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The trade of agricultural products in the eastern Mediterranean and the regional sea routes from thirteenth to fifteenth century*

For a long period between the thirteenth and fifteenth century the Mediterranean Sea, especially its eastern part, was the heart of international sea commerce, before new routes to the oceans displaced the area of maritime commercial activity¹. Throughout these three centuries there took place a significant development of maritime commerce, due to shifts and developments in the political, economic, social and technical contexts. The Fourth Crusade in 1204 was the turning point for fundamental political and economic changes in the eastern Mediterranean, while the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the rise of the Ottoman Empire signaled new major changes in the same area as well as in the whole of Europe. Economic growth following upon the demographic explosion in thirteenth-century Europe was among the major stimuli in the development of commerce. Meanwhile, social evolution and the enlargement of the needs of the European population, especially those of the upper class, for various products in their everyday life, increased the volume of trade. Technological progress in shipbuilding, in dimensions, tonnage, and speed; the diffusion of the sailing instruments, including maps, portolans, and the compass; and new types of sails, the increase in city-ports and the improvement of port facilities: these were in fact the results, not the causes, of the reinforcement of maritime commerce². At the same time, these developments also favored the increase in the volume of the trade and its expansion to new areas. Despite these great economic and social changes, however, between thirteenth and fifteenth century, in certain places the political circumstances both contributed to and hindered the further development of the maritime trade system.

In the later Middle Ages Venice and Genoa were the main trading powers in the eastern Mediterranean³. In the thirteenth century the two Italian city-states were rivals on equal terms. Venice, however, gradually strengthened its position when it acquired important colonies (Crete, Coron and Modon) and established control over certain areas (Negroponte, Cyclades) in Byzantine territories immediately after the Fourth Crusade and the fall of Constantinople. Genoa likewise strengthened its position not only during the second half of the thirteenth century after the treaty of Nymphaion and the restoration of the Byzantine Empire (1261), but also by the acquisition of its colonies in the northern Aegean (Chios, Old and New Phocaea) at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The capture and occupation of Famagusta in Cyprus for almost a century (1373–1464) was an important but unsuccessful venture for Genoa. The political weakness of the Ligurian city during the fifteenth century confirmed the absolute primacy of Venice, marking the fifteenth century as the golden age of Venetian commerce. The new political situation following the Fourth Crusade favored the development of a new kind of economic regionalism in the eastern Mediterranean. Economic zones, each with a strong center, appear throughout thirteenth and fourteenth century. Neighboring or intersecting these economic zones influenced the development of regional or short-distance sea trade practiced by private merchant ships.

While Venice and Genoa were controlling the major sector of commerce in Eastern Mediterranean, a significant number of merchants originating from other European cities or states were involved in regional trade as well. Byzantine merchants remained active for a long time after the fall of Constantinople in 1204, especially in the southern Aegean and the Black Sea, but gradually a great number of them became junior partners of

^{*} I am very grateful to Randolph Wilson, History department, Princeton University, for improving the English style of this paper.

¹ On the trade in the Eastern Mediterranean during the late Middle Ages, see the classical works of W. Heyd, Histoire du commerce du Levant au Moyen age, I–II. Leipzig 1886; E. Ashtor, Levant trade in the Later Middle Ages. Princeton 1983.

² U. Tucci, Navi e navigazione all'epoca delle crociate, in: Genova, Venezia, il Levante nei secoli XII–XIV, ed. G. Ortalli – D. Puncuh. Venice 2001. 273–294.

³ On the Venetian and Genoese merchants in the eastern Mediterranean during the twelfth and thirteenth century, see D. Jacoby, Mercanti genovesi e veneziani e le loro merci nel Levante crociato, in: Genova, Venezia, il Levante 213–256.

Italian entrepreneurs⁴. In addition, there were merchants active in the eastern Mediterranean from other Italian cities or regions such as Pisa, Amalfi, Florence, Naples, Ancon, Piacenza, Sicily (Messina, Syracuse, Palermo, Trapani) and Apulia, as well as from the Dalmatian city of Ragusa. From the rest of Europe, merchants from Spain (Catalonia), France (Narvon, Marseille), England and Flanders may also be found.

Among all these the predominance of the Venetian merchants is indisputable, although the Genoese merchants were formidable rivals for long periods. The commercial activity of Venice from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century is quite well illuminated, thanks to the richness of the Venetian archival sources and their study from nineteenth century to the present. In the second half of the twentieth century the study of the Genoese presence in the eastern Mediterranean and Aegean Sea revealed intense commercial activity. We know less about the rest of the trading nations acting in the same area, either because of poor documentation or because the study of existing sources has not yet been completed.

The history of maritime commerce and sea traffic is vast and complicate; accounting all these states, cities, ports, islands and other locations, as well as merchants of various origin involved, the only thing to do is to study the Venetian, in first place, and the Genoese commercial activity.

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Venice and Genoa established sea routes for their long distance state commerce. Venice organized eight sea routes, the well-known *mude*, four of which, as well as a part of a fifth one (the *muda* of Trafego), were situated in the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea (the *muda* of Romania, Cyprus–Armenia, Alexandria and Beirut)⁵. Venetian *mude* had a fixed date of departure and return, and a fixed itinerary including definite ports. The Genoese sea traffic system, in comparison, was less organized, with two main sea routes: from the coast of the Near East to Genoa via Cyprus or Alexandria, and from the Black Sea and Constantinople to Genoa via Chios⁶. Thus, the two city-states were able to obtain not only the commodities needed for the supply of their cities and their internal market, but also all the products for their external trade. Since the long-distance state commerce of the two cities has been thoroughly studied, we will try to study the short-distance private sea trade and the regional routes, taking as a starting point the colonies of Venice and Genoa in the eastern Mediterranean. This trade network could supply a great number of local markets with various products for the necessities of every day life, as well as with the exports to the mother cities and other markets.

