

ITALIAN PRIVILEGES AND TRADE IN BYZANTIUM BEFORE THE FOURTH CRUSADE: A RECONSIDERATION

DAVID JACOBY
The Hebrew University, Jerusalem
(Israel)

Between 1082 and 1192 several Byzantine emperors conferred extensive privileges on the three main Italian maritime powers, Venice, Pisa and Genoa¹. The charters they issued contained some provisions in favor of these city-states as collective bodies and others bearing on the latter's citizens as individuals and directly affecting their economic activity. These charters have been repeatedly examined. Nevertheless, a new reading of their commercial and fiscal provisions in a contemporary context and in a comparative framework is warranted. It reveals some misunderstood or overlooked aspects of their content, suggests novel interpretations, and sheds light on some of their effects on trade, shipping and the Italian settlement pattern in the Empire before the Fourth Crusade².

The first part of our examination is devoted to the nature and extent of the commercial and fiscal concessions made by the Empire to the Italian maritime powers. Venice was the first to benefit from them³. In 1082 Ale-

¹I have recently dealt elsewhere with the chrysobull of 992 in favor of Venice. See the emendations of its text and the detailed discussion in my review of Marco POZZA e Giorgio RAVEGNANI (eds.), *I trattati con Bisanzio, 992-1198* (Pacta veneta, 4), Venezia, 1993, published in «Mediterranean Historical Review», IX (1994), pp. 140-142.

²The present study is limited to these topics and does not aim at a comprehensive treatment of the privileges, nor of their overall impact.

³G. L. Fr. TAFEL und G. M. THOMAS (eds.), *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig*, Wien, 1856-1857, I, pp. 51-54 (hereafter: TTH); new ed. POZZA-RAVEGNANI, *I trattati con Bisanzio*, pp. 35-45. Quotations from charters in favor of Venice appearing below are from this edition. On that of 1082, see Ralph-Johannes LILIE,

xios I Komnenos granted the Venetians freedom of trade in all commodities and total exemption from commercial dues, toll payments and port duties throughout the Empire. The most important among these payments was the *kommerkion*, a customs duty and sales tax amounting to ten percent of the value of the merchandise. No less important was the implicit lifting of the time limitation of three months residence, previously imposed upon the Venetians and other foreigners⁴. In addition, the emperor freed the Venetians from the authority of several state officials, among them the *kommerkiarioi* or customs agents, in charge of levying the *kommerkion*⁵. The *logothetos* of the *dromos*, responsible since 992 for the inspection of Venetian ships and for the collection of the taxes they owed⁶, is not mentioned in this context. It is likely, therefore, that this officer retained some of his former functions with respect to the Venetians, an assumption apparently supported by a clause in the charter which Alexios III Komnenos issued in their favor in 1198⁷. In any event, it is clear, that Byzantine officers continued to exercise some form of control over Venetian merchants and checked their identity in order to ensure that they only, and not others, benefit from the privileges bestowed upon them⁸. This supervision is confirmed by the taxing of the Venetians' trade partners before 1126⁹, which supposes that Byzantine officers were either present when transactions were carried out or were informed about them by *mesites* or official middlemen. In short, Anna Comnena's claim that the Venetians could "trade without

Handel und Politik zwischen dem byzantinischen Reich und den italienischen Kommunen Venedig, Pisa und Genua in der Epoche der Komnenen und der Angeloi (1081-1204), Amsterdam, 1984, pp. 8-16, and Silvano BORSARI, *Venezia e Bisanzio nel XII secolo. I rapporti economici*, Venezia, 1988, pp. 3-16.

⁴Robert S. LÓPEZ, *Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire*, «*Speculum*», XX (1945), pp. 27-28, 40, repr. in IDEM, *Byzantium and the World around it: Economic and Institutional Relations*, London, 1978, no. III.

⁵On these offices, see Hélène AHRWEILER, *Fonctionnaires et bureaux maritimes*, «*Revue des études byzantines*», XIX (1961), pp. 246-252; Nicolas OIKONOMIDES, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IX^e et X^e siècles. Introduction, texte, traduction et commentaire*, Paris, 1972, pp. 311-313, 319-321, with references to earlier studies.

⁶New ed. POZZA-RAVEGNANI, *I trattati con Bisanzio*, p. 24.

⁷He appears as cancellarius vie in TTH, I, pp. 273-274 (misdated); new ed. POZZA-RAVEGNANI, *I trattati con Bisanzio*, pp. 132-133.

⁸The regular inspection by the *kommerkiarioi* was later explicitly mentioned in the Byzantine-Venetian treaty of 1265: TTH, III, p. 84.

⁹See below.

interference as they wished" and "were completely free of Roman authority" should not be taken at face value¹⁰. The wide-ranging concessions of 1082 to the Venetians, never before granted to foreigners, constituted a first and significant breach in the tight Byzantine economic and fiscal system and in the state's supervision over the activity of foreigners in the Empire. They served as a precedent on which Venice itself, as well as Pisa and Genoa later relied when requesting commercial and fiscal privileges.

The clauses in the charter of 1082 dealing with trade throughout the Empire contain a list of thirty cities and two islands, Corfu and Chios. Opinions differ as to the nature of this enumeration, its implications, and the side responsible for its inclusion. It is commonly believed that it had a restrictive character, denying the Venetians tax exemptions in places omitted from the list, such as Crete, Cyprus and the Black Sea. It has even been suggested that the emperor intended to prevent their access to these localities and regions¹¹. The charter issued by John II in 1126, which reproduces the list of 1082, appears at first glance to support these restrictive interpretations¹². It has already been noted, however, that the Venetians traded somewhat later in places omitted from the list, namely Crete and Halmyros, where one of them even resided in 1129¹³. This would imply that the Venetians were not excluded from these places, nor from any part of the Empire, and traded in them without enjoying their tax exemptions. Yet it should be stressed that both the charters of 1082 and 1126 emphatically state that the Venetians were to enjoy their commercial and fiscal privileges in all the territories of the Empire or Romania and in all the localities in which trade was conducted, "in omnes partes Romanie, et simpliciter in omnes partes sub potestate nostre pie mansuetudinis, in omnibus negotiationis locis". It is noteworthy that the imperial charter granted to Pisa in 1111 also included commercial and fiscal provisions that

¹⁰Anne Comnène, *Alexiade*, ed. Bernard LEIB, Paris, 1945, lib. VI, 10

¹¹Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 50-61; Silvano BORSARI, *Venezia e Bisanzio*, pp. 8-9, 19-20.

