



Summary :

The Byzantines maintained, developed and occasionally enlarged the existing Roman road-system. A hallmark for the road-system of Asia Minor was the transfer of the capital to Constantinople (324-330): it resulted in the increase of the importance of the roads starting from Constantinople and of the harbors of the south coast of Propontis (Sea of Marmara), whereas in the mean time it efficiently confined the importance of the roads of northwestern, western and southern Asia Minor. The so-called *cursus publicus* was elevated to a main communication route of Asia Minor during the Byzantine period.

Date

4th-11th century, 13th century, 15th century

Geographical Location

Asia Minor

1. Byzantine road-system in Asia Minor

1.1. The categories, the use and the importance of Byzantine routes

The Romans divided the roads into the public ones (*viae publicae*) and the private ones (*viae privatae*). The Byzantines maintained this discernment although with some slight adaptations according to the conditions of their era. Thus, in Byzantium the road-system included the main artery (state or royal road – *strata* or *leophoros* or *trivos*), the provincial routes (side route) that connected the small towns with the major urban centers and the villages, and the rural roads that connected the villages with the surrounding region, as well as the region with the small towns. The last ones partially belonged to private landowners, but the whole agrarian community made use of them and for that reason they were not discerned from the private roads of the Romans. Rural road was a pathway as well, natural or artificial road, which often, in case of sloping ground, was sustained by a supporting wall.

Byzantine public roads, which constituted a Roman heritage, were straight roads with paved flat surface and solid substructure. Their width was up to 6,50 meters at some points. The physical form of the ground and the structure of the settlements-network mainly determined the design and formation of these routes. The Byzantines, true heirs of the Roman tradition, maintained and developed the existing Roman road-system in an excellent way, though occasionally enlarged it as well. The *Anecdota* (Secret History) of Procopios, hagiographical texts, monastic documents and other sources contain numerous testimonies for road-construction works in Byzantium.¹ Although the Roman roads were created to serve mainly military causes, in practice it performed political, cultural and trade operations as well, inside the Byzantine dominion or at a wider scale, beyond the local one.

Many roads in Asia Minor are known in international bibliography with a special name that defines their function in a certain period, as their importance experienced differentiations in time, in accordance with diverse factors (internal and external political situation, war and peace, development or diminution of commerce, establishment or elevation of new urban centers etc.), as the following examples show: the foundation of a new capital (Constantinople AD 324-330) caused the decline of those roads directed from the western coasts of Asia Minor to the eastern borders and the rise of the diagonal roads, which drove from the new capital as a starting point to [Cilicia](#) and [Syria](#). One of them, the pilgrim's road, which linked central Europe with Palestine, ceased to serve the traveling of pilgrims at the end of the 6th century, when the Aimos' peninsula was cut off of central Europe, resumed its old function at the end of the 10th century, when



the road of Hungary opened (end of 10th century), and left abandoned definitely after the establishment of the [Sultanate of Iconium](#) (end of 11th century). The diagonal road that passed through [Amorion](#), capital of the [theme \(thema\) of Anatolikon](#), and led to the city of [Ikonion](#), was of great importance from the 7th to the 9th century, whereas from the 10th century its westerly variation from Philomelion to Ikonion came to the foreground.² Finally, a frequent transposition of the trade roads is ascertained, as they were directly influenced by the relation of Byzantium with its neighbors each time (Persians, Arabs, Turkomans) and by the political situation of central Asia.

1.2. State and problems of research

The road-system of Asia Minor has been studied within the frame of wider works about the history, the economy and the historical geography of Asia Minor.³ Thus, our knowledge about the exact route of the roads, their military use and the structure of the road-system of Asia Minor during the Byzantine years (4th-11th century, 13th century for the regions of the [Empire of Nicaea](#), 15th century for the regions of the [Empire of Trebizond](#)) is generally satisfactory. We do not know sufficiently enough the importance of the roads for the circulation of the merchants and other professionals and private people, because of the condition of the sources and the lack of relevant monographs. The fullest knowledge of the road-system of Asia Minor and its importance, especially the financial one, could have contributed to the whole understanding and interpretation of the mobility of populations in the region, of the military importance of the peninsula, of the administrative organization of the provinces in Asia Minor, of the demographic, defense and economic policy that the central authority of the Byzantine state applied and of the general financial development of this particular geographic area.

2. The meaning of the foundation of Constantinople for the communication

During the Roman period the roads of Asia Minor were oriented and directed towards [Ephesos](#), by following the West-East axis. Of great commercial importance was at that time the so-called "common road". This road, whose route had been described by Artemidoros,⁴ started from Ephesos and, by following the valley of Maiandros (Meander), passed by [Magnesia](#) and [Tralles](#) and headed towards [Laodikeia](#), Philomelion and [Apameia](#). There it met the south branch of the military road, which led to [Caesarea](#), center of the hinterland of Asia Minor, and to Euphrates. During the early imperial period of Rome a northern connection was added, which passed through Ancyra and served firstly military utilities. The transport of the capital and the shift of the center of gravity of the empire from Rome to Constantinople (A.D. 324-330) contributed heavily to the rise of the importance of the roads starting from the new capital and from the harbors of the southern coast of Propontis, whereas simultaneously confined in a dramatic way the importance of the roads of the northwestern, western and southern Asia Minor, including the common road.

