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Products and markets - The activities of the imperial guilds of Constantinople

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Abstract

In the present paper the questions that are covered concern specific entrepreneurial aspects of the imperial guilds in Constantinople of the 10th century. The mentioned aspects are dealing first with the products and services offered by the guilds and secondly with the places, streets and areas where the guild members allowed to do their business. All this information is stated in the Book of the Eparch (BE) or Book of the Prefect («Το Επαρχικόν Βιβλίον»). Accordingly we are analyzing first the structure and quantity of the products / services mentioned in the Book of Eparch (BE) and next we are mentioning the used locations prescribed by the Prefect himself. Therefore the investigation analyses the products / services as well as the places connected with each of the products and services that are sold there.

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1. Prolegomena

The prosperous economic and trade situation of the 10th century affected the well-being of the whole East Roman Empire. But as it is common, it concerned firstly and expectedly the capital of the East Roman Empire, Constantinople. The meaning of Constantinople as the «Polis» («The City») of the empire was exceptional for the economy and trade. The political territory of the capital covered a large part of the surrounding areas having a radius of one hundred miles in any direction (Κόλιας, Χρόνη, Το Επαρχικόν Βιβλίον, 2010, p. 17). Due to this fact the emperors appointed the Eparch («Επαρχος») a person to be in charge of all issues concerning the administrative, economic, legal and civil agendas.

He was ranked in the 18th position below the emperor, but in reality he was “the second man” in the city (Κόλιας, Χρόνη, Το Επαρχικόν Βιβλίον, 2010, p. 14; «in the city above all, after the emperor and outside of the city <beyond the 100 miles> has no other authority, but only to judge» - «εν τη πόλει μείζων πάντων εστί μετά τον βασιλέα, εξελθών δε του όρους της πόλεως εξουσίαν ουκ έχει πλην του κελεύειν και δικάζειν»

(Κόλιας, Χρόνη, Το Επαρχικόν Βιβλίον, 2010, p. 16, in: Mavridis, & Vatalis, 2014)) functioned as a mayor or the «father of the city» (Κόλιας, Χρόνη, Το Επαρχικόν Βιβλίον, 2010, p. 14, in: Mavridis, & Vatalis, 2014).

The Eparchos (prefectus urbi) had a number of other imperial officials in his office and under his command in order to support him in managing his important and decisive work. The Eparchos or prefectus urbi had his residence in the Mese Odos (Μέση Οδός) of Constantinople close to the forum of emperor Constantine the Great. Under the subordination of the Eparch were 14 types of officers (see Mavridis, D. G. & Vatalis, K. I., 2014). Among others those officers had to be aware that all members of the guilds were selling only the prescribed products and additionally that they used the right streets, places and other named locations, like Emboli for their business.

2. The imperial guilds of Constantinople

In the EB there are 21 different guilds or collegia (see Χριστοφιλόπουλος, 1935 / 2000, pp. 77-96 and Koder, Das Eparchenbuch, 1991, pp. 72–143). The first collegium concerns the notaries (ταβουλλάριοι - tabularii, συμβολαιογράφοι - symvolaiografoi). The second group concerns the dealers in bullion (argyropratai – αργυροπράτες, χρυσοχόοι – chrysochooi or goldsmiths). Group three concerns the bankers (τραπεζίτες - trapezites, καταλλάκται - katallaktai, κολλυβιστές - kollyvistes, εξισωτές - exisotes, κολλεκτάριοι - collectarii, αργυραμοιβοί – argyramoiboi, σαράφης - sarafis).

The argyropratai are dealing with gold, silver, jewelry and precious stones (πολύτιμοι λίθοι) and with money exchange the latter (bankers). The fourth concerned group is the domestic silk garments merchants (vestiopratai – βεστιοπράται). The fifth group is called prandiopratai (πρανδιοπράται) who are silk importers mainly from Syria and Baghdad. The sixth syllogos (guild) is named metaxopratai, metaxarioi or melathrarioi (μεταξοπράται, μεταξύριοι, μελαθράριοι), which means raw silk merchants.

The seventh group is the raw silk dressers or silk spinners (καταρτάριοι, katartarioi) who are producers of silk fibers from the cocoons of the silk worm. In the eighth chapter of the EB are regulations about the clothiers or silk dyers (σηρικάριοι, serikarioi). They buy raw silk and sell the made cloths to the silk stuff merchants (vestiopratai, βεστιοπράται). The ninth guild is dealing with imported silk and linen stuff (οθωνιοπράται, othoniopratai, μθανείς, mithaneis) coming from Strymon in Makedonia, Kerasous in Pont Euxine and other places.

The tenth group, the perfume merchants (μυρεψοί, myrepsoi) are importers of items coming mainly from Chaldia / Pontos through Trapezous. The eleventh group are the wax and taper merchants (κηρουλάριοι, keroularioi) who are producers and sellers of wax items (e. g. candles for the churches). As number twelve mentioned in the EB are the soap merchants (σαπωνοπράτες, saponopratai). The guilds ranged between the 10th and 12th group deal with house, body and spiritual culture (perfumes, candles and soaps) items.