¹²TTH, I, pp. 95-98; new ed. POZZA-RAVEGNANI, *I trattati con Bisanzio*, pp. 51-56: *habeant ipsi sine prohibitione et negotiari sine commercio et datione qualicumque altera in omnibus dinumeratis in prefato chrysobullio civitatibus et regionis*.

¹³Crete: Raimondo MOROZZO DELLA ROCCA - Antonino LOMBARDO (eds.), *Documenti del commercio veneziano nei secoli XI-XIII*, Torino, 1940 (hereafter: DCV), nos. 33, 56 (1111 and 1130); Halmyros, nos. 34-35, 54 (1111 and 1129).

were to be valid throughout the Empire, without any geographic limitation¹⁴. It is most unlikely that Venice, which enjoyed a larger tax exemption than Pisa, would have agreed to such a limitation when its privileges were renewed in 1126. Under these circumstances, we have to find another explanation for the inclusion of the list of cities and islands and the omissions from it, more convincing than the one offered until now.

I would suggest that the Venetians themselves requested an explicit reference to localities and islands in which they already conducted fairly extensive trade, as in Thebes and Dyrrachion or Durazzo, about which we have clear evidence, or to which they were hoping to extend their activity in the near future¹⁵. With the exception of Adrianople, all these places were either situated along the coast or close to it, such as Thebes and Antioch. It is noteworthy that their enumeration follows the course of navigation toward Constantinople, in the east from Laodikeia to Phokaia or Phoea along the seaboard of Northern Syria and Asia Minor, and in the west from Dyrrachion, the first Byzantine station encountered by the Venetians in the Adriatic, along the coast of the Peloponnese. The list thus reflects the perspective of sailors and merchants, based on practical experience, rather than the view of Byzantine state officials stationed in the capital. It is generally assumed that, in view of their location, both Crete and Cyprus were important strategic bases along the main waterways of the Eastern Mediterranean at the turn of the eleventh century¹⁶. This view, however, is not supported by contemporary sources and reflects an unwarranted backward projection of conditions existing only much later. In any event, from a Byzantine perspective these islands were then of minor strategic, commercial and fiscal importance, compared with other places and

¹⁴See below.

¹⁵The *taxegium de Stives* is mentioned both in 1072, with implicit reference to the previous year, and 1073, which suggests regular voyages to Thebes: DCV, nos. 12-13. See also David JACOBY, *Silk in Western Byzantium before the Fourth Crusade*, «Byzantinische Zeitschrift», 84/85 (1991-1992), pp. 494-496. The earliest extant evidence about Venetian trade in Antioch is dated 1095, after its capture by the Muslims: DCV, no. 24. On Dyrrachion, see Alain DUCELLIER, *La façade maritime de l'Albanie au Moyen Age. Durazzo et Valona du XIe au XVe siècle*, Thessaloniki, 1981, pp. 70-72, yet instead of 1084 read 1082.

¹⁶Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 56, 121-122; Silvano BORSARI, *Venezia e Bisanzio*, pp. 19-20; Elisabeth MALANUT, *Les îles de l'Empire byzantin, VIIe -XIIe siècles*, Paris, 1988, pp. 440-446; John H. PRYOR, *Geography, Technology and War. Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean, 649-1571*, Cambridge, 1988, *passim*, esp. 25-39, 87-101, 112-134.

regions in the Empire in which the Venetians were granted the benefit of their privileges. We may safely discount, therefore, a supposed Byzantine reluctance to enable Venetian trade in Crete and Cyprus because of strategic considerations or because of the severe losses in fiscal revenue the imperial treasury would have incurred.

Indeed, there is no evidence that ships engaging in long-distance trans-Mediterranean trade regularly called in the ports of Crete and Cyprus or sailed along their coasts at that time. Navigational considerations induced them to hug the seaboard of the Peloponnese on their way between Venice and Constantinople, while those connecting Venice and Alexandria relied on a string of Aegean islands to sail between the Peloponnese and Asia Minor and proceeded along the Levantine coast. Crete and Cyprus were left out from these itineraries. Significantly, the Venetian war fleet operating in the Eastern Mediterranean from 1122 to 1125, which was not involved in maritime trade, sailed between Venice and the Levant along what must have been the regular maritime route from Venice via Corfu and the Aegean to Rhodes, and other western fleets followed the same route in subsequent years. Largely similar conditions still prevailed with respect to Crete in the first decades of the twelfth century, despite an apparent increase in Venetian trade in the island in the years preceding the delivery of the new imperial charter of 1126¹⁷.

Nor was Cyprus located along a major waterway or serving as an indispensable stopover for long-distance trade. Venetian interest in it was slow to develop after the First Crusade. The privileged Venetian outposts established along the seaboard of the Crusader Levant between 1098 and 1124 were closer to Muslim inland markets and offered more secure and favorable conditions for seaborne trade and logistic support than Byzantine Cyprus. Even after the Latin conquest of 1191 Cyprus continued for many years to fulfill a marginal economic function within long-distance Mediterranean commerce¹⁸. On the other hand, it was integrated together with the Crusader Levant and Egypt in a triangular regional trade pattern, as

¹⁷See David JACOBY, *Byzantine Crete in the Navigation and Trade Networks of Venice and Genoa*, in Laura BALLETO (ed.), "Studi in onore di Geo Pistarino", Genova, 1995 (in press).

¹⁸See David JACOBY, *The Rise of a New Emporium in the Eastern Mediterranean: Famagusta in the Late Thirteenth Century*, «Meletai kai hypomnemata, Hidryma archiepiskopou Makariou III (Nicosia)», 1 (1984), pp. 145-179, esp. 145-154, repr. in IDEM, *Studies on the Crusader States and on Venetian Expansion*, Northampton, 1989, no. VIII.

attested in 1139 by the sailing of a Venetian ship between Limassol and Damietta and a trade investment in Sarracen bezants, struck in the Crusader states¹⁹. The journey between Acre and Constantinople via Cyprus may have become more common by 1142²⁰. Not until sometime before 1173, though, do we find a Venetian settled in the island, namely at Paphos²¹. Some Venetians may have been among the Latins, presumably merchants, who resided at Limassol when the Latins conquered Cyprus in 1191²².