A part of the sea trade in the eastern Mediterranean, although not the most important, was that of agricultural products, such as grain, wine, olive oil, non-wrought cotton and linen, pulses, raisins, rice, sesame and dried fruits (figs, nuts and others). Among all these products grains (wheat and barley) were undoubtedly the most important both because of the quantities transported and the severe restrictions imposed on their trade, intending to the sufficiency in the granaries of the colonies and the mother cities, as well as to the sufficiency in the local markets for bulk or retail sale. On the other hand, for the rest of the agricultural products there were no trade restrictions and consequently they were a considerable part of private commerce during these three centuries.

Notarial deeds concerning activities of sea trade usually do not provide us with information about the transported products. Some examples, however, confirm that private ships transported quantities, large and small, of agricultural products inside the regional economic zones of the eastern Mediterranean.

From the beginning of the thirteenth century, the great regional centers, from which the maritime trade routes began, were the Venetian colonies of Crete, Modon and Coron, Negroponte and Lusignan Cyprus (and mainly Famagusta), from the fourteenth century on there was also Genoese Chios in the northeastern Aegean.

⁴ G. Makris, Studien zur spätbyzantinischen Schiffahrt (*Collana storica di fonti e studi* 52). Genova 1983; A. E. Laiou-Thomadakis, The Greek merchant of the Palaeologan period: a collective portrait, in: Praktika tes Akademias Athenon, Synedria 18 (1982). Athen 1982, 96–127 (Reprint in Eadem, Gender, Society and Economic Life in Byzantium. London 1992, VIII); Eadem, The Byzantine Economy in the Mediterranean Trade System, Thirteenth – Fifteenth Centuries. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 34–35 (1980–1981) 177–222 (Reprint in Eadem, Gender, Society and Economic Life in Byzantium, VII); K.-P. Matschke, Commerce, trade, markets and money: Thirteenth – Fifteenth centuries, in: The economic history of Byzantium from the seventh through the fifteenth century, ed. A. E. Laiou, I–III. Washington, D.C. 2002, II 771–806.

⁵ D. STÖCKLY, Le système de l'Incanto des galées du marché à Venise (fin XIIIe-milieu XVe siècle). Leiden-New York-Köln 1995

⁶ M. Balard, La Romanie génoise (XII°-debut du XV° siècle), I-II (Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 235). Rome 1978.

All these centers were connected to each other, and were also connected with other ports of the eastern Mediterranean. Each one offered for trade not only the surplus of its own annual agricultural production, but also all products imported from other markets, mainly from Egypt, Near East and Asia Minor.

Crete was one of the most important regional centers, situated at a crucial point of the eastern Mediterranean. Venetians made the island a space of production and exportation of agricultural products, as well as a base to import various products for local consumption or for re-exportation. Political stability in Crete from the end of the thirteenth century gave Venice the opportunity to increase the volume of its trade on the island, at the moment when Venetian trade in the Mediterranean was also growing. The important position of Crete in the trade system of the eastern Mediterranean is well documented by the archival sources and the abundance of information.

Connections between Crete and the rest of the eastern Mediterranean were intense. Tables 1 and 1a show the relationships between the three main Cretan ports, Chania, Rethymno and above all Candia, the capital city and the biggest port of the island, and other ports⁷. Two usual types of connection existed: direct, from one port to another, and indirect, through intermediate ports. When two ports were connected, the port of departure usually supplied the port of arrival, and vice versa, with a variety of products needed. Following trade routes with several stops merchants could take advantage of local production and the necessities of each region, investing their own capital and their investor's in the best way.

Cretan ports were points of departure for several sea routes in various directions: to the ports of south and eastern Peloponnese and the island of Kythera, to the nearby Aegean islands of the Cyclades and Dodecanese, to Negroponte, to Cyprus, to the coasts of Asia Minor and Syria, to Damietta and Alexandria of Egypt, and finally to the north Aegean Sea, Constantinople and the Black Sea. Two of the main intermediate stops of these sea routes were the islands of Rhodes and Cyprus (the ports of Famagusta, Limassol and Paphos). Both islands, indeed, served to bridge the gap between Crete and the western coast of Asia Minor and Syria. Rhodes and Cyprus imported products for local consumption, but they were also an important station of transit for various products arriving from or heading towards Crete and other ports. Both Rhodes and Cyprus were certainly a significant market for all Cretans who invested heavily in the sea trade. There was also a close connection between Crete and Constantinople during the fourteenth century. The Byzantine capital imported products from Venice and exported others to Venice via Crete. Archival sources inform us that the merchants of Crete worked as intermediaries in the trade of various products from and to Constantinople throughout the fourteenth century.

Crete was an export center for substantial quantities of local agricultural products, mainly grain and wine, as well as pulses, dried fruits, honey, medical herbs, and, during the fifteenth century, of small quantities of cotton and sugar. On the other hand, the quantities of agricultural products imported for local consumption were rather limited: olive oil was the only exception, whose local production was never sufficient. Grain was also imported when there was a bad wheat harvest or famine. At the same time, agricultural products were imported only to be re-exported to Venice or to other regions. For this reason grain was imported mainly from Asia Minor, more so when the quantities of local grain production bought by the state for the granaries of Venice or its colonies were insufficient. Quantities of sugar and cotton from Cyprus, Syria or Alexandria were also imported. Crete was an indispensable supplier of agricultural and other products needed in the nearby islands

⁷ On the traffic of the port of Candia, as well as of those of Chania and Rethymno, see Ch. Gasparis, Η ναυτιλιακή κίνηση από την Κρήτη προς την Πελοπόννησο κατά τον 14ο αι. *Ta Istorika* 5, 9 (1988) 287–318; IDEM, Οι θαλάσσιες μεταφορές μεταξύ των λιμανιών της Κρήτης (1326–1360), in: Pepragmena st' diethnous kretologikou synedriou, II. Chania 1991, 67–101; IDEM, Κρήτη και Ανατολική Μεσόγειος. Το μικρομεσαίο εμπόριο και η ναυτιλιακή κίνηση τον 140 αιώνα, in: Treasures of Arab–Byzantine Navigation (7th–13th c.)/Θησαυροί της Αραβοβυζαντινής ναυσιπλοΐας (7^{oς}–13^{oς} αι.). Athens 2004, 54–63; S. Borsari, I movimenti del porto di Candia aa. 1369–1372 (dal repertorio del notaio Giorgio Aymo). *Università di Maccerata, Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia* 30–31 (1997–1998) 323–346.

