would have seized any amount of grain destined for the capital, if they would have had the chance to do so – a similar action to this was already recorded for Carthage.

As we have already seen, neither the relative administrative importance nor the geographical position *per se*, provided a certain and safe frame for the supply flow of urban centres. We can go one step further in that direction by showing that even what would seem to be the correct co-ordinates on our supply axes, that is both a favourable, coastal position and a genuine administrative importance, were not sufficient to guarantee a constant or certain supply flow.

<sup>16</sup> The crisis is recorded by Ps.-Joshua Stylites = The Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite, ed. and trans. by W. WRIGHT. Cambridge 1882 (Reprint Amsterdam 1968); see now the translation: The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, trans. with Notes and Introduction by F. R. TROMBLEY – J. W. WATT (*Translated Texts for Historians* 32). Liverpool 2000, XXXVIII–XLVI (27–35 WRIGHT/37–49 TROMBLEY – WATT); a vast body of literature has emerged commenting on these events: E. PATLAGEAN, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale: Byzance 4e – 7e siècle*. Paris 1977, 79, 87; A. GUILLOU, *La cosiddetta cronaca siriana di Giosuè lo Stilita: “Storia del tempo dell’afflizione a Edessa, Amida e in tutta la Mesopotamia”*, in: *La civiltà Bizantina dal IV al IX secolo. Aspetti e problemi (Corsi di Studi 1)*. Bari 1977, 369–83, *passim*; H. LECLAINCHE, *Crises économiques à Édesse (494–506) d’après la chronique du pseudo Josuè le Stylite*. *Pallas* 27 (1980) 89–100, *passim*; GARNSEY, *Famine*, 1–7, 20–36; DURLIAT, *Ville*, 418–20; M. KAPLAN, *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VIe au XIe siècle*. Paris 1992, 455–8, 470–71; I. TELELIS, *Μετεωρολογικά φαινόμενα και κλίμα στο Βυζάντιο. Προσέγγιση των πληροφοριών από τις πηγές και εμπερικές ενδείξεις για τις διακυμάνσεις του κλίματος της Ανατολικής Μεσογείου και Μέσης Ανατολής (300–1500 μ.Χ.) (Πονήματα της Ακαδημίας Αθηνών)*. Athens 2004, Nos. 109–110; A. LUTHER, *Die syrische Chronik des Josua Stylites (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 49)*. Berlin–New York 1997, 173–8; R. W. BURGESS, *Overlooked Evidence for Grain Prices in Antioch A.D. 333*. *ZPE* 120 (1998) 297; J. M. BREYER, *Sie legten lediglich eine nicht unbeträchtliche Menge Eier in unser Land. Heuschreckenplagen in der Spätantike und die Chronik des Josua Stylites*. *Byzantina* 21 (2000) 57–83 and now D. STATHAKOPOULOS, *Famine and Pestilence in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Empire: a Systematic Survey of Subsistence Crises and Epidemics (Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs 9)*. Aldershot 2004, 250–255.

<sup>17</sup> J. B. SEGAL, *Edessa: The Blessed City*. Oxford 1970 (Reprint New Jersey 2001).

<sup>18</sup> *Vita of Nicholas of Sion*, ed. G. ANRICH = Hagios Nikolaos. *Der heilige Nikolaos in der griechischen Kirche*, vol 1 (*Texte und Untersuchungen*). Berlin 1913, 52 (40–41); Translation: *The Life of Saint Nicholas of Sion*, ed. and translated by I. ŠEVČENKO – N. PATTERSON ŠEVČENKO (*The Archbishop Iakovos Library of ecclesiastical and historical sources* 10). Brookline 1984, 83.