3. Functions of the road-system during the Medieval times

3.1. The *cursus publicus* and its use

During the Byzantine period (4th-13th century) the so-called *cursus publicus* was elevated to a main communication route of Asia Minor. This road had as its starting point [Chalcedon](#), where during the 9th century resided count Kyros "τοῦ τῶν δημοσίων ἱπποστασίων δρόμου τυγχάνων ἐπόπτης" of the royal leophoros to Chalcedon,⁵ that traversed Asia Minor diagonally from northwest to southeast. The first part proceeded in a parallel way to the Asian coast of



Propontis, but soon after drove all along the coastline towards Dakibyza, [Nicomedia](#), Eribolos, Praenetos, Helenopolis and Pylai. [Theodore of Sykeon](#) during his return from Constantinople (spring of the year 610), while reaching Optanitates, a suburb of Nikomedeia, went astray from his road and traveled by horse through the coastal road Eribolos-Latomion-Myrokopion-Herakleion, heading to the monastery of Saint Autonomous (situated on the hill Soreoi or Megalophos, only 2,5 klm. from the coast).⁶ At Eribolos, as well as in the next three **emporion**, the road left behind the coast and led to [Nicaea](#) and [Prousa](#). According to the Arab geographer Al-Mas'udi, Acropolis, an area of Constantinople across Chalcedon, the promontory Leukate, close enough to Dakibyza, Saggaros, an emporion on the golf of [Cius](#),⁷ and Pylai constituted the first four accesses to the capital of the Byzantine state.⁸

Nicaea and Prousa constituted each one the starting point of an alternative route of the *cursus publicus*. The easterly one passed through [Dorylaeum](#), Nakoleia and Amorion, whereas the westerly one through [Kotyaion](#), Akroinion and Philomelion. The two alternative routes were connected in Laodicea Katakekaumene, in order to constitute one road that continued to Ikonion, Heracleia, [Podandos](#), Cilician Gates and [Tarsus](#) and led to [Antioch](#), where main commercial roads from the Syrian hinterland, and especially those from Aleppo and Baghdad, ended. From Ikonion some subsidiary roads started, which ended in different terminals of the coast of Asia Minor, such as [Anemourion](#) (Anemourion-Ikonion-[Leontopolis](#)-Lystra-[Germanikopolis](#)), [Seleukeia](#) (Ikonion-Laranda-Seleukeia) and [Pompeiopolis](#) (Ikonion-Ad Fines-Tetrapyrgia-Pompeiopolis).⁹ The second of these three roads crossed [Lykaonia](#) and [Phrygia](#), by following the Kalykandos valley and by continuing towards Korykos, Tarsos and [Mopsuestia](#), in order to end in Seleukeia. This road was used from those that participated in the [Third Crusade](#),¹⁰ whereas during the Arab-Byzantine conflicts, the Arabs used this road, as well as the road of Armenia and the road that crossed the regions of [Cappadocia](#)-[Galatia](#), in order to invade the territories of Asia Minor.¹¹

3.2. Road-system and commerce

Testimonies derived mainly from Arab sources show that the diagonal road Nicaea-Amorion or Philomelion-Cilician Gates started fulfilling commercial purposes from the decade 930-940. On the river Lamos, the border between the Muslim market of Tarsos and the [theme \(thema\) of Seleukeia](#), and a usual place of exchange of prisoners of war between the Arabs and the Byzantines, were held big trade's fairs. From the Byzantine side, merchants of silk, of silk goods, of perfumes and of spices were present.¹² In the northern part of the same road, more precisely in the region of Augustopolis, in the theme (thema) of Anatolikon, an annual perfume market had been established.¹³ According to another testimony, the Arab commander of Tarsos, during the campaign that was conducted between the 20th of July and the 18th of August in 931, he entered undisturbed in the abandoned city of Amorion and became master of "a vast amount of merchandise and food".¹⁴ The merchants usually transported their products by caravans of camels, when they were about to travel deep in the Arab dominion. One of these Byzantine caravans was captured by the emir of Syria Abu 'l Hassan Ali Seif Eddauleh ibn Hadan (916-969) and its burden was confiscated. The caravan was returning from the Indies with an armed escort, led by **patrikios** Leo Phokas,¹⁵ and probably heading to Cilicia. The caravans that traveled from the Byzantine territories and the city of Antioch towards Aleppo and the markets of Syria, carrying usually merchandise of luxury, are mentioned in the Arab-Byzantine commercial treaty of 969/970. The taxation of the merchandise took place in the customs of Aleppo, where the imperial custom officials were cooperating with two local lords of northern Syria. The importance of the roads of Asia Minor for the development of the commerce of the empire during the 9th and the 10th century, a period that the Arabs marked decisive naval victories in the Aegean, such as the



conquest of Crete and Cyprus, is unquestionable. A. Ducellier supports that before the 11th century the overland trade, that served mainly the transportation of merchandise of luxury, had a bigger circle of labor than the one of the Mediterranean, which had been specialized to forward heavy strategical merchandise (wood and metals).¹⁶ In contrast, N. Oikonomides does not accept that the circle of labor by land with Anatolia was bigger than the circle of labor of the Mediterranean.¹⁷

3.3. Pilgrim's road

The most easterly variation of the *cursus publicus* turned north after Nicaea and passed through [Ancyra](#), Aspona, Koloneia and Podandos, bypassing Salt Lake on the eastern side, without approaching Phrygia nor [Pisidia](#). This variation, known as the road of pilgrims, is described in full in the late Roman itineraries and was used, only to mention the most popular examples, by two illustrious and well known pilgrims, Aitheria, during her return from the Holy Land (May-June 384), and Melania the Younger, while proceeding to the Holy Land (end of February-6 April 437). From the 6th to the 10th century the road served, at least as the private journeys concerns, exclusively the Byzantine travelers. The old aged hermit Antiochos that had visited [Maurice](#) (582-602), as a representative of a Palestinian town, during his return from Constantinople, spent his night in the monastery of Saint Theodore in Sykai. The abbot accompanied his visitor as far as Anastasioupolis. A little later the hermit succumbed to the hardships of his journey, while traveling on the public strata, that is on the pilgrim's road.¹⁸ The European pilgrims appear again on the roads of Asia Minor only in the 11th century. The duke of Normandy Robert I (the Magnificent) died in Nicaea while returning from his pilgrimage at Jerusalem (1035), whereas the Danish Swein Godvinsson succumbed to the cold while crossing on bare food the mountains of Anatolia (autumn of 1052).¹⁹