⁸ A. E. Laiou, Un notaire vénitien a Constantinople: Antonio Bresciano et le commerce international en 1350, in: Les Italiens a Byzance, édition et présentation de documents par M. Balard – A. E. Laiou – C. Otten-Froux (*Byzantina Sorbonensia* 6). Paris 1987, 79–103, and mainly 83–86.

⁹ Ch. Gasparis, Η ελιά και το λάδι. Παραγωγή και εμπόριο στη μεσαιωνική Κρήτη (13°5–14°5 αι.), in: Elia kai ladi. D´ triemero ergasias, Kalamata 1993. Athens 1996, 151–158.

of the Cyclades and the south Aegean, as well as in the south Peloponnese. Meanwhile, imports flowed to Crete from the Venetian ports of Modon and Coron.

Archival sources from Crete dating from 1326 to 1334 provide some answers about the products exported in small private vessels to various ports¹⁰. These sources are, in fact, permissions for departure of vessels after the verification of the products loaded or the check for fugitive slaves or *villani*¹¹. The products carried by these ships were almost exclusively grain, both wheat and barley, and small quantities of flour, olive oil and pulses. A significant number of the departing vessels had as their destination the ports of Crete, where the agricultural products were gathered for local consumption or for export¹². The products exported from Crete, more frequently from Chania than Rethymno, were transported almost exclusively to the Peloponnesian ports of Modon and Coron¹³ (see table 1b) – only once is the port of Negroponte also mentioned¹⁴. The connection between Candia and the two Peloponnesian ports, even if in our documents seem very limited, in fact were always intense, at least until the end of the fifteenth century, when they ceased to be Venetian colonies.

From 1326 to 1334, considerable quantities of non-agricultural products were also exported from Crete, such as timber, elaborated or not, iron and tools (such as horse shoes, nails, plough-shares, rural tools, anchors etc.), as well as some quantities of salt and pitch (see table 1c)¹⁵. All of these products were transported to the Peloponnese and Negroponte, to the Cyclades, the Dodecanese and Chios, even to Constantinople. It is evident that iron was the main non-agricultural product transported, Candia was the only port of departure and the ports of destination were much more numerous compared to those receiving agricultural products. Candia, where one could find a variety of local or imported products, was indisputably the main center of trade for the area.

Despite the restrictions imposed by Venice on the grain trade in and through Crete, it is certain that the surplus of wheat and barley, after the state purchase of necessary quantities, was free to be negotiated by merchants in the private market or to be exported by owners for various reasons¹⁶. Exports were also realized through the permissions given by the local authorities to specific persons and for specific purposes to transport their grain production to other places inside or outside Crete. For example, during the thirteenth and fourteenth century such permissions were given to the Venier family in order to transport grain from its estates in Crete to the island of Kythera¹⁷. Members of the Corner family received, in 1315 and 1356, permissions to transport grain from their estates in Crete to the island of Karpathos. Francesco Baroci received the same in 1309 and 1316, allowing him to transport produce to the islands of Santorini and Therasia¹⁸. In both cases, the agricultural produce from the estates of the two families in Crete provided the necessary quantities of foodstuffs to the inhabitants of the two small islands. Merchants were also sometimes given permission for the export of grain either to territories under Venetian dominion or control, like Modon and Coron¹⁹, or to non-Venetian regions,

All information derive from unpublished archival sources, and especially from: Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Duca di Candia*, b. 10 and 10bis (Atti antichi). There is a lot of information about the departures of vessels from the Cretan ports, but just a part of them contains information about the products transported.

¹¹ Gasparis, Η ναυτιλιακή κίνηση από την Κρήτη προς την Πελοπόννησο 289; ΙDEM, Οι θαλάσσιες μεταφορές μεταξύ των λιμανιών της Κρήτης 69–70.

¹² Gasparis, Οι θαλάσσιες μεταφορές μεταξύ των λιμανιών της Κρήτης 96–98 et passim.

¹³ Gasparis, Η ναυτιλιακή κίνηση από την Κρήτη προς την Πελοπόννησο κατά τον 14ο αι. 309–310 et passim.

¹⁴ In June 1327 a vegeta plena of olive oil was transported from Candia to Negroponte (ASV, Duca di Candia, b. 10, q. 1, f. 21r).

¹⁵ These were the main products imported from the West to the latin East, see JACOBY, Mercanti genovesi e veneziani 252–253.

E. A. Zachariadou, Prix et marchés des céréales en Romanie. (1343–1405). Nuova Rivista Storica 61 (1977) 291–306; D. Tsoun-Garakis, Η σιτική πολιτική της Βενετίας στην Κρήτη τον 13ο και 14ο αιώνα. Παραγωγή, διακίνηση και τιμές του σιταριού. Mesaionika kai Nea Ellenika 3 (1990) 333–385, and mainly 351–373.

¹⁷ Ch. Gasparis, Cerigo sotto il dominio veneto: problemi economici di un'isola di importanza strategica, in: Venezia e Cerigo, Atti del Simposio Internazionale, Venezia 2002 (*Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini di Venezia, Convegni* 8). Venice 2003, 114.