In short, in 1082 Venetian trade with both Crete and Cyprus was of marginal importance and the prospects of its development were rather limited, compared with Venetian activity and expectations in the localities and regions listed in the chrysobull of Alexios I. Conditions had not basically changed by 1126, both islands being still positioned on alternative, yet not on main navigation routes. As a result, it was Venice which apparently refrained from demanding their inclusion in the charters of 1082 and 1126. The same holds true of Rhodes, which well into the twelfth century was apparently no more than a stopover for Venetian ships on the way to and from the Levant and does not appear before 1198 in an imperial charter in favor of Venice²³. In these islands Venetian merchants were nevertheless entitled to their tax exemptions, as elsewhere in the Empire²⁴.

The chrysobull issued by John II in 1126 reveals that the imperial officers were levying the full amount of the *kommerkion* from Byzantine subjects and foreigners trading with the Venetians, in order to compensate the imperial treasury for the loss of revenue resulting from the latter's exemption. This practice had been common for many years, which suggests that its implementation had begun before 1118, when John II ascended the throne, and was not related to the emperor's refusal to renew the Venetian

¹⁹DCV, no. 74.

²⁰DCV, no. 82, drafted in January 1143, with reference to a stopover in Paphos.

²¹DCV, nos. 454-455, not in 1201, as mistakenly stated in David JACOBY, *The Rise of a New Emporium*, pp. 164-165; also DCV, no. 373, on trade between Tyre and Cyprus some time before 1189.

²²George HILL, *A History of Cyprus*, Cambridge, 1940-1952, I, p. 318.

²³See Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 124-125; TTH, I, p. 265 (misdated); new ed. POZZA-RAVEGNANI, *I trattati con Bisanzio*, p. 130.

²⁴The omission of the Black Sea from the charters of 1082 and 1126 was apparently related to Venetian reluctance to engage in trade in this region for economic reasons. The issue is not discussed here for lack of space and will be examined separately in a forthcoming study.

privileges in the first eight years of his reign. Nor was it due to the private initiative of some imperial officers. Rather, it seems to have been devised and ordered by a high-ranking authority, as implied by the wording of the clause dealing with its abolition in John's charter of 1126, which refers to a *capitulum*, apparently an official decree²⁵.

About 1136 Venice requested Emperor John II to enjoin his officers to ensure Venetian freedom of trade and full tax exemptions in Crete and Cyprus, as well as for goods exported from these islands to other parts of the Empire²⁶. This too has been interpreted as proof that until then the Venetians were denied the benefit of these privileges in the two islands. Yet following my argument that the lists of 1082 and 1126 were not restrictive, another explanation may be suggested. Ample evidence adduced below clearly demonstrates that there often was a wide gap between the wording, meaning and intention of imperial privileges or orders and their interpretation and implementation in the field, despite the centralized structure of the Byzantine state. It is highly probable, then, that while the privileges of 1082 and 1126 were meant to be comprehensive by the Byzantine and Venetian negotiators, the imperial customs officers stationed in the provinces considered them selective. As a result, they may have inflicted more hardship upon the Venetians in Crete and Cyprus than elsewhere in the Empire, since the two islands were not explicitly mentioned in the chrysobulls issued in these years. However, the main factor accounting for Venice's request of about 1136 was the growing volume of Venetian trade in Crete and Cyprus. In 1147, at Venice's insistence, Manuel I explicitly referred to the injunction of his father John II when he reconfirmed the privileges of 1082 and 1126. It should be noted, though, that even then John's orders issued some eleven years earlier were not properly implemented and, as a result Venetian trade in the islands was still being hampe-

²⁵TTH, I, p. 97; new ed. POZZA-RAVEGNANI, *I trattati con Bisanzio*, pp. 54-55: *quatenus corrigetur huiusmodi quoque capitulum*. For another instance of official restriction of free trade, see below.

²⁶This is reported in the charter issued by Manuel I: TTH, I, pp. 113-124, esp. 124; new ed. POZZA-RAVEGNANI, *I trattati con Bisanzio*, pp. 60-65, esp. 63-64: *licentiam his donans improhibite et per insulas Cypron et Creten negotiari et sine commercio ubique terrarum imperii mei pro his, que ab huiusmodi insulis negociande sunt ab eis*. Another, later Latin version is more fluent: *ibid.* For the presumed dating of the emperor's instructions, see Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 374-375.

red²⁷. This suggests once more that the unfavorable trade conditions encountered by the Venetians in Crete and Cyprus until about 1136, as well as between this date and 1147, were not related to a supposed exclusion of these islands from the privileges granted in 1082 and 1126.

On 12 March 1171 all the Venetians present in the Empire were either arrested on the orders of Manuel I, or fled²⁸. Some Venetians resumed their activity in the Empire a few years later, as in Thebes since 1175 and Constantinople in 1176, if not earlier, though presumably on a smaller scale than before²⁹. Larger numbers of Venetians re-established themselves in Constantinople and in the Empire's provinces since the autumn of 1183. It would seem that they enjoyed the tax exemptions to which they were entitled, although Venice and Byzantium did not formally resume their formal relations and renew their previous agreements before February 1187. Venice obtained then compensations for goods confiscated by the imperial authorities or seized by imperial subjects in March 1171, yet there was no reference to the *kommerkion* in this context³⁰. This is all the more significant because in 1192 both Pisa and Genoa complained about excessive payments of this due imposed on their citizens in similar circumstances³¹. The chrysobull of 1198 issued by Alexios III Komnenos did not introduce any change with respect to Venetian taxation in the Empire. However, it contains a new geographic reference. Instead of enumerating cities and islands, as the charters of 1082 and 1126, it contains a list of fiscal districts³². This list, which virtually covers the whole Empire, may be safely ascribed to the Byzantine authorities, yet again its insertion in the imperial charter must have been requested by the Venetians. It reflects both

²⁷TTH, I, p. 124; new ed. POZZA-RAVEGNANI, *I trattati con Bisanzio*, pp. 63-64: *non contigit autem, que in huiusmodi precepto comprehenduntur effectum recipere.*

²⁸See Michael ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204. A Political History*, London and New York, 1984, pp. 199-201.