The city to discuss is Thessalonica, an urban centre of great strategic, commercial and administrative importance, and the capital of the prefecture of Illyricum<sup>19</sup>. The incidents we are about to examine took place in the late sixth / early seventh century and are recorded exclusively in the *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*, an account of the miracles performed by the city's patron saint<sup>20</sup>. In 597 and around 608–611 the city of Thessalonica was ravaged by famine. In the first case we have the additional information that an Avar siege of the city had taken place prior to the famine<sup>21</sup>. The hinterland had been pillaged by the enemy and no food shipment could be expected because it was generally rumoured that Thessalonica had been taken by the Avars and this news kept the merchants away from its port. In the second case nothing more is recorded than the presence of the famine<sup>22</sup>. In both cases, however, the end of the crisis was reached in the same, miraculous way: Saint Demetrios appeared to state officials in charge of the shipment of grain to Constantinople at the intermediate port at Chios and prompted them, in visions, to turn their course around and head for Thessalonica. Needless to say, that according to the hagiographic narrative this came to be and the city was amply supplied with food. In my mind, the miraculous element in the narrative stands for something that would otherwise be impossible: that grain destined for the capital would – even partly – be used to relieve a subsistence crisis in any other urban centre. There is also a third similar case of famine in Thessalonica. It occurred in 676–678, and it was caused by a two-year siege by various Slavic tribes<sup>23</sup>. The imperial relief in form of a moderate shipment of grain arrived only after the end of the siege and no miraculous intervention of the Saint was called for. The probable cause for this change of attitude can be explained historically. At the end of the seventh century with large territories (North Africa, Egypt, Syria and Palestine) irrevocably lost to the Arabs and with the pressure of the Slavs imminently felt at the Balkans<sup>24</sup>, the imperial government must have felt the need to protect what was now the second most important city of the Empire by offering relief from the crisis.

What has been discussed so far suggests a very negative picture for the supply of urban centres in Late Antiquity, regardless of their position in the two axes mentioned above. Were there then urban centres for which the system of supply functioned always in a stable and certain way? The answer is yes, though with some reservations depending on the technical limitations present at the times: this rule was only valid for those urban centres wherein the Emperor resided.

Rome had been the imperial residence par excellence, the *caput mundi* and as such its provisions with food (especially grain, oil, wine and meat), had been one of the chief priorities of the imperial government over the first three centuries AD<sup>25</sup>. When Constantine shifted the weight of imperial power to the East, by inaugurating Constantinople in the early fourth century, he could certainly not have predicted the full impact of that move. At first Constantinople was a fairly small city, and the 80,000 annona tickets amounting to the total rations of free bread, were perceived as a means to attract people to the new capital<sup>26</sup>. But as Constantinople's importance grew rapidly along with its population, the importance of Rome diminished. This is a well known fact, but it is interesting to see how the question of the balance of supplies between both cities corroborates this tendency.

The material I have collected in my book includes data on shortages and famines that may serve as an indicator of the malfunction of the system of supplies<sup>27</sup>. It is clear from the presentation of the data, that Rome underwent a drastic status-change in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Eight consecutive subsistence crises in one century (seven of which were concentrated in its second half) signify severe problems with the city's provisions. With

<sup>19</sup> A. SCHMINCK, Galerius und Thessaloniki, in: Byzantine Law. Proceedings of the International Symposium of Jurists, ed. Ch. PAPASTATHIS. Thessalonica 2001, 117–32.

<sup>20</sup> P. LEMERLE, Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans, 2 vols. Paris 1979–1981; P. SPECK, De miraculis Sancti Demetrii, qui Thessaloniam profugus venit, oder: Ketzerisches zu den Wundergeschichten des Heiligen Demetrios und zu seiner Basilika in Thessalonike (*Poikila Byzantina* 12). Bonn 1993, 255–532; IDEM, Nochmals zu den Miracula Sancti Demetrii (*Poikila Byzantina* 13). Bonn 1994, 317–429.

<sup>21</sup> Miracles de Saint Démétrius I § 68–72 (101–3 LEMERLE).

<sup>22</sup> Miracles de Saint Démétrius I § 73–80 (106–8 LEMERLE).

<sup>23</sup> Miracles de Saint Démétrius I § 243–268 (211–21 LEMERLE).

<sup>24</sup> J. F. HALDON, Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture, rev. ed. Cambridge 1997, 41–67.

<sup>25</sup> GARNSEY, Famine, 208–17, 236–43, 251–62; DURLIAT, Ville, 37–123.

<sup>26</sup> DAGRON, Naissance; 518–41; MANGO, Développement, *passim*.

<sup>27</sup> STATHAKOPOULOS, Famine and Pestilence, esp. ch. 2, 23–34.

the foundation of Constantinople, and the direction of the Egyptian annona towards the new capital around the 330's, Rome had to experience a gradual, but — taking into consideration the long tradition behind this measure — nevertheless, quite sudden lack of grain<sup>28</sup>.