¹⁸ S. Μ. ΤΗΕΟΤΟΚΙS, Ιστορικά κρητικά έγγραφα εκδιδόμενα εκ του Αρχείου της Βενετίας. Αποφάσεις Μείζονος Συμβουλίου Βενετίας 1255–1669. Athens 1933, 56, n. 2 and 3, 84–85, n. 26; ΙDEM, Θεσπίσματα της Βενετικής Γερουσίας 1281–1385, Μνημεία της Ελληνικής Ιστορίας, B2. Athens 1937, 22, n. 14 (cfr. F. Thiriet, Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie, II [1329–1399]. Paris 1958, 80, n. 286). Cfr. TSOUNGARAKIS, Η σιτική πολιτική 367.

See, for example, an order of 1326 concerning the permissions (gratie) given for the exportations of grain to the Aegean islands: Duca di Candia. Bandi (1313–1329), ed. P. RATTI-VIDULICH. Venice 1965, 164–165 n. 407. See also the permission given for exportations of grain to Modon and Coron in 1356, if the price remained under the 22 hyperpers the 100 mensure: ΤΗΕΟΤΟΚΙS, Θεσπίσματα της Βενετικής Γερουσίας 1281–1385, B2, 41–44 (THIRIET, Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise I, n. 306). In 1356, a

mainly in the Aegean Sea or in Byzantine territories²⁰. Apart from grain, Cretan wine was the only agricultural product exported on a wide scale from Crete to a great number of ports in the eastern Mediterranean and to many places in western and northern Europe²¹.

The permissions given by the Venetian authorities of Crete encompassed not only to the export of grain, but also its importation during times of great necessity. One of the main suppliers of grain were the Turkish emirates of Asia Minor. During the summer and autumn of 1334, 14 permissions were given for import of grain from the Turkish emirates of Asia Minor to Crete. These permitted a sum of 2,040 hyperpers to be exported from Crete for the purchase of an adequate sum of grain, and allowed for the importation of 29,300 *mensure* of grain²². In two decrees of January and October of the following year the Cretan authorities called every one who was interested to take a loan from the Public Treasury to transport wheat and barley from Asia Minor (*partes Turchie*) and to sell it in the central square of Candia²³. There is no doubt that very often, especially when the local production could not cover the necessities of the mother city, a large portion of the grain exported from Crete to Venice had been imported from other regions.

Even if our documents do not provide us with any kind of information about other products except grain imported from or exported to the Turkish emirates, it is worth mentioning that there are some articles in the treaties signed between the *duca* of Crete and the emirs during the fourteenth and the first decades of the fifteenth century (1331–1414) concerning the trade of wine, pulses, linen, rice, sesame and raisin²⁴. We may therefore conclude that the trade of these products was also carried out between the two regions.

Another important regional trading center was Lusignan Cyprus. During the thirteenth century, the French kings conceded commercial privileges and trade stations in the Cypriot ports to Venice and Genoa in order to facilitate their commercial activity on the island, as well as on the coasts of the Near East and Egypt. Cyprus was established as an important trading base at the beginning of the fourteenth century, shortly after the fall of the Crusader states. During the fourteenth century, its position was strengthened even more, after, first, the occupation of the Asian port of Ayas (1337) and, later, the occupation of the whole of Lesser Armenia by the Mamelouks (1374). The papal embargo imposed on the Mamelouk ports (1291–1344) as well as the Genoese occupation of Famagusta (1374) had a decisive influence on the economy of Cyprus²⁵.

permission has been given to Laurentio Dandolo for exportation of 1.000 *staria* of grain to Modon, Coron and Negroponte for three years, if the price remained under the 30 hyperpers the 100 *mensure*: ΤΗΕΟΤΟΚΙS, Θεσπίσματα της Βενετικής Γερουσίας 1281–1385, B2, 71 (ΤΗΙΡΙΕΤ, Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise I, n. 351). See also the table containing the grain exportations from Crete to Modon and Coron: Gasparis, Η ναυτιλιακή κίνηση από την Κρήτη προς την Πελοπόννησο κατά τον 14ο αι. 309–310. In 1291, a characteristic contract has been signed in Coron. According to the agreement, Marco Cristiano has chartered a *nave* owned by Gabriel Zeto and Petrus Barbo to transport salt from Modon to Chania, and then wheat from Chania to Modon (Pasquale Longo. Notaio in Corone. 1289–1293, ed. A. Lombardo. Venice 1951, 45, n. 58).

See, for example, the permission for grain exportations from Crete to non Venetian regions for a period of ten months, from August 1293 to May 1294: F. Thiriet, Délibérations des Assemblées vénitiennes concernant la Romanie, I (1160–1363). Paris 1966, 68–69, n. CLXXXII.

Ch. Gasparis, Παραγωγή και εμπορία κρασιού στη μεσαιωνική Κρήτη, 13ος–14ος αι., in: Praktika diethnous epistemonikou symposiou «Oinos palaios edypotos». To kretiko krasi apo ta proistorika os ta neotera chronia, ed. A. K. Mylopotamitaki. Herakleion 2002, 225–236; U. Tucci, Le commerce vénitien du vin de Crète, in: Maritime Food Transport, ed. K. Friedland. Cologne–Weimar–Vienna 1994, 199–211; Idem, Il commercio del vino nell'economia cretese, in: Venezia e Creta. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Iraklion–Chania 1997, ed. G. Ortalli. Venice 1998, 183–206; E. Kislinger, Graecorum vinum nel millenio bizantino, in: Olio e vino nell'Alto Medioevo (Settimane di studi della fondazione Centro Italiano di studi sull'Alto Medioevo LIV). Spoleto 2007, 631–665, here 661–664.

ASV, *Duca di Candia*, b. 10, q. 3, 36r–47r. A permission has been given in October 1334. The ship was going to depart from Candia to transport wine to Rhodes and then it had to depart for Palatia in Asia Minor to buy 15.000 *mensure* of wheat for Candia (ASV, *Duca di Candia*, b. 10, q. 3, 45v).

²³ ASV, *Duca di Candia*, b. 14, 103r, 106v.