The 13th guild is that of the grocers (σαλδαμάριοι, saldamararioi, from sal = salt + gamina = vegetables) while the guild of the saddlers (λωροτόμοι, lorotomoi, μαλακατάριοι, malakatarioi, βυρσοδέψες, vursodepsai) takes up the 14th place. The 15th group is the butcher's guild (μακελάριοι, makelarioi) and is followed in the 16th place by the guild of the pork merchants (χοιρέμποροι, choiremporoi).

The guild of the fishmongers (ιχθυοπράται, ichthyopratai) is the 17th group and the bakers guild (αρτοποιοί, artopioi, μάγκιπες, mangipes) the 18th one. In the above mentioned places - 13th to 18th, except for the saddlers – the concerned guilds deal with daily food items for the mass population, like the bakers who are the a-to-po-qo, artopokos, artopopos, artopoiios, pistor, artopastas, «bread-pastor» of the linear B tablets (see Mavridis, D. G., 2008, Disclosed Intellectual Capital Aspects in Creto-Mycenean Palatial Linear B' Clay Tablets,).

The 19th guild is the inn-holders (κάπηλοι, kapeloi) and being tavernians (kapeloi) they were less respected. They sold wine, «pusca» (oxycraton, οξύκρατον, see Κουκουλές, Φ., Βυζαντινών βίος και πολιτισμός, Β. Ι, 1955, p. 194) and food during the week – in six days, from the second hour of the day (about 7.00 a.m.) up to the second hour of the night (7.00 p.m.), but “never on Sundays”, nor on big holidays.

While the chapter twenty (20.) of the EB concerns the «Legatarios», an officer of the Eparch, the 21st guild are the animal specialists or inspectors or assessors (βόθροι, vothroi, probably from «βοοθεωρία, vootheoria» which means inspection of cutlets). The last codified guild –No 22 - is this of the undertakers like clay item makers, marmor item makers and painters (εργολάβοι - ergolavoi, locatores and conductores operis).

3. The sold products

The sold products as they are mentioned in the EB are about one hundred items and are tightly connected with each guild. For some guilds the nomination of the items or services is not mentioned in a taxative way or described in a general way, like the services of the notaries. Accordingly we are going to analyze only those distinguished as taxative mentioned products. The guild of the argyrorapratai (αργυροπράται, *dealers in bullion, goldsmiths*) trade with gold, silver and any kind of precious stones and jewelry, which makes 3% of the total amount of items mentioned in the EB.

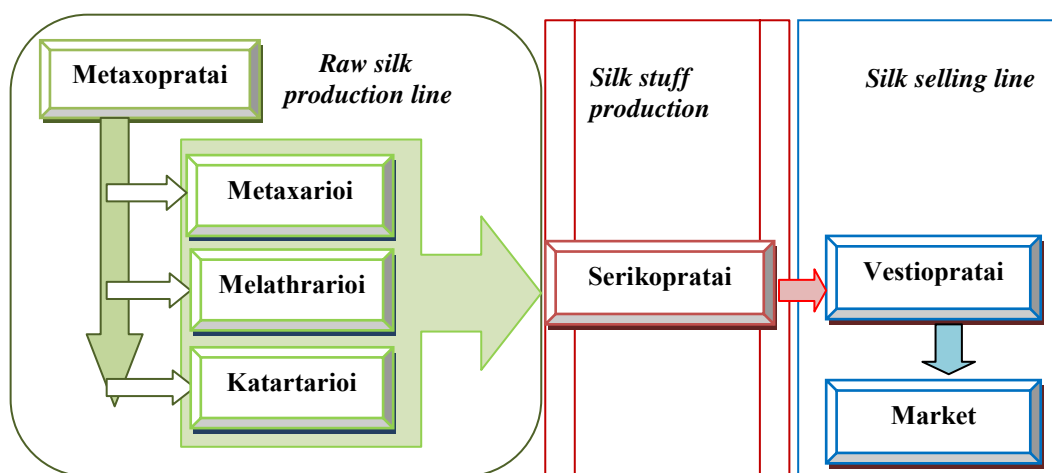


Figure 1: The silk production road - Raw silk production line (Metaxarioi, Melathrarioi and Katartarioi), Silk items production (Serikopratai) and silk selling line (Vestiopratai, Market)