At the same period the population in Constantinople experienced only one case of shortage between 330–337: there the causes had been climatic. The absence of subsistence crises in 4<sup>th</sup> century Constantinople may also be taken as an indication that the capital's growing population was either as large that the amount of the imported grain could cover, or smaller. Until the loss of Egypt and its grain to the Persians, and then to the Arabs in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Constantinople remained quite safe from the menace of famine-induced mortality: there were no cases in the 4<sup>th</sup>, one in the 5<sup>th</sup>, two in the 6<sup>th</sup>, one in the 7<sup>th</sup> and one in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. This last case refers to the only recorded siege-induced famine that Constantinople had to endure from the time of its foundation up to 750<sup>29</sup>. In a number of cases where the Capital had to experience sieges there have been no recorded cases of famine<sup>30</sup>.

On the contrary, Rome suffered a number of siege-induced famines that were often coupled with the outbreak of an epidemic resulting in massive mortality. There were seven of them between 397–398 and 545–546. It is remarkable that this famine-induced mortality in Rome is concentrated within a 150-year-period between the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, which largely coincides with the long period of unrest that was unleashed upon Italy as a result of attacks first by the Visigoths and then by the Ostrogoths. Rome depended on the African grain shipments after the Egyptian annona was directed towards Constantinople (cf. supra)<sup>31</sup>. From 435 onward, as the Vandals conquered Africa, but mostly in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the fatal combination of imperial warfare against the Vandals in Africa (533–534) and against the Goths in Italy (535–552) produced a disastrous situation for the city. The Lombard incursion that followed did not apparently cause any large scale mortality resulting from famine. This can be seen as a result of the overall population decline that was brought about by the outbreak of the plague in the 540s<sup>32</sup>. There is a tendency for more famines in the old rather than in the new Rome. In my mind this reflects the effort of the imperial government to secure provisions (mostly the grain provisions) for their residence as an utmost priority. The emperors lived in Constantinople in close proximity to the populace that had to be provided for; if there was not sufficient food, riots would commonly result. This phenomenon was fairly common in late antique Rome<sup>33</sup>, but relatively rare in Constantinople<sup>34</sup>.

Another example will show that it is the administrative, and not the geographical status of the imperial residence, which ensured that it was so carefully provided for. In 362–363 Julian resided in Antioch while preparing for war with Persia<sup>35</sup>. Due to the concentration of troops in the city, and also due to a recent drought

<sup>28</sup> The Constantinopolitan annona officially began in May 332 according to the *Chronicon Paschale*, (531). Cf. DAGRON, *Naissance*, 530–31; SIRKS, *Food*, 202.

<sup>29</sup> The city was held by the usurper Artabasdos and besieged by the rightful heir Constantine V from September 742 to November 743 cf. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. DE BOOR, Leipzig 1873, AM 6235 (419); Patriarch Nikephoros, *Breviarium*, ed. C. MANGO (*CFHB* 13), Washington, D.C. 1990, 66 (136). Furthermore see P. SPECK, *Artabasdos der rechtgläubige Vorkämpfer der göttlichen Lehren: Untersuchungen zur Revolte des Artabasdos und ihrer Darstellung in der byzantinischen Historiographie (Poikila Byzantina 2)*, Bonn 1981, 19–77, *passim*; I. ROCHOW, *Byzanz im 8. Jahrhundert in der Sicht des Theophanes: quellenkritisch-historischer Kommentar zu den Jahren 715–813 (BBA 57)*, Berlin 1991, 144–6; P. SPECK, *Das letzte Jahr des Artabasdos. JÖB 45 (1995) 37–52*.

<sup>30</sup> In 626 (cf. A. STRATOS, *To Βυζάντιο στον Ζ' αιώνα*, 6 vols. Athens 1965–77, II 491–542; W. TREADGOLD, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, Stanford 1997, 297–8); in 674–678 (cf. STRATOS V 35–45; 325–7) and in 717–718, where a famine ravages the Arab army that had set the city under siege; TREADGOLD, 346–9).

<sup>31</sup> SIRKS, *Food*, 146–8.

<sup>32</sup> From the vast literature on the Justinianic plague it will suffice to refer to: STATHAKOPOULOS, *Famine and Pestilence*, 110–54; IDEM, *The Justinianic Plague Revisited. BMGS 24 (2000) 256–76*, and now *Plague and the End of Antiquity. The Pandemic of 541–750*, ed. L. K. LITTLE, Cambridge 2007 and P. HORDEN, *Mediterranean Plague in the Age of Justinian*, in: *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. M. MAAS, New York 2005, 134–160. (The author of the latter was kind enough to allow me to consult his paper prior to publication, for which I am grateful).