²⁴ E. A. ZACHARIADOU, Trade and Crusade. Venetian Crete and the Emirates of Menteshe and Aydin (1300–1415). Venice 1983, 159, 163–165, 171–172, 187–189, 191–192, 198–200, 214, 222–223, 230–231, 236–237.

On the economy and the commerce in medieval Cyprus, see D. Jacoby, Το εμπόριο και η οικονομία της Κύπρου (1191–1489), in: Istoria tes Kyprou, IV. Nicosia 1995, 387–454; IDEM, The Rise of a New Emporium in the Eastern Mediterranean: Famagusta in the Late Thirteenth Century. *Meletai kai Hypomnemata* 1 (1984), 145–179 (Reprint in IDEM, Studies on the Crusaders states and on Venetian expansion. London 1989, VIII); N. COUREAS, Economy, in: Cyprus. Society and Culture. 1191–1374, ed. A. NICOLAOU-KONNARI – Ch. SCHABEL, Leiden–Boston 2005, 103–156.

Cyprus was closely tied to Crete and the coast of Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt (see table 2). Rhodes was also an important way station on the sea routes originating at Cyprus. From there the ships continued their way either northeast to the western coast of Asia Minor²⁶, or southwest to Crete²⁷. In Cyprus the port of Limassol was tightly linked to the ports of Acre and Ayas during the thirteenth century. Since 1260, and especially after 1291, the port of Famagusta replaced the port of the Limassol as the main port of Cyprus. It is not a coincidence that in many archival sources Cyprus as a port destination is identified with Famagusta. From the fourteenth century on, the smaller ports of Paphos in the south of the island and Keryneia in the north, as well as the port of Limassol, were way stations and not ports of departure or final destination²⁸. The connection between Cyprus and the ports of the Peloponnese, of Negroponte or of the Cyclades, although they existed, remained rather limited, because the ports of Crete were the main intermediaries²⁹. In any case, these three islands – Crete, Cyprus and Rhodes – formed a strong economic axis, linked to the coast of Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt, in the trade network of the eastern Mediterranean³⁰.

During the thirteenth century the agricultural production of Cyprus increased little by little, and from the fourteenth century merchants could find in the Cypriot market a great variety of goods either of local production or imported from the ports of Syria and Alexandria. The importance of Cyprus in Venice's long-distance trade network before the end of the fifteenth century was less significant than one might imagine. Products were transported from Cyprus to Crete and from there to Venice or other destinations³¹. For Genoa, on the other hand, Cyprus was an important trading base, and Genoese ships traveled from the island directly to Genoa or to other Italian and European ports.

The most important agricultural products exported from Cyprus were primarily cotton and sugar, as well as grain, wine, olive oil and carobs³². However, grain, small quantities of olive oil, wine and mastic from Chios were also imported, only to be re-exported, as the local production of these goods, except for mastic, seems to have sufficed for local needs.

A third regional trading center in the northeastern Aegean was the island of Chios, a Genoese colony from the beginning of the fourteenth until the second half of the sixteenth century³³. Chios was a significant trading

²⁶ In 1361, for example, there was an agreement for a travel from Famagusta to Rhodes or Theologo or Palatia and from there to Atalia and then to Paphos or Limassol or Keryneia and back to Famagusta (BOATERIIS, n. 114).

²⁷ In 1361, a contract has been signed for a travel from Famagusta to Limassol, Paphos, Rhodes, Candia and back to Famagusta (Boateriis, n. 98, 99).

²⁸ A usual sea route from Crete to Cyprus encompasses all three ports of southeastern Cyprus, that is Paphos, Limassol and Famagusta. In 1306, for example, the Venetian Bamdino Gotto resident in Constantinople had signed an agreement according to which the Venetian Nicolao Barastro resident in Candia had to transport with his *tarida* 60 *milliaria* of cretan cheese from Candia to Cyprus. Barastro was going to sail first to the ports of Paphos and Limassol, where he would wait Gotto for two days in each port, and then to the port of Famagusta, where he would wait also for another two days. In Famagusta Gotto had to decide if he would sell the cheese there or he would sail to the port of Iacia. In this case the cost of the transport would be increased. (The documents of Angelo de Cartura and Donato Fontanella venetian notaries in fourteenth-century Crete, ed. A. M. Stahl. Washington D.C. 2000, 142, n. 374).

See, for example, a travel, in 1360, from Famagusta to Coron, (Boateriis, n. 28), and another one, in 1361, from Coron to Famagusta and from there to Candia (Boateriis, n. 71). See also some travels between Famagusta and Negroponte in 1360, 1361 and 1365 (Boateriis, n. 3, 103, 275). K.-P. Matschke, Belege und Beobachtungen zur griechischen Bevölkerung von Rhodos unter der Herrschaft der Johanniter, in: Byzantina Mediteranea. Festschrift für Johannes Koder zum 65. Geburtstag. Vienna—Cologne—Weimar 2007, 445—458.

See, for example, an agreement signed in Candia, in 1353, for a travel from Candia to Cyprus, from there to Syria and then to Armenia, and from Armenia to Rhodes and back to Candia (Zaccaria de Fredo. Notaio in Candia [1352–1357], ed., A. LOMBARDO. Venice 1968, 50–5, n. 71–72).

On the commercial relations between Crete and Cyprus, see A. Lombardo, Cittadini di Creta e commerci cretesi a Cipro nella seconda metà del sec. XIV da un cartolare notarile rogato a Famagosta (1360–1362), in: Pepragmena b' diethnous kretologikou synedriou, III. Athens 1968, 102–150; N. Coureas, Commercial relations between Lusignan Cyprus and venetian Crete in the period 1300–1362. *Epeterida tou kentrou epistemonikon ereunon* 26 (2000) 141–155.

³² Jacoby, Το εμπόριο και η οικονομία της Κύπρου (1191–1489) 407–410, 417–420; Coureas, Economy, in: Cyprus. Society and Culture. 1191–1374, 105–115.