The pilgrim's road was a road that in all probability the so-called "great" ambassadors of the Great King of Persia to Constantinople followed as well, and the Byzantine ambassadors to the opposite direction up to the end of the 6th century. That appears from the official report of the travel of the "great" Persian ambassador in Constantinople, that had been preserved at least until the middle of the 10th century in the *scrinium barbarorum*, that is in the part of the state archive of Byzantium, related to the neighbor nations. Therefore the provinces of [Cappadocia](#) and [Galatia](#), as well as Helenopolis, a harbor on the coastline of [Bithynia](#), are reported there as main stations or places through which the embassy passed, besides the border station of Dara and the city of Antioch. From Helenopolis the Persians had the possibility to cross by boat in Dakibyza and thereafter with beasts of burden to reach Chalcedon via the overland road and later to the capital, or to head exclusively through the overland road (Helenopolis-Nikomedeia-Dakibyza-Chalcedon).²⁰

3.4. Military roads to the eastern frontier

Ancyra was the starting point of a military road that led to the East and ended at [Melitene](#), before passing through [Caesarea](#) or [Sebasteia](#). Two parts composed the link Ancyra-Caesarea-Melitene. The first part (Ancyra-Caesarea) had to alternative routs. The first one, south of the river Ali, passed by Parnassos and Nyssa, the second one, north of Ali, passed by Saniana, the castle of Semaluos/Cemele and the station Aqua Saravenae and crossed more than on time over the river. The second part of the route (Caesarea-Melitene) had two alternative routes as well. The southern one passed by Komana, Arabissos and Lykandos, the northern one by Tzamandos, Ariarathia and Taranta. The second part Ancyra-Melitene passed by [Tabia](#), the castle of Charsianon, the [aplekton](#) Bathys Ryax and Sebasteia and constituted



part of a longer road that led from Kamachos (Satala) to [Constantinople](#).

There can be discerned two variations, on which (according to an Arab itinerary)²¹ were in operation the services of a *cursus publicus* (post stations and transport services by horses). The northern and the shortest one had as starting point Kamachos and passed through Saricha, the castle of Charsianon, the castle of Sangaris/Tarsos, the lake Boane or Sophon, Nikomedeia and Chalcedon. All along the road 186 stations of the *cursus publicus* functioned. The southern and longest one, with starting point Kamachos as well, passed through Melitene and Ancyra and demanded much more time to cover. Comparable to the Itinerary of Ibn Hauqal, though more detailed, is the Itinerary of Al-Muqaddasi that commenced from Amida and crosses Simsat, Harput, Koloneia, Melitene, Arqa, Aromane, Tzamandos, Caesarea, Ancyra, the bridge of Sangarios in the land of Maleinoi, Nikomedeia and Charax, an emporion (commercial station) on the north side of the golf of Nikomedeia, from where someone could be ferried over to Constantinople via the sea road.²²

Nevertheless, according to the testimony of Constantine Porphyrogenetos, the main military road passed through [Malagina](#), Doryalion, Kaborkin, Koloneia and Caesarea, where there were equally numbered *aplekta*, that is places for the gathering of the Byzantine armies. In Koloneia this road branched off towards Tarsos. When the campaign headed against Tarsos, the armies were gathered in Koloneia, from where they started their route from the road [Tyana](#)-Podandos to the Cilician Gates. When the campaign had as destination Anatolia, the army was gathered in Caesarea and afterwards went across Arabissos or Germanikeia, heading to Melitene or [Samosata](#). Much northern were located the *aplekta* of Dazimon, Bathys Ryax and Tephrike. There ended obviously the northern military road that commenced from Chalcedon and went through [Gangra](#) and Ancyra.²³ In the military roads of Asia Minor were in operation as well the services of *cursus publicus* during the 9th and 10th century. That is confirmed not only by the Arab sources, but by the Byzantine sources as well. In order to escape to the Caliphate general Manuel, got ferried across from Constantinople to the Pylai of Bithynia by ship and afterwards reached the Cilician Gates, by using public vehicles that were guarded in the stations of *cursus publicus* (834). The history was repeated with the eunuch Samonas, 70 years later (904). This illustrious fugitive, of an Arabian origin, followed the northern military road, though caught while he was passing over Ali in the monastery of Holy Cross in Siricha.²⁴

4. The route communication of the cities of Asia Minor

4.1. Links from North to South

Through Sebasteia passed two important route connections that were developed upon the north-south axis. The first one started from [Amaseia](#), met with the road Caesarea-Melitene on the junction Plasta/Elbistan and ended at [Adana](#) (via Koukousou) or at Germanikeia or at Aleppo (via Adana). The other one commenced from [Amisos](#) and ended at Koukousou. From Koukousou started three roads that ended respectively at Andrassos, at Germanikeia and at Adatha (in northern Syria).²⁵ Another important route connection from north to south was the road Amisus-Tabia-Caesarea-Tauros-[Cilicia](#). The last part Caesarea-Cilicia went by Kyzistra, Magida, Tyana, Faustinopolis and Podandos. Basil II during his campaign (878) made use of the most easterly variation of this part that passed through Koukousou and ended at Germanikeia.²⁶

The great road that crossed over Asia Minor in a diagonal way, from NE to SW, linked [Attaleia](#) with [Trebizond](#). The



route connection Attaleia-Ikonion-Nicaea is known from the description of the Arab prisoner Ibn Yahia's journey by horses of the *cursus publicus* that was included in the work of Ibn Rustah Book of Precious Records. This journey is dated between the end of the 9th and the beginning of the 10th century.²⁷ Almost until 900 the travelers preferred the western variation of the same road that passed by Amorion, capital of the theme (thema) of Anatolikon.²⁸ Life of Saint Antony the Younger mentions the use of this alternative route with Sillyon, near Attaleia, as its starting point, the Pylai of Bithynia as its terminal, and [Amorion](#) and Nicaea as its intermediate stations (the journey is dated around the end of the third decade of the 9th century).²⁹ Arab traveler Ibn Battuta started from Attaleia in order to reach Ikonion, with intermediate stations the places of Turdur and Egredir (=Akroterion, promontory in Greek) on the banks of the homonymous lake (1332/1333).