<sup>33</sup> H. P. KOHNS, *Versorgungskrisen und Hungerrevolten im spätantiken Rom (Antiquitas, Reihe 1/6)*, Bonn 1961.

<sup>34</sup> Only five riots recorded, cf. STATHAKOPOULOS, *Famine and Pestilence*, Catalogue Nos 43, 51, 59, 132, 165, 176.

<sup>35</sup> These incidents are recorded in a large number of sources: Ammianus Marcellinus XXII 12–14 (I 277–82); Libanios, *Orationes* I 126 (I, 1 143–44), XI 177–78 (I, 2 496–7), XV 20 (II 127), XVIII 195 (II 321–2); *Epistulae* W 695 (= F 785, X 707–8), W 712 (= F 802, X 722–4); Julian, *Misopogon*, esp. 368a–370d (195–8); John Chrysostomus, *De S. Babyla* 2. *PG* 50, 531; Socrates III 17, 2 (212–3). Furthermore see: DE JONGE, *Scarcity, passim*; G. DOWNEY, *The Economic Crisis at Antioch under Julian the Apo-*

that had destroyed the crops, a severe shortage broke out in the city. The measures that Julian took to relieve the crisis were remarkable – and needless to say – were not again applied to that city, either before or after this incident. At first he took administrative measures against the crisis, regulated the market prices of the city, and exempted citizens from taxes. Then, when all this had failed, he had large amounts of grain imported from the nearby cities of Chalkis and Hierapolis. Subsequently, he continued to offer a sizeable quantity of corn from his own patrimony and household and finally he had Egyptian grain brought to the city and sold at an extremely low price. This would never have occurred in Antioch, if the emperor had not resided there at that time.

Other cases can also illustrate the absolute priority of providing Constantinople with food over any and every other city in the Empire<sup>36</sup>. In 361 African grain destined for Rome, where a famine ravaged the population, landed in Constantinople instead<sup>37</sup>. In 581–582 grain and bread were imported from Egypt and especially from the Thebais region, to supply famine-ridden Constantinople although this caused an even more dire famine with massive mortality in those regions<sup>38</sup>. Finally, in a case mentioned above between 608–611, during the reign of Phokas, a famine ravaged Thessalonica<sup>39</sup>. This famine was miraculously terminated by Saint Demetrios, who allegedly appeared to an official in charge of the grain-shipments to Constantinople, and who had him direct these shipments instead, to Thessalonica. A wheat shortage was already manifest in the capital, probably as a result of the uprising of the Heraclids against Phokas, a movement which included the withholding of the African and Egyptian grain shipments to the capital<sup>40</sup>. Contrary to what the Miracles of St Demetrios report, the famine in Thessalonica must have been caused by the effort of Phokas to ensure that the largest possible amount of grain from the area still under his control was imported to the capital. This resulted in the occurrence of shortages and/or of famines in other cities, that would have otherwise obtained this grain. We can safely assume that these grain shipments did not in fact reach Thessalonica instead of Constantinople, otherwise a famine/shortage in the Capital would have resulted. However, there is no such record.

We have mentioned before that the supply system to the imperial place of residence was ideally, but not always actually stable and certain. The problems in the mechanisms of supply occurred whenever external factors interfered. No grain shipment, imperial or other, was safe from untoward climatic conditions. This was the case in 330–337 in Constantinople when the failing south wind hindered the grain shipment from landing<sup>41</sup>, a situation that was to repeat itself over the centuries, until Justinian I, had built a large granary on Tenedos that allowed grain to be unloaded near the capital in anticipation of favourable wind conditions.<sup>42</sup> Similar cases are also recorded for Rome<sup>43</sup>.

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state, in: *Studies in Roman Economic and Social History in Honour of Allan Chester Johnson*, ed. P. R. COLEMAN-NORTON. New York 1951 (Reprint 1969), 312–21; P. PETIT, *Libanius et la vie municipale à Antioche au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris 1955, 109–18; G. DOWNEY, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest*. Princeton 1961, 382–93; IDEM, *Ancient Antioch*. Princeton 1963, 164–75; H.P. KOHNS, *Die tatsächliche Dauer des Maximaltarifs für Antiochia v. J. 362*. *Rheinisches Museum* 114 (1971) 78–83, *passim*; H. SCHNEIDER, *Die Getreideversorgung der Stadt Antiochia im 4. Jh. n. Chr.* *Münstersche Beiträge zur Antiken Handelsgeschichte* 2 (1983) 62–6; HERZ, *Studien*, 335–7; GARNSEY, *Famine*, 22–3; DURLIAT, *Ville*, 365–75; BURGESS, *Evidence*, 297.