On the history of Chios during the genoese domination and the economy of the island, see Ph. Argenti, The Occupation of Chios by the Genoese and their Administration of the Island, I–III. Cambridge 1958; Balard, La Romanie génoise; G. Pistarino, Chio dei Genovesi nel tempo di Cristoforo Colombo (*Nuova Raccolta Colombiana*). Rome 1995.

base for Genoa, laying on the route to Constantinople and the Black Sea, areas of great importance for Genoese trade. Moreover, Chios is near the coast of Asia Minor, where, despite Ottoman dominion, Genoese merchants had commercial interests (Old and New Phocaea). A treaty signed in 1415 between the Mahona of Chios and Sultan Mahomet II established free commercial activities in Asia Minor in place of annual tribute³⁴. The island served more as a commercial base of transit than as a producer of agricultural goods for export; this excepting, of course, mastic, which was exported to Constantinople, Rhodes, Famagusta, Beirut, Damietta and Alexandria, and to other ports of the Byzantine Empire, the Aegean Sea and Europe³⁵. During the fourteenth century, Chios was also a transit station for cotton, coming from Turkey, Cyprus and Syria, to be exported to European markets³⁶. Finally, small quantities of wine, olive oil, lemons and nuts were exported to Pera, Crete or to the ports of western Europe (Venice, Savona, Amalfi etc.)³⁷.

As a Genoese colony Chios always maintained a close connection with Constantinople and the Genoese quarter of Pera, as well as with Caffa, the Genoese colony on the Black Sea to the north (table n. 3). There was also a direct connection with the coast of Asia Minor and the nearby islands of Tenedos and Lesbos (the port of Kalloni), as well as with Rhodes, Negroponte, Crete, Cyprus and some islands of the Cyclades, like Andros and Naxos³⁸. In addition, ships sailed from Chios to the ports of Egypt and Syria, but the documentation about how often this happened is poor. Chios remained primarily a way station for the sea route from Constantinople to Genoa, to other ports of Italy in Apulia or to Sicily, and to the rest of Europe (Flanders, Southampton).

Apart from these important regional economic zones around Crete, Cyprus and Chios, there were also smaller ones, like that of the Dodecanese islands around the island of Rhodes, the zone of the central Aegean between the islands of Chios and Negroponte, and that of central Greece around the port of Chalkis in Negroponte.

Some islands of the Dodecanese, such as Rhodes, Kos, Leros, Nisyros, produced small quantities of agricultural products, like wheat, barley, oats, sesame, pulses and figs, that they usually exported to the islands of the same area. Grain, however, was very often imported to the islands of the Dodecanese from other ports. Rhodes, a larger island with more need for foodstuffs, imported grain, wine, olive oil and other products from Alexandria, Cyprus, Crete, Negroponte, Old and New Phocaea, Chios, Lesvos, the Peloponnese (even from the port of Patras), and from the nearby islands of Kos and Leros³⁹.

Negroponte and its port of Chalkis, very close to the coast of continental Greece, was linked to various areas. Negroponte exported mainly grain, timber, acorns, wax and cotton to Crete, the Peloponnese, the Cyclades, the islands of the northern Aegean, northern Greece (Thessaloniki), as well as to the nearby coasts of Attica and Thessaly (small ports of Volos, Almyros, Demetrias, that were under Venetian control until the Fourteenth century⁴⁰). It imported grain and raisins from Thessaly, Attica, Modon and Coron, Crete, and Cyprus for local consumption or re-exportation to the Aegean islands or Venice, silk from Thebes and dried figs from Chios, part of which was then exported to Thessaly (Volos, Lamia)⁴¹.

Finally, the connection between the Peloponnesian ports of Modon and Coron and the Aegean islands, Negroponte or the ports of Asia Minor (Theologos, Palatia) was rather secondary, occasional, and, according to some examples, concerned primarily with the transportation of grain.

³⁴ Argenti, The Occupation of Chios by the Genoese I 170; PISTARINO, Chio dei Genovesi 58–59.

³⁵ On the commerce of mastic, see Argenti, The Occupation of Chios by the Genoese I 482–484; Balard, La Romanie génoise II 742–749; M. Balard, Le mastic de Chio, monopole de la Mahone génoise, in: Res Orientales, VI. Hommages à Claude Cahen. Paris 1994, 223–228.

³⁶ Balard, La Romanie génoise II 741–742.

³⁷ Argenti, The Occupation of Chios by the Genoese I 510, 513–514.

³⁸ L. Balletto, Tra Andros veneziana e Chio dei Genovesi nel Quattrocento. *Thesaurismata* 31 (2001) 89–105; IDEM, Commerci e rotte commerciali nel Mediterraneo orientale alla metà del Quattrocento: l'importanza dell'isola di Chio, in: Money and markets in the Palaeologan era, ed. N. G. Moschonas. Athens 2003, 97–112.

³⁹ Ζ. Α. ΤSIRPANLIS, Ανέκδοτα έγγραφα για τη Ρόδο και τις Νότιες Σποράδες από το αρχείο των Ιωαννιτών Ιπποτών 1421–1453. Rhodes 1995, 139–144.

V. HROCHOVA, Le commerce vénitien et les changements dans l'importance des centres commerciaux en Grèce du 13^e au 15^e siècles. Studi Veneziani 9 (1967) 3–34; J. KODER – F. HILD, Hellas und Thessalia (TIB 1). Vienna 1976.

⁴¹ N. G. Moschonas, Εύριπος, κέντρο βενετικού εμπορίου, in: Benetia-Euboia. Apo ton Egripo sto Negroponte. Praktika diethnous synedriou, Chalkis 2004, ed. Ch. A. Maltezou – Ch. E. Papakosta. Venice–Athens 2006, 157–171, mainly 161–167; L. Balletto, Negroponte nei traffici commerciali genovesi nel Mediterraneo orientale sulla fine del Medioevo, in: *Op. cit.* 173–202.