Attaleia with Seleukeia were constituting during the 9th century the two basic harbors to embark from Asia Minor towards Cyprus, a very important trade destination, as it appears from the Life of Saint [Constantine the Jew](#), who reached there while coming from the monastery of Phlouboute at Nicaea.³⁰ The most northerly part of this long route connection (Ikonion-Caesarea-Sebasteia) was named Ulu Yol (long road) during the dominion of the Seljuks (12th-13th century).³¹ One more transversal and long road of Asia Minor was heading from Lajazzo (Ayas) of the Kingdom of [Armenia Minor](#) in Cilicia through Sebasteia/Sivas to Trepizond. This road is mentioned in *Practica della mercatura* of Pegolotti that Marco Polo made use of in the middle of the 13th century during his journey to Asia.³²

4.2. Trepizond and Attaleia

An important role for the foreign trade played Trepizond, Attaleia and in a lesser degree the neighbor Seleukeia. These important harbors functioned, mainly during the first half of the 10th century, as *kommerkia* (trade markets), that is commercial gateways of the empire with the Caliphate on the borders of Asia Minor. Based on the surviving seals and the informations of Ibn Hauqal, N. Oikonomides³³ ended up to the conclusion that the movement of the merchandise at Trepizond was three times more than the one of Attaleia-Seleukeia and he attributed this gap on the fact that the total amount of the Egyptian imports were transported straight to Constantinople and they were cleared through the customs at [Abydos](#). Trepizond, which constituted the main point of connection of the Byzantine world with the routes of silk during the 6th century, had maintained its importance even during the Dark Ages (7th and 8th century), as well as Tarsos and Ephesus, the former one as the terminal point of trade roads that crossed the Islamic countries and the latter one as the par excellence center of commerce with the Aegean. In all three harbors was accumulated during the 7th and 8th century the long-distance trade, which was not influenced from the decline of the cities.³⁴ During the first half of the 10th century, the trade importance of Trepizond took off and the city became the par excellence destination for the traders of precious merchandise (silk, perfume and dyeing products) from the East.

4.3. Trepizond and overland trade roads

At Trepizond terminated a trade road that commenced from Mosul, the greatest thoroughfare junction of the Muslim world. The initial part of Mosul's road made use of the stream of the Tigris river until the harbor Djazirat ibn Umar (founded since 865 in a meander of the river, on the location of ancient Bazabda). This river route covered Ibn Battuta by boat during the first half of the 14th century.³⁵ This route had correspondence and link with a long road that is described in the form of an itinerary in the work of Muqaddasi. This road crossed Armenia and the northern part of



Asia Minor, passing by the following stations: Martyropolis/Mieferkin, Mous, the greatest city of the region of Taron on the banks of river Arsianas, Olnoutin, Sinn Nuhas ("bronze tooth"), Samuqmus (Keltzene), Koloneia, [Neokaisareia](#), the kleisoura of the Martyrs, Annesa, Pimolisa, the land of Suania, Dusiniya (=Tosya/Dokeia?), Nahuriya (?), Krateia-Flaviopolis, "the lake with the sweat water", the land of Maleinoi and the castle of Sangaris/Tarsos.³⁶ It seems that from a certain point of this long road that ended at Constantinople, Trepizond was approachable · this point was probably the crossroad Sinn Nuhas, maybe in the region Simhac, identified with the place Ma/din an-nuhas ("bronze mine"), where Muslim traders were obviously leaving.³⁷ For the presence of Arab merchants in the Byzantine harbor of Trepizond and the routes of the region Armenia-Arran-Azerbaijan we have information by the [Book of the Eparch](#) and the Arab geographers Al-Mas'udi, Ibn Hauqal and Muqaddasi.³⁸

As it appears from all the above-mentioned, in the system of roads of Asia Minor particularly important communication junctions were Koloneia and Caesarea, because they were located at the crossroad of the routes leading from Constantinople to the East (Armenia, Persia, Near East) and of the links heading from the northwest to the southeast, whereas after the 11th century Sebasteia gained particular importance as the key-point of the roads that were directed from northeast to southern Asia Minor. Further easterly was located [Theodosiupolis](#), a crucial location of vital importance for the international trade that developed from the 11th century onwards. At Theodosiupolis (Erzerum) someone could have found all the products brought by the caravans from Armenia, Persia, India, and the rest of Asia during the 10th and 11th century, thanks mainly to the road of caravans passing through Tambriz (Tauris). The road Tambriz-Erzerum-Trepizond was also important within the chronological framework from the middle of the 13th until the middle of the 14th century, because it insured, in combination with the trade roads that drove from the hinterland to the harbors of Lesser Armenia (or Little Armenia), a very intensive commercial communication between Persia and the Western Europe.³⁹ Therefore, the trade caravans of the East headed to Trepizond or the ports of Syria and Cilicia by the Mediterranean Sea, through the cities of Asia Minor's hinterland.