²⁹Thebes: David JACOBY, *Silk in Western Byzantium*, pp. 495-496; Constantinople: Luigi LANFRANCHI (ed.), *S. Giorgio Maggiore* (Fonti per la storia di Venezia, sez. II - Archivi ecclesiastici - Diocesi Castellana), Venezia, 1968, III, nos. 374-375.

³⁰David JACOBY, *Conrad, Marquis of Montferrat, and the Kingdom of Jerusalem (1187-1192)*, in Geo PISTARINO (ed.), "Atti del Congresso Internazionale 'Dai feudi monferrini e dal Piemonte ai nuovi mondi oltre gli Oceani'", Alessandria, 1993, p. 221.

³¹See below.

³²TTH, I, pp. 246-278; new ed. POZZA-RAVEGNANI, *I trattati con Bisanzio*, pp. 119-137: *in quibus mercari debent ordinari.* See Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 41-49, 62-68.

the effective range of Venetian trade in the Empire, which had considerably expanded in the course of the twelfth century, and expectations of further development.

Pisa presumably relied on the Venetian privileges of 1082 in its negotiations with Alexios I, yet had to settle for much less. The charter issued by this emperor in its favor in 1111, which has survived as an insert in the one delivered by Isaac II Angelos in 1192, contains three provisions dealing with the *kommerkion*³³. The Pisans were completely exempted from this due on the import of bullion into the Empire, which the emperor wanted to further to the benefit of the imperial treasury. Bullion imports were anyhow required by the Pisans' negative balance of trade with Byzantium. In addition, the rate of the *kommerkion* was reduced from ten to four percent on the import of other goods brought from foreign countries, which the Pisans were allowed to sell or exchange as well as to transfer freely between Constantinople and the Byzantine islands. This geographic reference was clearly not restrictive. It reflected the actual trade and barter in which the Pisans were engaging at that time, both in and between Byzantine ports, in particular when crossing the Aegean on their way to and from Constantinople, the Crusader Levant and Egypt. Although not explicitly stated, the Pisans were liable to the full amount of the *kommerkion* on exports from the Empire. It has not been noted that such was also the case with respect to the sale of goods purchased within the Empire itself, primarily domestic products, another field of activity in which the Pisans remained on the same footing as non-privileged Latins and imperial subjects³⁴. Significantly, the chrysobull of 1111 does not contain a reference to freedom of trade in all commodities, as found in the charter of 1082 in favor of Venice. This omission may be ascribed to a major evolution in the Byzantine attitude and policy toward foreign merchants. Since 1082 the Empire had apparently lifted its previous restrictions on their sojourn and free-

³³Giuseppe MÜLLER (ed.), *Documenti sulle relazioni delle città toscane coll'Oriente cristiano e coi Turchi fino all'anno MDXXXI*, Firenze, 1879, pp. 43-45 (Greek version) and 52-54 (Latin version). For typographical reasons I quote here the Latin version. On this charter, see Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 69-76.

³⁴Giuseppe MÜLLER, *Documenti*, pp. 44 (Greek) and 53 (Latin): *Alias autem merces quae de Romania sunt vendetis sicut Romei et dabitis sicut Romei*; a somewhat different wording appears on pp. 46 and 55. Silvano BORSARI, *Pisani a Bisanzio nel XII secolo*, in "Studi di storia pisana e toscana in onore del prof. Cinzio Violante" (Biblioteca del «Bollettino Storico Pisano», Collana storica, XXXVIII), Pisa, 1991, p. 61, is the only one to have noted this restriction, yet does not dwell on its implications.

dom of movement within the Empire and adopted a more liberal stance toward them. What had been a novelty in 1082 had become self-evident and customary by 1111. The major economic issue at stake at that time between the Empire and Pisa was the tax exemptions which the latter requested.

Both John II in 1136 and Manuel I in 1170 issued charters to Pisa, yet without any change in the taxation clauses of 1111³⁵. Ten years of tension elapsed after the 1182 massacre of the Latins in Constantinople until the Empire and Pisa renewed their formal relations in February 1192³⁶. Within the preceding ten years, though, a small number of Pisans had pursued their commercial activity in the Empire, some of them even residing there, yet the imperial authorities refused to honor the partial exemption of the *kommerkion* to which they were entitled. In 1192 Pisa requested the reimbursement of the excessive payments exacted from them³⁷. It obtained a marked improvement with respect to the *kommerkion*. Indeed, Isaac II extended the four percent rate, previously limited to imported foreign commodities, to all transactions, whether sales or purchases, regardless of the nature and origin of the merchandise. In other words, for the first time the partial tax exemption enjoyed by the Pisans would cover both imported and domestic commodities traded on the internal market. The reference to Constantinople and all the imperial territories in this context reflects the extension of Pisan activity throughout the Empire³⁸. It is likely that it was requested by the Pisans themselves, in order to prevent any restrictive interpretation that might arise from the charter of 1111, which mentioned the Byzantine capital and the Aegean islands. Though not

³⁵For the first, see Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Byzanz und die Kreuzfahrerstaaten. Studien zur Politik des byzantinischen Reiches gegenüber den Staaten der Kreuzfahrer in Syrien und Palästina bis zum vierten Kreuzzug (1096-1204)*, München, 1981, pp. 106-107. The charter of Manuel I appears as an insert in the one of 1192: Giuseppe MÜLLER, *Documenti*, pp. 45 (Greek) and 54 (Latin). See also Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 76-78.

³⁶Giuseppe MÜLLER, *Documenti*, pp. 40-49 (Greek) and 49-58 (Latin). See Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 79-83.

³⁷Giuseppe MÜLLER, *Documenti*, pp. 41-42 (Greek), 50-51 (Latin). See JACOBY, *Conrad, Marquis of Montferrat*, p. 222.

³⁸Giuseppe MÜLLER, *Documenti*, pp. 46 (Greek) and 55 (Latin): "de centum quatuor, tam in magna Urbe, quam in ceteris terris nostrae pia tranquillitatis, non solum de iis quae de alienis partibus ab ipsis in Romaniam afferuntur universis mercibus, verum etiam et de iis quae de terris Romaniae ab ipsis emuntur et in magna Urbe vel aliis terris Romaniae venduntur (...) et quatuor de centum tantum dare eos iubet et in mercibus ipsorum quas de Romania equidem emunt".

explicitly stated, Pisan exports remained liable to the full ten percent *kommerkion*.