Private regional sea trade, and especially the trade of agricultural products in the eastern Mediterranean for almost three centuries, is a vast and open field of research, with many more topics to be studied and questions to be answered. It is well known that we do not have at our disposal all the evidence to do so, either because some of the topics are poorly documented or because the rich documentation existed for the rest of the topics have not been completely studied until now. For example, there were serious fluctuations in the trade of agricultural products from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. We also know when these fluctuations happened, but we do not always know the exact causes. It seems probable that these causes were not exclusively political and economical circumstances, but also natural disasters and crop diseases, various changes in everyday life due to the demographic growth, new economic and social circumstances, the increase of sea traffic and more and more frequent contact between people of different culture and habits. It is even more difficult, apart from grain and wine, to give answers about specific agricultural products' trade. Studying the history of the trade of agricultural products, it is possible to find out whether some of these were more popular at certain periods of times, and how and why that should have been so. It would be interesting to know if the commercial policy of the trading powers – mainly Venice and Genoa – helped some products to become popular, or if some of them enjoyed high popularity even before. We are quite sure that the answers, at least to some of these questions, are in the existing sources and mainly in the notarial acts. Compared to public documents, notarial acts are closer to private commercial activity and offer invaluable information about regional economic zones.

There is no doubt that sea traffic for the trade of agricultural products in the regional economic zones of the eastern Mediterranean was quite intense with a great variety of sea routes and local connections. Venetians and Genoese merchants from the mother cities or the colonies, Greeks merchants from the Byzantine Empire or the Latin territories in Romanía, other Italians, Catalans, French, or Dutch merchants were acting in the eastern Mediterranean, not only in long distance trade, but also in the regional trading network. It is worth noticing the cooperation between merchants of different national origins, for instance, between Venetians and Genoese, Venetians and Catalans, and, of course, between Venetians, Genoese and Greeks. The role of the Greeks in the regional trade system, especially those of the Latin colonies, must not to be neglected. As early as the thirteenth, but primilary from the fourteenth century on, Greeks were acting in many sectors of the local and regional trade, first as a crew or captains, and very soon as owners of small or medium vessels, as merchants or investors in the sea trade.

Archival sources, and especially notarial acts, offer a great deal of information about the commercial sea routes, but usually do not mention the products transported. Nevertheless, as our examples prove, agricultural products were a considerable part of the regional sea trade. Moreover, many territories in the eastern Mediterranean, and mainly the small islands, had to be supplied, regularly or occasionally, with food-staffs to meet local needs. The Cyclades is a good example, having as its main supplier the island of Crete. However, even larger continental zones or islands, such as Asia Minor, the Peloponnese, Thessaly, Crete and Cyprus, had to be supplied from time to time with certain agricultural products.

The agricultural products transported in the regional economic zones of the eastern Mediterranean were: grain, mainly wheat and barley, wine, olive oil, cotton and linen, pulses, dried fruits, raisin, and some quantities of rice and sesame. There were also some special local products widely demanded by the merchants, such as mastic from Chios, carobs from Cyprus or substances for medical uses, like *laudanum* from Crete⁴². All of these agricultural products were either the surplus of the local production, exported directly to other regions, or imported products for re-exportation to larger markets.

The quantities of agricultural products transported for local consumption were rather small, compared to other products such as raw materials or tools imported from Egypt, Near East, Venice or Genoa. The main part of the agricultural products transported to regional ports in Crete, in Cyprus, in Peloponnese or in Chios, was for re-exportation to larger markets like Venice, Genoa, Constantinople or Alexandria.

⁴² In 1271, for example, Iohannes de Bonamico resident in Candia has received from Raphael Natale 217 ½ livre of *lathanum* to sell during the travel that Iohannes was going to make (Pietro Scardon. Imbreviature [1271]. Documenti della colonia veneziana di Creta, ed. A. Lombardo. Turin 1942, 7–8, n. 16). In 1304, Marco Contarino son of Petro resident in Venice has received in Candia from Victor Paulo resident in Candia 2 *milliaria* and 825 livre of *ladhanum* in order to sell it in Alexandria (Pietro Pizolo. Notaio in Candia, ed. S. Carbone, II, 1304–1305, Venice 1985, 53, n. 804).

The trade of agricultural products in the eastern Mediterranean and the regional sea routes from thirteenth to fifteenth century

Venice was undoubtedly the main trading power in the regional economic zones of the eastern Mediterranean, because of its numerous and important colonies in the area, as well as its significant commercial privileges in Cyprus, Egypt, and many territories of the Byzantine Empire. Many other merchants, however – first among them the Genoese – were serious commercial rivals of the Serenissima, especially during the fourteenth century.

THE MAIN REGIONAL SEA ROUTES IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN SOURCES (XIIIth – XVth C.)

Apart from the bibliography referred in the text notes, the primary published sources used for information about the connection between the regional ports of the eastern Mediterranean (see tables) are:

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Z. A. Tsirpanlis, Ανέκδοτα έγγραφα για τη Ρόδο και τις Νότιες Σποράδες από το αρχείο των Ιωαννιτών Ιπποτών, 1421–1453. Rhodes 1995

A lot of information about the sea trade of fourteenth-century Crete derive also from: Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Duca di Candia*, b. 10, 10bis, 11, 14.