5. Subsidiary road-system

5.1. Roads of northern Asia Minor

The significance of the roads that crossed northern Asia Minor was relatively confined during the Byzantine years. From Trepizond, a terminal point of the northern variation of the international route of silk started a road that did not follow with great precision the steep and extremely chopped coastline, rather kept off of it, when necessary.⁴⁰ Probably this road covered "δημοσίᾳ ἵππῳ" the Byzantine envoy Zemarchos while he was returning from his embassy to central Asia (August 569 – August 571).⁴¹

Important role for the inner communication of Asia Minor played the route connection that went through [Paphlagonia](#) and ended at [Euchaita](#) of Pontos (Constantinople-Chalcedon-Nikomedea-[Claudiupolis](#)-Krateia-Gangra-Euchaita). In all probability this road followed patriarch Macedonios, when he was exiled at Euchaita (511). The crossing of the mountainous and impassable Paphlagonia was extremely painful during the winter, as the example of [John Mauropous](#), metropolitan of Euchaita, shows, who needed two whole months to reach there, while he was returning from the capital (winter of the year 1050).⁴² At Gangra this road was branching off. The south branch lead to Euchaita and Amaseia, whereas the north branch ended at [Sinope](#) via Pompeiopolis. The harbor of Sinope was accessible from the road Saframpolis-Kastamon-Pompeiopolis as well.⁴³ The Arab traveler Ibn Battuta to reach the coast of Pontos,



used the road Claudioupolis-Krateia-Kastamon-Sinope (14th century).⁴⁴ This road continued to the east of Euchaita in order to lead to Dazimon and Komana and to end at Neokaisareia, Nicopolis and Koloneia (sixtieth station of *cursus publicus* from Constantinople eastwards). The before-mentioned Arab Itinerary of Al-Muqadassi witnesses the importance of that road that was connected on the one hand with Ancyra and [Gangra](#) and on the other hand with [Satala](#) (Kamachos) and Theodosiupolis.⁴⁵

The roads that came from Armenia and crossed Pontos and Paglagonia were important for the trade, of course, as well as probably the long road which had as its starting point Doubios of the Byzantines, the Armenian Dwin, and which roughly coincided with the previous one. With a total length of 875 Armenian miles, according to the distances that an Armenian Itinerary of the 10th century gives, this road went through Theodosiupolis, the mysterious "border moat", which is hard to locate, Colonea, Neokaisareia, Amaseia, Gangra and Ancyra and ended at Constantinople.⁴⁶ A series of connections at the north-south axis united the coastal settlements of Pontos with the arteries of the hinterland and of hinterland's big towns, following usually the river valleys. These route connections were the following: from Sinope towards the valley of Amnias, from Pavres all along river Ali, from Amisus all along river Iris to Magnopolis and Amaseia, from Oinoe to Neokaisareia and even farther to Sebasteia, from [Kerasous](#) to Koloneia and even farther to Nicopolis and the river Euphrates or to Sebasteia, from Tripolis and Trepizond to Satala and even farther to Theodosiupolis, from Rhizaion to Theodosiupolis, from Athenai to Syspiritis and Pharangion. Most important from the above-mentioned route connections were those that ended at Amisus and at Trepizond.⁴⁷

5.2. Roads of the western and northwestern Asia Minor

The importance of western Asia Minor had been diminished, as we said before, after the [foundation of Constantinople](#). Virtually, this region constituted the hinterland of Phrygia and Pisidia. The most important roads commenced from the coast, followed the valleys of the big rivers Kaikos, Hermos, Kaystros and Maiandros (Meander) and headed eastwards, to meet with the *cursus publicus*. The most important of these route connections were the following: [Kyzicos](#)-Lopadion-Prousa-[Sardis](#)-Nicaea-[Smyrna](#)-Synaos-[Kotyaiion](#)-Dorylaion-Ancyra-Ephesus-Laodikeia-Apameia-Polybotos-Amorion-Ancyra. In the mean time there were transversal roads as well. The most westerly one led from Ephesus to Kyzikos, by following the coastline and by going through Smyrna, [Cyme](#), Myrina, [Elaea](#), Argiza, [Pergamon](#) and Poimanenon.

The roads that linked the Straits of Hellespont with the region of the capital and with western Asia Minor converged at Lopadion. The harbor of Lopadion, on the banks of the river Ryndakos, very close to its confluence with Makestos, was an important thoroughfare junction. To the east it was directly linked with Prousa and the harbor of Kios on the south coast of Propontis, and through Prousa with Nicaea and Nikomedeia,⁴⁸ whereas to the west with Kyzikos, [Lampsacus](#) and Avydos. A variation of this last junction was used from the military detachment that escorted Theodore of Stoudios and other 11 monks from the monastery Sakkoudion to the coast, where the illustrious fugitive embarked on a ship with final destination Thessalonica (February-March 797). Towards the opposite direction traveled monk Ioannikios Boilas around 825. From the monastery of Megas Agros at Sigriane, where he went to venerate the tomb of [Theophanes the Confessor](#), he returned to the Mount Trichalix, near Prousa, via the road that followed the north bank of lake Apolloniatis. In order to reach the lake from Sigriane, Ioannikios had probably crossed the valley of Ryndakos until Lopadion. Lopadion also constituted a necessary station for those that were directed from the region of Prousa to western or southern Asia Minor.