Genoa presumably requested in 1155 the extensive commercial and fiscal privileges bestowed upon Venice in 1082, as it did shortly after March 1171³⁹. However, the relevant provisions in the agreement it concluded in 1155 with the envoy of Manuel I, Demetrios Makrembolites, were modelled on the Pisan privileges of 1111⁴⁰. The Genoese chronicler Caffaro reports the reduction of the *kommerkion* rate from ten to four percent, without specifying in what circumstances it applied⁴¹. Yet from the Pisan precedent we know that it concerned exclusively imported goods, in addition to a total exemption on bullion encouraging Genoese merchants to import it⁴². Genoa did not take hold of its quarter in Constantinople until 1160 and the emperor failed to honor other provisions of the 1155 treaty⁴³, yet the fiscal clauses appear to have been fulfilled. In 1175 Genoa explicitly referred to the period preceding and the one following its agreement with Demetrios Makrembolites, when it requested compensations for losses it had incurred and those of individual Genoese merchants⁴⁴. These losses included excessive payments of the *kommerkion*, above the reduced four percent rate of 1155⁴⁵.

It has not been perceived that Manuel I severely curtailed the implementation of this rate in October 1169. Henceforth it was to be valid in Constantinople only, yet not for the re-export of unsold imported goods,

³⁹See below.

⁴⁰Cesare IMPERIALE DI SANT'ANGELO (ed.), *Codice diplomatico della repubblica di Genova dal MCLXIII al MCLXXX*, Roma, 1936-1942 (hereafter: *CDG*), I, pp. 327-330, esp. 328: *in aliqua vero terra imperii eius non dabitur commercium maiorem quem Pisani nunc [tribuunt]*. See Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 84-87.

⁴¹Luigi Tommaso BELGRANO e Cesare IMPERIALE DI SANT'ANGELO (eds.), *Annali genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori dal MXCIX al MCCXCIII*, Roma, 1890-1929 (hereafter: *Annali Genovesi*) I, pp. 41-42.

⁴²*CDG*, II, p. 222: a shipment *in argento vivo* before 1174.

⁴³Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, p. 86, n. 6, argues that the treaty was not confirmed by the emperor, and Michel BALARD, *La Romanie génoise (XIIe - début du XVe siècle)* (Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, CCXXXV), Rome, 1978, pp. 23-25, that it was simply not implemented before 1160, yet see below.

⁴⁴Instructions of December 1174 to the Genoese ambassador Grimaldi, submitted the following year to the emperor: *CDG*, II, pp. 206-222, esp. pp. 216-217: *a tempore conventionis Macrampoliti infra, ante conventionem Demetrii*.

⁴⁵*CDG*, II, p. 217, note: *ultra debitum drectum solutum*.

for which the Genoese would pay the full rate like non-privileged Latins and, implicitly, Byzantine subjects. The same rule would apply to the imported goods they sold in the Empire's provinces⁴⁶. The emperor also introduced a restriction regarding navigation, of which neither Venice nor Pisa suffered. Genoese ships were allowed to sail freely in Byzantine waters, yet not to Rossia and Matracha. Opinions widely differ as to the meaning and implications of this restriction, some arguing that the two names point to cities, while others believe they stand for the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, respectively⁴⁷. This last explanation may be discarded. Genoa's later request that its ships be allowed to sail to Matracha would have been meaningless if Rossia had pointed to the Black Sea, which these vessels would have been compelled to cross⁴⁸. The basic issue, then, was whether or not these ships would be permitted to enter the Black Sea, since there was no way to control their course of navigation once they were in this region, unless Rossia and Matracha were under Byzantine rule. The provision, however, did not amount to a total ban on Genoese sailing into the Black Sea. It envisaged imperial permission in specific cases, though not a general authorization. Moreover, since the restriction regarded ships only, it did not prevent Genoese merchants from venturing into the Black Sea on Byzantine or foreign vessels⁴⁹. There is no evidence, however, that either Genoese vessels or merchants took advantage of these possibilities⁵⁰. In 1170 Manuel I yielded to Genoa's pressure and granted it a quarter at a favorable location within Constantinople,⁵¹ presumably in

⁴⁶CDG, II, pp. 104-116, esp. 111: "et ut debeant commercium dare sic: videlicet in Constantinopoli, de centum quattuor, in aliis vero terris Romanie sicut ceteri Latini dant commercium"; p. 112: "si autem Ianuenses res suas in Constantinopolim introduxerint easque vendere non poterint, fiet de rebus eorum sicut consuetudo est fieri in aliis Latinis qui dant commercium". A somewhat different wording appears in the copy of Manuel's charter inserted in the one issued by Isaac II in 1192, yet the meaning is the same: *ibid.*, III, p. 61.

⁴⁷See Michel BALARD, *La Romanie génoise*, p. 28, n. 44, whose last reference regards ships in the service of Manuel I, and not Genoese commercial vessels; Sandra ORIGONE, *Bisanzio e Genova*, Genova, 1992, p. 75, n. 41, sums up previous approaches without taking sides.

⁴⁸CDG, II, p. 115, note.

⁴⁹CDG, II, p. 112: *nisi forte ab eius imperio hoc fuerit eis concessum*. The reference is to the *naves Ianuensium* appearing at the beginning of this clause, and not to the Genoese themselves, while *forte* hints at exceptional permits.

⁵⁰Ralph-Johannes LILJE, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 87-100, 481-484, and others have overlooked the full implications of these clauses.

⁵¹CDG, II, pp. 117-121.

part as compensation for the restriction of its fiscal privileges in the previous year. Since the chrysobull of 1170 does not refer to taxation, it is obvious that the provisions of 1169 remained in force. This is also suggested by their insertion in the charter issued by Isaac II in April 1192⁵².

Genoa attempted to take advantage of the abrupt interruption of Venetian trade in the Empire on 12 March 1171⁵³. Shortly afterwards, it instructed its ambassador Amico de Murta to request from the emperor property, privileges and donations similar to those obtained by Venice in the past or, if not possible, at least those enjoyed by Pisa. The provision concerning trade dues refers to the full tax exemptions enjoyed by the Venetians in all types of transactions throughout the Empire. The exemption which Genoa requested was to cover not only its citizens, but also the residents of its *districtum*, which extended along the Riviere of the Ponente and the Levante and comprised localities inland either allied to Genoa or subjected to its rule⁵⁴. Since 1104 Genoa had obtained the inclusion of various localities of the *districtum*, whose inhabitants participated in its commercial and maritime expansion overseas, in its treaties with Crusader rulers in the Levant, although the *districtum* as such was not explicitly mentioned before 1190⁵⁵. Genoa, however, failed to obtain any of the concessions it requested or an improvement in the harsh tax rule introduced by Manuel I in 1169.