<sup>36</sup> It is noteworthy that such a practise continued well into the Ottoman period of the city; cf. T. MALTHUS, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. The sixth edition (1826) with variant readings from the second edition (1803), ed. E. A. WRIGLEY – D. SOUDEN (*The Works of Thomas Robert Malthus* 2). London 1986, 113: “When Constantinople is in want of provisions, ten provinces are perhaps famished for a supply.”

<sup>37</sup> Mamertinus, *Gratiarum Actio Iuliano XIV* (= *Panegyriques latins*, ed. E. GALLETIER, vol 2 [Paris 1952] 27–8); KOHNS, *Versorgungskrisen*, 125–8; DAGRON, *Naissance*, 531; DURLIAT, *Ville*, 44.

<sup>38</sup> John of Ephesos, *Historia ecclesiastica*, Pars III. Ed. E. W. BROOKS (*CSCO, Scriptores Syri* III 3. Louvain 1936) XLV (133–4); Michael the Syrian II 351–2; PATLAGEAN, *Pauveté*, 77 n. 52, 80; TELELIS, *Μετεωρολογικά φαινόμενα*, No. 190.

<sup>39</sup> See above.

<sup>40</sup> J. H. W. G. LIEBESCHUTZ, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City*. Oxford 2001, 272–6.

<sup>41</sup> Eunapios, *Vitae Sophistarum*, ed. I. GIANGRANDE. Rome 1956, VI 2, 9–12 (20); O. Seeck, *Sopatros* (11). *RE* 3A 1007; H. P. KOHNS, *Hungersnot*. *RAC* 16 (1994) 875; DAGRON, *Naissance*, 531–2.

<sup>42</sup> Procopius, *Buildings* V 1, 7–12 (IV 150–51); A. M. MÜLLER, *Getreide für Konstantinopel. Überlegungen zu Justinians Edikt XIII als Grundlage für Aussagen zur Einwohnerzahl Konstantinopels im 6. Jahrhundert*. *JÖB* 43 (1993) 6.

<sup>43</sup> See STATHAKOPOULOS, *Famine and Pestilence*, Nos 12 and 31, both from the 4th century.

But the human element could also interfere with the imperial will. Rome was subject to what seems to have been a recurring obstruction of its food supplies either for political or for military reasons. This was particularly true for the fourth and early fifth centuries during which time four such cases were attested.<sup>44</sup> This must have also been true for Constantinople, but the few recorded cases that have come down to us show that the imperial government took draconian measures to ensure that the supply for its capital would not be endangered. In 355 Athanasios was banished to Gaul following the accusation that he had wanted to detain the grain shipments to Constantinople<sup>45</sup>. In 452 the party of the deposed patriarch of Alexandria, Dioskoros, revolted against the authorities, and threatened to obstruct the grain shipments to Constantinople. The emperor Markianos ordered the Egyptian corn to be delivered and shipped to the capital at Pelusium instead of to Alexandria, whereupon the rebels in the latter city suffered starvation<sup>46</sup>.

John of Ephesos informs us of the massive mortality that ensued during a dire famine that ravaged Constantinople and Egypt in 581–582, but he ends in a positive note: “Through God’s mercy in that year the tuna-catch was extraordinary, so that everybody could buy them cheaply and eat enough. In the regions far from the sea God made fruit and vegetable ripen in abundance.”<sup>47</sup> We can sum this up as follows: for inhabitants of mainland cities which above all enjoyed no administrative importance, it often required a miracle to supply them with food.

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<sup>44</sup> STATHAKOPOULOS, *Famine and Pestilence*, Nos 3, 15, 37, 44.

<sup>45</sup> Athanasios, *Apologia contra Arianos* (*Apologia secunda*), ed. H. G. OPITZ (*Athanasius Werke* 2). Berlin–Leipzig 1940, 87,3 (166); *Socrates* I 35, 2 (85); cf. HERZ, *Studien*, 328–9; SIRKS, *Food*, 202.

<sup>46</sup> Theodore Anagnostes, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. G. Ch. HANSEN (*GCS*). Berlin 1971, fr. 362 (102).

<sup>47</sup> John of Ephesos, *Historia ecclesiastica*, Pars III. Ed. E. W. BROOKS (*CSCO, Scriptores Syri* III 3). Louvain 1936, XLV (133–4).