After Lopadion, this road crossed the valley of Makestos and ended to the Aegean coasts ([Adramyttion](#), Pergamon, Smyrna, Ephesus) (Second Crusade), whereas the transversal and southward directed branch came by the town of [Achyraous](#) in the valley of Balikesir, Kalamos, [Thyateira](#), Laodikeia (upon Lykos), [Magnesia](#), and Philadelphia and ended at Attaleia. The Crusaders used both of these branches or alternative routes during the 12th century,⁴⁹ whereas after more than two centuries the famous Arab traveler Ibn Battuta traveled towards the opposite direction, passing through Ephesus, Smyrna, Magnesia, Pergamon, Balikesir and Prousa, to terminate at Nicaea.⁵⁰ This route connection used [Peter of Atroa](#) (near Mount Olympus of Bithynia), when, after the renewal of the iconolaters' persecutions by Leo V, undertook a long voyage-pilgrimage through the NW Asia Minor. After crossing Lydia and Asia, he ended in Ephesus, where he prayed in the magnificent justinianic [basilica of Saint John the Theologian](#). Thereafter, he reached, undoubtedly with intermediate stations in the cities of Magnesia, Tralles and Laodikeia (upon Lykos), after 15-days march, the sanctuary of [archangel Michael at Chonai](#) of Phrygia and finally he got ferried across Cyprus, from an unknown Lycian harbor (around 813/814).

The existence of the road connection between Phrygia and Lycia is confirmed from an epistle of Theodore of Stoudios: To Bonita one can approach by the sea as well, because Bonita are at a distance of 100 miles from the Lycian coast.⁵¹ It seems that during the Byzantine period, the road Ephesus-Phrygia obtained a certain, religious significance, and maybe a certain importance for the trade as well. Therefore, it was used by the monophysite bishop [John of Ephesus](#) for the christianisation of the communities of those pagans leaving in the hinterland of Caria. On the other hand, it united two of the most important cult centers of Asia Minor, Ephesus and Chonai (very close to ancient Kolossai) which had not attract only pilgrims, but merchants as well, because trade's fairs were held there. From the harbor of Ephesus sailed during the fourth decade of the 9th century, more precisely around 832/833, entire commercial fleets towards Constantinople, if the relevant information from the Life of Gregory of Dekapol is assumed to be reliable. The merchant ships which the saint's biographer mentioned, may have carried wheat and other agricultural products from Asia Minor's hinterland. Ephesus was mainly important for the maritime trade of the empire, because it was situated on the road that led from Alexandria all along the west coastline of Asia Minor towards Constantinople. A road that the ships used during the 6th century to carry wheat to Constantinople and the restless Radhanites, polyglot Jews merchants that traveled from Spain to the Far East and vice-versa during the middle of the 9th century, to carry musk, perfumed wood, camphor, cinnamon and other exotic products.⁵²

The abbot of the [Stoudios' monastery](#) used in 819/820 that part of the transversal road that had Smyrna as its starting point (Smyrna-Kalamos-Achyraous-Prousa-Chalcedon), while he was returning triumphantly from his third exile. During the first half of the 11th century a particularly intensive circulation of people between Ephesus and Constantinople is marked. Lopadion on the banks of the navigable river Ryndakos, constituted the main intermediate station. Here was the place where boatswains frequented and travelers embarked, as well as, probably, merchandise for the capital of the empire.⁵³ The harbor of Lopadion, according to the geographer Al-Mas'udi, composed the fifth in a row (from north to south) access point for the Muslims heading to Constantinople.⁵⁴

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Glossary :

	aplêkton, fossaton
Since late Antiquity the terms aplêkton (< applicitum) and fossaton (< fossa: ditch) meant the military camp. During the middle Byzantine period aplêkton took a more specific meaning defining the place where the imperial troops were raised before a campaign. The imperial aplêkta in Asia Minor were six: Malagina, Dorylaion, Lopadion, Καβόρκιν, η Δαζυμίων, ο Βαθύς Ρύαξ. The list of the aplêkta of the empire is preserved under the title «Υπόθεσις τῶν βασιλικῶν ταξειδίων καὶ ἡ πόμνησις τῶν αἰπλήκτων», which is incorporated in the most complete manuscript of the work of Constantine Porphyrogenetus (944-959) <i>De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae</i> (Περὶ βασιλείου τάξεως), in the codex of Lipsia of 12th century.	
	cursus publicus
Byzantine empire: the service of the public post (office), "δρόμος", dispatched into carrying the official correspondence as well as articles concerning the administering of the empire, but also applied to the military and the provincial administration. Two departments, manned with slaves, performed the duty: the <i>cursus velox</i> , that used horses, and the <i>cursus clabularis</i> , that used ox carts. Occasionally the cooperation of individual entrepreneur was in effect. Under Justinian I (527-565) the department of the <i>cursus clabularis</i> was abolished. The department of the <i>cursus velox</i> was abolished in the 12 th c. in Asia Minor and soon after in the Balkans as well. The office was administered by the <i>Curiosus Cursus Publici Praesentalis</i> under the <i>Magister Officiorum</i> , the <i>logothetes tou dromou</i> (λογοθέτης του δρόμου) and in the end by an <i>interpreteur</i> (ερμηνευτής).	
	emporion, the
Places where trade was conducted, usually small settlements of urban character on the borders or along the coasts and the commercial routes. With the same term are characterized the trade districts, the markets outside the walls of a city and/or settlements being themselves trade centers.	
	kommerkiarios (commerciarius)
An official of the fiscal service in charge of the levying of the tax called <i>commercium</i> (δεκάτη<, 10%), that was imposed over the portage and the selling of articles. The jurisdiction of each <i>commerciarius</i> was exercised either over specific urban centers with vivid commercial activity or over particular widespread territories of the empire. Since the official had been appointed by the emperor himself he used to be called "royal <i>commerciarius</i> ". In the Late Byzantine era the <i>commerciarius</i> acted also as an individual entrepreneur who used to merchandise silk for his own interest.	
	patrikios
(from lat. <i>patricius</i>) Higher title of honour, placed, according to the " <i>Tactika</i> " of the 9th and the 10th centuries, between <i>anthypatos</i> and <i>protospatharios</i> . It was given to the most important governors and generals. Gradually, however, it fell into disuse and from the 12th century did not exist any more.	