We have noted that the 1182 massacre of the Latins in Constantinople did not entirely interrupt Pisan trade in the Empire. The same holds true with respect to the activity of Genoese ships and merchants. Some of them visited Constantinople since 1186, if not earlier, yet trade with the Empire remained intermittent until April 1192, when a new Genoese-Byza-

⁵²CDG, III, pp. 61-62.

⁵³On which see above, n. 28

⁵⁴CDG, II, pp. 114-116, n. 1, esp. 115, note: "Ianuenses vel aliquis de districtu eorum nullum dritum, nullam dactam vel exacionem ullo modo tribuant et liberam et omnimodam habeant facultatem mercandi et utendi per omnem terram et omnes partes imperii et etiam exercendi negociationem pannorum sete apud Stivam sicut Veneti soliti erant". These instructions were issued after the news of the events of March 1171 had reached Genoa: see W. HEINEMEYER, *Die Verträge zwischen dem Oströmischen Reiche und die italischen Städten Genua, Pisa und Venedig vom 10. bis 12. Jahrhundert*, «Archiv für Diplomatik, Schriftgeschichte, Siegel- und Wappenkunde», III (1957), p. 109, n. 146.

⁵⁵David JACOBY, *Les Génois dans l'Empire byzantin: citoyens, sujets et protégés (1261-1453)*, «La Storia dei Genovesi», IX (1989), pp. 246-248

ntine agreement was concluded⁵⁶. In the previous ten years Genoese merchants had endured numerous vexations. Genoa failed to obtain the reimbursement of excessive payments of the *kommerkion*, except for that made by Genoa's envoys upon their arrival in Constantinople in the spring of 1192. Nor was it granted a lowering of the due's rate from four to two percent⁵⁷. On the other hand, the negotiations led to a substantial improvement in its trading conditions. Isaac II extended the four percent rate from Constantinople to the Empire's provinces, claiming that this provision concurred with the one appearing in the charter issued by Manuel I⁵⁸. In fact, though, there was a wide gap between the relevant provisions of 1169 and 1192. The Genoese tax exemptions of 1155 had been based on those granted to Pisa in 1111 and shortly after March 1171 Genoa had attempted to obtain those enjoyed by Pisa at that time. There is good reason to believe, therefore, that the laconic statement of April 1192 in favor of Genoa regarding the extension of the four percent rate covered the same transactions as those mentioned in the Empire's agreement with Pisa two months earlier. In other words, the reduced rate would henceforth apply to the sale of imported goods, as well as to all transactions in internal trade throughout the Empire. Exports, though, remained liable to the ten percent rate.

A comparison between the commercial and fiscal privileges granted by the Empire to the three Italian maritime powers before the Fourth Crusade reveals that Venetian merchants enjoyed a considerable advantage over their Pisan and Genoese counterparts. Only they benefited from a full exemption of both maritime taxes and the *kommerkion*, regardless of the nature of their transactions. By contrast, the Pisans and the Genoese were given such an exemption on bullion only, yet had to pay a four percent *kommerkion* for import and export. Conditions for the Genoese were even worse between 1169 and 1192, when this rate was applied to their imported goods in Constantinople only. In addition, the Pisans and the Genoese paid until 1192 the full ten percent *kommerkion* on trade within the Empire itself. This last rule severely restricted their competitiveness on the internal

⁵⁶CDG, III, pp. 51-62. See Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 100-102, 569-571. For the years 1182-1192, see David JACOBY, *Conrad, Marquis of Montferrat*, pp. 222-223 and 237-238, n. 117.

⁵⁷CDG, III, pp. 53-54, 58-59.

⁵⁸CDG, III, p. 58: "iuxta concessum illis diploma ab (...) Manuele, solventes quatuor pro centum intus et extra Constantinopolim".

Byzantine market. Only in 1192 did they obtain the extension of their reduced rate to all types of transactions throughout the Empire, yet still suffered from a handicap with respect to the Venetians, who were totally exempted. Finally, Genoa was the only one among the three maritime powers whose shipping in the black Sea was restricted.

While the imperial privileges were undoubtedly of great importance for the conduct of trade, their effect entirely depended on implementation. One point in case is the freedom of trade in all commodities, from which in principle the three maritime powers benefited. In practice, however, they were denied trade in certain types of precious silk fabrics produced in Thebes, although an explicit reference to this restriction appears neither in the charters delivered to them, nor in any other source. Venice gained access to these silks by imperial authorization many years before 1171, while Genoa made a vain attempt to obtain it from Manuel I shortly after this date. The failure to deal in these silks presumably accounts for the absence of Genoese and Pisan merchants and settlers from Thebes in the twelfth century, by contrast to their Venetian counterparts⁵⁹.

The gap between imperial privileges and reality is also illustrated in other ways. It has been rightly observed that it was particularly attractive for Byzantine subjects to trade with the Venetians, who could offer higher purchase prices without losing their competitive edge over Byzantine or other western merchants. Transactions with them were even more advantageous than deals with Byzantines subjects, which entailed the payment of full dues⁶⁰. It was not self-evident, however, that the Venetians could always translate their sweeping tax exemptions of 1082 into the economic edge they were originally meant to provide over other merchants. The imposition of the full *kommerkion* on the Venetians' trading partners since some time in the reign of Alexios I until 1126 did not contradict the wording of the exemption clauses of 1082, yet virtually cancelled for many years any advantage that could have resulted from them. Moreover, Venetian merchants encountered serious difficulties until 1147, if not later, in obtaining the implementation of their fiscal privileges in Crete and Cy-

⁵⁹See above, n. 54, and David JACOBY, *Silk in Western Byzantium*, pp. 466, 490-492.