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TABLE 1: CRETE

Departure	stop a	stop b	stop c	stop d
Candia	Paphos	Limassol	Famagusta	Iacia
	Cyprus	Syria	Armenia	Rhodes
	Cyprus	Turkey/Miletus		
	Cyprus (Famagusta)	Armenia		
	Limassol	Famagusta		
	Cyprus	Miletus		
	Negroponte	Rhodes		
	Negroponte	Cyprus	Armenia	
	Negroponte	Thessaloniki	Constantinople	
	Alexandria			
	Seteia (Crete)	Alexandria		
	Rhodes			
	Rhodes	Palatia/Asso		
	Rhodes	Cyprus	Syria	
	Settia (Crete)	Damietta		
	Palatia (Miletus)			
	Theologo (Ephessus)			
	Anea			
	Modon	Coron		
	Nauplio			
	Monemvasia			
	Kythera			
	Mykonos			
	Serifos			
	Santorini			
	Cyclades (see table 1a)			
	Dodecanese (see table 1a)			
Chania	Modon	Coron		
	Coron	Venice		
	Kythera			
Rethymno	Modon			

TABLE 1a: Ports or places by geographical zones connected with Crete

CRETE⁴³:

Candia, Rethymno, Chania, castello Milopotamo, Apokoronas, Mousselas, Chersonissos, Mirabello, Seteia, Ierapetra, Myrtos, castello Iustiniano, Anchilie

PELOPONNESE:

Modon, Coron, Monemvasia, Nauplio, [island of Kythera]

ISLANDS OF SOUTHERN AEGEAN:

- a. CYCLADES: Melos, Naxos, Sifnos, Santorini, Amorgos, Ios, Serifos, Anafi, Andros, Mykonos, Sikinos
- b. DODECANESE: Rhodes, Kos, Patmos, Karpathos, Astypalaia, Nissiros

ISLANDS OF NORTHERN AEGEAN, BOSPHOROS, BLACK SEA:

Negroponte, Chios, Lesvos, Thessaloniki, Gallipoli, Pera/Constantinople, Tana, [Romania]

CYPRUS, COAST OF EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN:

Famagusta, Paphos, Limassol, Levante/Oriente, Turkey, Smyrna, Theologo (Ephessus), Palatia (Miletus), Old Phocaea, Aenus, Beirut, Alexandria, Damietta,

IONIAN SEA, WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN:

Corfu, Venice, Puglia, Otranto, Sicily, Naples, Pisa, Saragossa, Barcelona

⁴³ Connection between the ports of Crete. Just three of them, Candia, Chania and Rethymno, were ports of departure to places out of Crete.

The trade of agricultural products in the eastern Mediterranean and the regional sea routes from thirteenth to fifteenth century

TABLE 1b: Agricultural products exported from Candia (1326-1334) (source: ASV, Duca di Candia, b. 10)⁴⁴

YEAR	DEPARTURE	DESTINATION	No of DEP.	PRODUCTS
1326	Candia	Modon	1	500 mensure of wheat
	Chania	Modon	5	3.300 mensure of wheat
		Coron	4	2.350 mensure of wheat
1328	Candia	Modon	1	522 mensure of barley
		Coron	2	1.660 mensure of wheat
	Chania	Modon	4	1.800 mensure of wheat
		Coron	14	4.700 mensure of wheat
	Rethymno	Modon	1	?
1329	Chania	Modon	2	400 mensure of wheat
		Coron	3	700 mensure of wheat
1332	Candia	Coron	5	5.850 mensure of wheat
	Chania	Coron	2	1.500 mensure of wheat
1333	Candia	Modon	1	1.000 mensure of wheat
		Coron	4	1.425 mensure of wheat
	Rethymno	Modon	2	600 mensure of wheat

TABLE 1c: Non agricultural products exported from Candia (1326–1334) (source: ASV, Duca di Candia, b. 10)

DESTINATION	No. of DEP.	PRODUCTS
Rhodes	28	44 <i>milliaria</i> ¹ of iron 2.000 <i>livre</i> of iron 49 barrels of nails (aguti) 4 anchors 18 hoes (zape) 173 boards of cypress wood
Monemvasia	12	27 ½ <i>milliaria</i> of iron 6.300 <i>livre</i> of iron
Coron – Modon	6	2 <i>milliaria</i> of iron 3.000 <i>livre</i> of iron 5 <i>milliaria</i> of pitch
Naxos	8	3 <i>milliaria</i> of iron 162 <i>livre</i> of iron 500 <i>livre</i> of nails 19 boards
Negroponte	3	4 milliaria of iron
Nauplio	3	15.000 <i>livre</i> of iron
Constantinople	3	2 <i>milliaria</i> of iron timber
Chios	2	1 <i>milliarium</i> of iron 1.500 <i>livre</i> of iron
Sifnos	1	3 boards

 $^{^{44}\,}$ Cfr. Gasparis, Η ναυτιλιακή κίνηση από την Κρήτη προς την Πελοπόννησο 309–310. $^{45}\,$ 1 milliarium = 1.000 livre = 480 kg.

Charalambos Gasparis

TABLE 2: CYPRUS

Departure	Stop a	Stop b	Stop c	Stop d
Famagusta	Alexandria			
	Rhodes/Theologo/ Palatia (Miletus)	Paphos/Limassol/ Keryneia		
	Limassol	Paphos	Rhodes	
	Limassol	Paphos	Rhodes	Candia
	Limassol	Rhodes	Limassol	
	Rhodes	Candia		
	Candia			
	Negroponte			
	Atalia			
	Coron			

TABLE 3: CHIOS

Departure	Stop a	Stop b
Chios	Pera	
	Caffa	
	Old Phocaea	
	Palatia	
	Smyrna	
	Rhodes	
	Cyprus (Famagusta)	
	Candia	
	Negroponte	Lamia/Volos ⁴⁶
	Thessaly (Volos)	
	Andros	Karystos (Negroponte), Modon
	Thessaloniki	
	Alexandria	
	Genoa	
	Brindisi/Puglia	
	Sicily	
	Flanders	
	Malaga/Cardiff	Southampton/Sluis
Candia	Chios	Constantinople
Rhodes		Rhodes
Tenedos		
Lesvos (port of Kalloni)		
Palatia		Alexandria
Famagusta		Genoa
Genoa		Alexandria
Genoa		Pera
Brindisi		
Ancona		

 $^{^{46}}$ Towns in Thessalia. Volos is a port, but Lamia is a mainland town, linked to Volos.