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Quotations

Trepizond and Attaleia:

The taxes collected at Trepizond and Attaleia produce a very rich income and highly abundant revenues. It is composed from the taxation imposed to those that are transported from the domain of Islam, that is those that are taken prisoners on the coasts of Syria or on the ships of the Muslims, from the ransom that chelandion, dromon and galea assure, and finally from the income of the sale of Muslim prisoners, of their ships and of their merchandise · an imperial tax overburdens all these. The officer in charge, responsible for the collection of the tax upon the price of the merchandise, of the ships and of the Muslim prisoners, appropriates to himself amounts of money higher than those reaching the emperor.

Many persons worth trusting and acquainted with the situation of the Byzantine lands, because they had lodged there, reported me – and this correlates with the information brought to me by Isa ibn Habib Nadjjar – that the tax imposed at Attaleia by the commander of the fleet of this harbor, with the duty to conduct raids in the dominion of Islam, has been abolished. A few years before the abolition of the tax, when the Byzantines due to their victories had obtained a full control over the Islam, after the year 320 (932) the tax rose to three kentenarion of gold (21.600 pieces), amount that, added to all other dues and gifts, rendered thirty thousand denarii (30.000 pieces) and a hundred prisoners each year. Ever since the laxity has increased on the border territories, which were fallen victims to the anarchy. The revolutions and the tyranny of the power restrained the commanders of every sense of honor and the tax was directly collected...

The amount for the emperor from the tithe imposed upon the merchandise imported at Trepizond or exported from it, including the amount rendered to the commander of the custom houses in the form of gifts that the peddlers or this city were obliged to pay, is rising to such an amount that, according to the majority of my informers, has never reached ten thousand kentenarion of gold (72.000 pieces), before the taxes were restored right after the capture of Melitene, of Shimsat and of Hisn Ziyad.

Ibn Hauqal, *Configuration de la terre (Kitab surat al-ard)*, translation Kramers, J. H. – Wiet, G. (Beirut, Paris 1964), pp. 192-193.

The Arab-Byzantine commercial treaty (14.12.969 – 11.01.970):

&20. As far as the tithe imposed on those coming from the lands of the Romans is concerned, the custom officers of the emperor will cooperate with the custom officers of Qarghuwayh and Bakjūr (Arab local leaders (emirs) in Syria) · upon all merchandise, such as gold, silver, greek silk goods interwoven with gold, rough silk, precious stones, jewellery, pearls, thin silk stuff (sundus), the imperial custom officers will impose the tithe · upon regular tissues, linen, and silk stuffs with flowers of different colors (buzyun), animals and other merchandise, there will be the custom officers of the lord chamberlain (that is of emir Qarghuwayh) and of Bakjūr those who will impose the tithe. After them, the tax collectors of the emperor will collect all the rest dues.

&21. Every time a caravan will come from the Greek lands and will head to Aleppo, Zirwar residing on the borders will write down and will inform accordingly the emir, in order the last one to send someone who will welcome and escort the caravan to Aleppo. If, after this, the caravan will be attacked on road, the emir is obliged to give back whatever will have been lost · accordingly, if a caravan suffer damages from Bedouins or Muslims in the lands of the emir, the emir is obliged to give the appropriate compensation.

Canard, M., *Histoire de la dynastie des Hamdanides de Jazira et de Syrie A* (Paris 1953), pp. 835-836.

The commercial importance of Trepizond:

1. The perfumers owe to receive from importers their share of the merchandise, in the price each product has the day it is imported in Constantinople from the merchants of the Chaldees or Trepizond or some other region...Let them sell pepper, spikenard, cinnamon, aloes wood, amber, musk, incense, myrrh, balsam, indigo, shellac, mint, smoke-tree wood, caper, and everything else is included in the art of perfume and dyeing.

Επαρχικόν Βιβλίον 10. 2, εκδ. Koder, J. *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen* (Wien 1991), pp. 110-111.



2. Trepizond is situated on the shores of the Black Sea. There, during the course of the year, many trade fairs are held, where many nations are gathered in order to do business: Muslims and the Byzantines and the Armenians and many more, even people from the land of Kirgizes (Kyrgyz)

Al-Mas'udi, *Bis zu den Grenzen der Erde. Auszüge aus dem Buch der Goldwaschen (Bibliothek arabischer Erzähler)*, translation Rotter, G. (Münich 1982), p. 85.

3. Trepizond is a border town of the Romans. There, all of our merchants are going. All of the tissues of the Greek handicraft, all of the silk goods imported to the dominion of Islam, are been transported through Trepizond.

Al-Istakri, Defremery, "Al-Istakri", *Journal asiatique* 14 (1849), p. 462.

A journey through Anatolia under the auspices of the Byzantine government:

(Abul-Husain Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab Tell-Muzani narrates:) I was driven forward by the imperial post (*cursus publicus*) from Kamachos, a Byzantine town that was very important and wealthy, until Constantinople. It was about a total of 186 post stations. At the beginning we covered a two-days route from Kamachos until Saricha (maybe in the site of modern Tsoukour, 49 klm north-northeast of Caesarea), afterwards we needed a two-days march until the town of Charsianon (maybe at the eastern end of the valley between Caesarea and Ali). We passed through densely populated towns of which I didn't know the names, until we reached at Saghira, on the banks of Ali (more correctly of Sangarios). We crossed the river by boats and we sailed across a lake of a length of six parasangs. Then, we traveled by horses, covering a one-day distance, until we reached a city called Nikomedeia. From there we traveled for two days by the sea-road and we reached a city called Chalcedon. Here we spent the night and by the sunrise we embarked on ships · we reached Constantinople by noon, after having crossed the Straits. The distance between two post stations in the Byzantine Empire rises up to one parasang (about 6 klm). Each day they allowed us to cover a distance of 15-20 post stations, so as to reach Constantinople within about ten days after having departed from Camacho...After having commenced from Constantinople and left behind this city, I returned by the road of Ancyra, a ruined big city, and I reached Melitene, after passing by 108 post stations...I know that the journey between Kamachos and Melitene lasts 10 days of march, between Melitene and Ancyra 20 days and between Ancyra and Constantinople 10 days.