⁶⁰Angeliki E. LAIOU, *Byzantine Traders and Seafarers*, in Speros VRYONIS, Jr. (ed.), *The Greeks and the Sea*, New Rochelle, N.Y., 1993, pp. 84-85.

prus⁶¹. Similarly, Pisan and Genoese merchants and ships were sometimes denied the benefit of their partial exemption. The imperial customs officers often displayed excessive zeal, as we learn from the list of grievances submitted by Genoa in 1175. They arbitrarily imposed excessive dues and confiscated goods or exacted a second payment of the *kommerkion* from transiting merchants, although the due had already been paid at the port of departure. They even disregarded imperial letters enjoining them to desist from these practices and make redress⁶². These impediments to trade seem to have been a permanent evil throughout the Empire, from which foreign merchants of all nations occasionally suffered, at times systematically as the Pisans and the Genoese between 1182 and 1192⁶³. The infringement of privileges by imperial officers was so common that the Genoese-Byzantine agreement of 1169 devised a procedure, mentioned again in 1192, for the handling of Genoese grievances five years later⁶⁴.

The absence or non-implementation of privileges did not prevent trade and shipping nor entail their interruption. We have already noted that the Venetians engaged in business in Thebes, Dyrrachium and other localities before 1082, the Pisans in the Aegean before 1111, and the Genoese in Constantinople and Crete before 1155, though without tax exemptions. Similarly, some of them pursued their activity in periods of tension between their mother-city and the Empire, as the Pisans and the Genoese between 1182 and 1192. To be sure, the disparity between the partial tax exemptions enjoyed by these two groups and the full ones conferred on the Venetians constituted a serious handicap, yet did not prevent continuous competition between them. The rivalry was the fiercest in Constantinople, where it was fueled by the concentration and intensity of their trade and shipping and the existence of their quarters. In 1162 the Venetians joined Pisans and Greeks in the attack on the Genoese, while in 1171 they acted on their own against them⁶⁵.

⁶¹See above.

⁶²CDG, II, pp. 216-219, note; see also above, n. 45. Excessive dues had also been paid by the Venetians before 992: see above, n. 1.

⁶³See above.

⁶⁴CDG, II, p. 113, and III, pp. 61-62.

⁶⁵*Annali Genovesi*, I, pp. 67-68, and Michael ANGOLD, *The Byzantine Empire*, p. 200. Venetian fear of Pisan competition appeared in 1100, even before the Pisans had obtained privileges in the Empire: see Ralph-Johannes LILJE, *Handel und Politik*, p. 76, n. 15.

The nature and extent of the privileges obtained by the three major maritime powers appears to have exercised a far more decisive impact on the trade and settlement pattern of their citizens in the Empire's provinces. Long-term presence and permanent settlement were clearly related to continuity in trade in a substantial volume of goods or in the handling of expensive ones. Historical research has focused on long-distance commercial and maritime ventures, documented by notarial charters referring to the ultimate destinations of merchants and ships. On the other hand, it has largely ignored medium and short-distance traffic within the internal Byzantine trade system and failed to recognize its importance for the Italian merchants before the Fourth Crusade. Indeed, since the last quarter of the eleventh century the Venetians, followed in the twelfth century by their Pisan and Genoese counterparts, gradually integrated within the internal trade and maritime networks of the Empire. They took advantage of economic opportunities in ports of call along the shipping lanes connecting Italy to Constantinople, as well to the Crusader Levant and Egypt, and increasingly conveyed agricultural, pastoral and industrial commodities between them.

The Venetians' edge in the Byzantine provinces, where they were the only ones until 1192 to benefit from tax exemption on all transactions, was far more pronounced than in the capital. Even from 1192 until the Fourth Crusade they maintained a substantial advantage, since the Pisans and Genoese had still to pay their reduced *kommerkion* rate as well as maritime dues. The Venetians' wide tax exemptions clearly furthered the ramification and intensification of their trade and their handling of domestic products within the Empire, whenever they could take full advantage of their privileges. Thus, for instance, they exported Peloponnesian oil and Cretan cheese to Constantinople, Alexandria and presumably also Venice. Since 1071 at the latest they conveyed Theban silks to Venice and later to Thessalonica and the Empire's capital⁶⁶. A number of them settled temporarily or permanently in several Byzantine provincial cities, namely Dyrrachion, Sparta, Thebes, Corinth, Halmyros, Thessalonica,

⁶⁶See David JACOBY, *Silk in Western Byzantium*, pp. 478-479, 493-496, and above, n. 17.

Abydos and Rhaidestos, and in some of them they had their own churches and monasteries⁶⁷.

Though denied a preferential tax rate in domestic trade until 1192, the Pisans were active in Halmyros and presumably involved in its grain trade. Some of them were settled in the city, where they had two churches, attested in the 1150s, in addition to houses, trading facilities and a hospice or hospital, destroyed or damaged presumably in 1182, and rural land around the city. Before 1182 the Pisans held dwellings and a *fondaco* in Thessalonica, which appear to have served the needs of travelling merchants, rather than those of settlers⁶⁸. The extension of their reduced *kommerkion* rate to the provinces in 1192 surely encouraged the Pisans to intensify their trade in domestic products. In Modon, in the southwestern Peloponnese, three of them acted in 1201 as middlemen between Byzantine producers and a Venetian in a large deal in oil intended for export to Constantinople⁶⁹. The Genoese are documented in the second half of the twelfth century in or close to several places, namely Adrianople, Pasequia, Abydos, Chrysopolis, Halmyros, Methone or Modon, Colanixi, Avlona, Adramyttion, Andros, Chios, Rhodos, Attaleia and Crete⁷⁰. Many of these localities were for them no more than ports of call on the way to and from Constantinople or the Crusader Levant. Genoese trade in them appears to have consisted largely in exports by ships sailing to foreign countries, rather than in activity on the internal Byzantine market⁷¹. This is not surprising, since from 1169 to 1192 the Genoese suffered in the provinces from a serious disadvantage in tax rates and were thus less competitive there than their rivals. The extension of their reduced rate to all types of

⁶⁷See Silvano BORSARI, *Venezia e Bisanzio nel XII secolo*, pp. 31-106; Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 213-214; IDEM, *Die lateinische Kirche in der Romania vor dem vierten Kreuzzug. Versuch einer Bestandaufnahme*, «Byzantinische Zeitschrift», LXXXII (1989), pp. 202-206, 209-211. There also was a dependency of S. Nicolo di Lido in Thessalonica in 1165 according to a later document: Bianca LANFRANCHI STRINA (ed.), *Codex Publicorum (Codice del Piovego) I (1282-1298)* (Fonti per la storia di Venezia, sez. I-Archivi pubblici), Venezia, 1985, n° 28, p. 207.