Ibn Hauqal, *Configuration de la terre (Kitab surat al-ard)* 1, translation Kramers, J. H. – Wiet, G. (Beirut, Paris 1964), p. 190 (In the present translation the right order of the paragraphs has been restored).

Auxiliary Catalogues

Routes in Asia Minor

Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Laodikeia, Apameia, Philomelion, Caesarea or Ancyra

Chalcedon, Dakibyza, Nikomedeia, Eribolos, Praenetos, Helenopolis, Pylai

Eribolos, Latomion, Myrokopion, Herakleion

Eribolos, Nicaea, Prousa

Nicaea, Ancyra, Aspona, Koloneia, Podandos

Nicaea/Prousa, Dorylaion, Nakoleia, Amorion, Laodikeia Kekaumene, Ikonion, Heracleia, Podandos, Cilician Gates, Tarsos, Antioch

Nicaea/Prousa, Kotyaion, Philomelion, Laodikeia Kekaumene, Ikonion, Heracleia, Podandos, Cilician Gates, Tarsos, Antioch

Ikonion, Lystra, Leontopolis, Germanikoupolis, Anemourion



Ikonion, Laranda, Korykos, Tarsos, Mopsuestia, Seleukeia, Pompeiopolis

Ikonion, Ad Fines, Tetrapyrgia, Pompeiopolis

Ikonion, Philomelion

Ikonion, Amorion

Ancyra, Parnassos, Nyssa, Caesarea, Melitene

Ancyra, Saniana, castle of Semalouos, station Aquae Saravenae, Caesarea, Melitene

Ancyra, Tabia, castle of Charsianon, aplekton Bathryax, Sebasteia

Caesarea...Komana, Aravissos, Lykandos, Melitene

Caesarea, Komana, Aravissos, Germanikeia, Samosata

Caesarea, Tzamandos, Ariaratheia, Taranta, Melitene

Theodosiupolis, Kamachos, Saricha, castle of Charsianon, castle of Sangaris/Tarsos, lake of Boane or Sophon, Nikomedeia, Chalcedon

Amida, Simsat, Harpout, Koloneia, Melitene, Arqa, Aromane, Tzamandos, Caesarea, Ancyra, bridge of Sangarios

Nikomedeia, emporion Charax

Malagina, Dorylaion, Kavorkin, Koloneia, Caesarea

Colonea, Tyana, Podandos, Cilician Gates

Amaseia, Plasta, Koukousos, Adana

Amaseia, Plasta, Adatha, Germanikeia, Aleppo

Amisus, Tabia, Caesarea, Kyzistra, Magida, Tyana, Faustinoupolis, Podandos, mount Tauros, province of Cilicia

Martyroupolis, Mous, Olnoutin, Sinn Nuhas ("bronze tooth" linked to Trepizond), Keltzene, Koloneia,

Neokaisareia, kleisoura of the Martyres, Annesa, Pimolisa, land of Suania, Dokeia, Nahuriya (?), Krateia-Flavioupolis, "lake with the sweat water", land of Maleinoi, castle of Sangaris/Tarsos, Constantinople

Constantinople, Chalcedon, Nikomedeia, Claudioupolis, Krateia, Ancyra, Gangra, Euchaita, Amaseia (and Dazimon), Komana, Neokaisareia, Nicopolis, Koloneia, Theodosiupolis, Doubios

Constantinople...Gangra, Pompeiopolis, Sinope

Saframpolis, Kastamon, Pompeiopolis, Sinope

Claudioupolis, Krateia, Kastamon, Sinope

Sinope, Amisus, Magnopolis, Amaseia



Sinope, Oinoe, Neokaisareia, Sebasteia

Sinope, Kerasous, Nicopolis or Sebasteia

Rhizaion, Theodosiupolis

Kyzikos, Lopadion, Prousa, Nicaea (or Kios), Smyrna, Sardes, Synaos, Kotyaion, Dorylaion, Ancyra, Ephesus, Laodikeia, Apameia, Polybotos, Amorion, Ancyra

Kyzikos, Lopadion, Lampsakos, Abydos

Ephesus, Metropolis, Smyrna, Cyme, Myrina, Elaea, Pergamon, Argiza, Poimanenon, Kyzikos

Adramyttion, Pergamon

Achyraous, valley of Balikesir, Kalamos, Thyateira, Magnesia, Philaddelpheia, Laodikeia upon Lykos, Attaleia

Epheoso, Smyrna, Magnesia, Pergamon, valley of Balikesir, Prousa, Nicaea

Smyrna, Kalamos, Achyraous, Prousa, Chalcedon

Links among important towns:

Ephesus, Ancyra

Chalcedon, Gangra, Ancyra

Nicaea, Ikonion, Antioch

Nicaea, Ikonion, Attaleia

Amorion, Attaleia

Prousa, Ikonion, Antioch

Amaseia, Caesarea, Melitene

Sebasteia, Kamachos, Constantinople

Kamachos, Melitene, Ancyra

Koukousos, Andrasos

Koukousos, Germanikeia

Koukousos, Adatha

Ancyra, Sebasteia, Melitene, Amida

Ancyra, Caesarea, Melitene, Amida



Amisus, Koukousos

Attaleia, Trepizond

Lajazzo, Sebasteia, Trepizond

Tauris, Theodosiupolis, Trepizond