⁶⁸Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 188-190; Silvano BORSARI, *Pisani a Bisanzio*, pp. 65-66; Giuseppe MÜLLER, *Documenti*, pp. 71-72.

⁶⁹DCV, no. 456.

⁷⁰For evidence, see Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, index, under these names; for Crete, see above, n. 17, and for Andros, David JACOBY, *Silk in Western Byzantium*, pp. 460-461.

⁷¹See *ibid.*, pp. 460-461, and above, n. 17.

transactions since 1192 appears to have enhanced the Genoese supply of the Byzantine internal market, illustrated in 1200 or 1201 by the transportation of raw silk and silk fabrics presumably originating in Cyprus to Constantinople⁷². There is evidence about a single Genoese apparently settled in Crete in the 1150s and about a number of them established in Halmyros in the early 1160s⁷³. Yet on the whole the Pisan and Genoese trade and settlement patterns in the provinces were far more restricted than the Venetian ones⁷⁴. This may be partly ascribed to the limited range of their tax privileges outside Constantinople until 1192.

In the twelfth century the presence of the Italian maritime powers in the Empire was either restricted or interrupted at several occasions by political circumstances. Lack of continuity reduced or even completely eliminated, each time for several years, the benefits deriving from their trade privileges, to the advantage of their rivals. It seems obvious that Pisan merchants profited from the almost total halt of Venetian activity in Romania from 1121 to 1126, especially in Constantinople⁷⁵. The expected swift development of Genoa's trade in this city after the agreements of 1169 and 1170 may have been among the factors taken into account by Manuel I when he planned his coup against the Venetians, which took place on 12 March 1171. To some extent the Pisans and the Genoese apparently succeeded in filling the void left by the Venetians in Constantinople. This would partly explain the substantial growth of Genoa's trade in the city, suggested by a comparison of the losses its merchants incurred in 1162 and 1182, respectively⁷⁶.

By contrast, Pisa and Genoa seem to have been less successful in the provinces. The contraction of Venetian presence for several years after March 1171 surely enhanced Pisan trade in Halmyros and Thessalonica, yet does not appear to have furthered its expansion to other cities. Genoa's failure to obtain privileges similar to those conferred on the Venetians since 1082 or a privileged rate of the *kommerkion* in the provinces severely

⁷²See David JACOBY, *Silk in Western Byzantium*, pp. 496-497.

⁷³See above, n. 17, and Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, p. 188, respectively.

⁷⁴This conclusion is also suggested by the few sources bearing on the Pisans in the Empire's provinces.

⁷⁵On which see Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 368-374, and Silvano BORSARI, *Venezia e Bisanzio*, pp. 17-19.

⁷⁶Ralph-Johannes LILIE, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 320-321.

undercut its prospects of favorable trade developments. The massacre of the Latins in Constantinople in 1182, which abruptly interrupted Pisan and Genoese activity in the Empire, presumably hastened the return of a number of Venetians to their former quarter in the city in the following year and the expansion of their trade thereafter. The Venetians virtually faced no competition from their Italian rivals for about nine years, until the full resumption of the Empire's relations with Pisa and Genoa in 1192⁷⁷. Each time the return to the Byzantine market required a rebuilding of trade connections and networks. In some cases this could easily be achieved, as in Thebes where the absence of foreign competition facilitated the task of a Venetian a few years only after his escape from the Empire in 1171⁷⁸. Yet in Constantinople this must have been far more difficult, since competitors remaining in the city had ample time to consolidate their position on the local market. There were also obstacles in the provinces. Pisa did not request the restitution and restoration of its property in Halmyros and Thessalonica before 1197, five years after the renewal of its relations with the Empire⁷⁹, a clear indication that its merchants were slow to regain the role they had lost in 1182 in the trade of these cities.

The review of the commercial and fiscal privileges granted by the Byzantine emperors before the Fourth Crusade to Venice, Pisa and Genoa, respectively, reveals that the disparity between them was far wider than generally assumed. Normative texts, however, do not necessarily reflect actual conditions on the ground. Deliberate measures taken by the Byzantine government, the arbitrary action of its officials, especially in the provinces, and political developments affected in various ways, at times heavily, the implementation of the privileges and the benefit deriving from them. These factors should be taken into account in any evaluation of Italian trade and settlement in Byzantium and the impact these had on the Empire's economy.

⁷⁷ All these events have been treated above.

⁷⁸ See above, n. 29.

⁷⁹ See above, n. 68.

RÉSUMÉ

Divers empereurs byzantins octroyèrent de 1082 à 1192 des privilèges étendus aux trois principales puissances maritimes italiennes, Venise, Pise et Gênes. Une nouvelle lecture des clauses commerciales et fiscales de ces privilèges dans un contexte contemporain et dans un cadre comparatif révèle des aspects méconnus ou oubliés de leur contenu, suggère de nouvelles interprétations et éclaire certains de leurs effets sur le commerce, le transport maritime et l'implantation italienne dans l'Empire avant la quatrième croisade. Les écarts entre les privilèges respectifs des trois puissances étaient beaucoup plus grands qu'on ne l'admet couramment. L'application de ces privilèges et le profit qui en dérivait ont été affectés de diverses manières, parfois sensiblement, par les mesures délibérées du gouvernement impérial, les actions arbitraires de ses officiers, en particulier dans les provinces, enfin, les développements politiques. Il faut tenir compte de ces facteurs dans toute évaluation du commerce et de l'implantation des Italiens dans l'Empire byzantin et de leur impact sur l'économie de celui-ci.

SUMMARY

Between 1082 and 1192 several Byzantine emperors conferred extensive privileges on the three main Italian maritime powers, Venice, Pisa and Genoa. A new reading of their commercial and fiscal provisions in a contemporary context and in a comparative framework reveals some misunderstood or overlooked aspects of their content, suggests novel interpretations, and sheds light on some of their effects on trade, shipping and the Italian settlement pattern in the Empire before the Fourth Crusade. The disparity between the respective privileges granted to the three maritime powers was far wider than generally assumed. Deliberate measures taken by the Byzantine government, the arbitrary action of its officials, especially in the provinces, and political developments affected in various ways, at times heavily, the implementation of these privileges and the benefit deriving from them. These factors should be taken into account in any evaluation of Italian trade and settlement in Byzantium and the impact these had on the Empire's economy.