The guild of the vestiopratai (βεστιοπράται, silk stuff traders - i-to-we-sa / ιστοΦεσσα («ιστόν ὕφαινε, ιστόν δ' ἔστησεν νηός, ιστόν δ' ιστοδόκη πέλασαν, ιστία μὲν στείλαντο», *Iliad*, «ιστόν δ' εἰλάτινον, ιστία λευκά», *Odyssey*) > vestis, web, weben, Weste, Weber, Vestibuel, see Mavridis, D. G., «Thesaurus of Linear B'»), are trading with six items (6% of all mentioned items) and concern: silk and purpurn (porfyra = imperial red) clothes in general, Persikia porfyra from Persia (Περσίκια πορφυρά), Erythra oxea (Ερυθρά οξέα, dark red colored - e-ru-to-ro / ε-ρυ-το-ρο, ερυθρός, rubor, red, rot, rose («Εἰλέσιον καὶ Ἐρυθράς, χρυσὸν καὶ χαλκὸν ἐρυθρόν», *Iliad*, «αἶθοπα οἶνον ἐρυθρόν, κέρασσε δὲ νέκταρ ἐρυθρόν», *Odyssey*, see Mavridis, D. G., «Thesaurus of Linear B'»), Mesoforia porfyra (Μεσοφόρια πορφυρά, purpurn underwear), and Arrafa (Ἄρραφα, semi finished, semi sewed clothes).

The guild of prandiopratai (πρανδιοπράται, linen stuff traders - lat. brandeum = strip) deal with eight items which were imported from Syria (8% of the total items), like esthimata (εσθήματα, linen clothes - <εσθήματα> ἱμάτια, see Hesychius Alexandrinus, in: Mavridis, D. G., «Thesaurus of Linear B'»), hareria (χαρέρια, silk items), Syrian clothes, underwear, audiai (αυδίαι, linen clothes), thalassai (θάλασσαί, porfyra red clothes), chamia (χαμία, linen stuff), Bagdatikia (Βαγδατικά, clothes from Bagdad).

The trading of linen stuff produced in the Empire itself was only allowed for the guild of the

vestiopratai. The traded items of the next guild concern silk (μέταξα) in general. The guild is divided in three subdivisions or «sub guilds». The metaxopratai (μεταξοπράται) sell first the cocoons, the “eggs” of the silk worms, which deliver the raw silk fiber. The metaxarioi (μεταξάριοι), the melathrarioi (μελαθράριοι) and the katartarioi (καταρτάριοι) are the main raw silk or silk fiber producers. The serikopratai (σηρικοπράται, silk dyers) are the final producers of silk stuff. («Σῆρες» ζῶα νήθοντα μέταξαν ἢ ὄνομα ἔθνους, ὅθεν ἔρχεται καὶ τὸ ὀλοσήρικον, <σηρῶν> σκωλήκων τῶν γεννώντων τὰ σηρικά, <σῆρες> γὰρ οἱ σκώληκες, <σῆς> σκώληξ ὁ ἐν τοῖς μελισσ(ε)ίοις γινόμενος καὶ ὑφάσματος», Hesychius Alexandrinus, in: Mavridis, D. G., «Thesaurus of Linear B'»).



**PLATE IX. B. SEAL OF JOHN AND THOMAS, CHIEFS
OF THE IMPERIAL TEXTILE FACTORIES**

Figure 2: Seals of John and Thomas, Chiefs of the Imperial Textile Factories (ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ ΘΩΜΑΣ – ΕΠΙΣΤΗΡΙΑΚΟΝ ΑΙ ΚΑΙ ΑΡΧΟΝΤΕΣ)

Source: Lopez, R. S., 1945, *Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire*

The traded items of the silk production line (Figure 1) were first the cocoons, then the silk stuff (produced by the katartarioi and sold to serikopratai, who finished the silk clothes). In the silk selling procedure (Figure 1) the serikopratai sell the silk clothes to vestiopratai who offer them in the market at the right places (emboli, agorai and fore).

The items that are described with the most detail (21 items or 21%) are the blattia (βλαττία, purpurn clothes – lat. blatta), silk and wool stuff from Trapezous (μεταξωτά και μάλλινα υφάσματα από την Τραπεζούντα κόκκινου χρώματος) and the skaramangia (σκαραμάγγιον, purpurn imperial belted tunic with long full sleeves). The next category of clothes is the semi-milino-diblatta (ημιμηλινοδίβλαττα μιάτια, «half apple-red bi-purpurn» clothes) and the prasino-diblatta (πρασινόδίβλαττα, «green bi-purpurn» clothes).

Another category are the so called «persikia blattia polychrome» (περσίκια βλαττία πολύχρομα, i.e. rich colored purpur clothes), the fakiolia slavika (φακιόλια σλαβικά, slavian clothes) and the dispethama chlanidia (δισπίθαμα χλανίδια, purpur clothes),

Another sort of clothes are the characteristic exapola imatia (εξάπολα μιάτια, comparable with the ἑξάμιτον or hexamiton, i. e. "six threads", indicating the use of six yarns in the warp, which has been incorporated in the word "samite", the main warp threads of the fabric), the oktapola imatia (οκτάπολα μιάτια, indicating the use of eight yarns in the warp), dekapola (μιάτια δεκάπολα) and the imatia dodekapola (μιάτια δωδεκάπολα, twelve yarns in each warp of the woven clothes, which were also much heavier and precious),

A special kind of clothes are the porfyraera imatia (πορφυράερα, «air-purpur» clothes), the imatia alethnaera (μιάτια αληθινάερα, «air-real» or «air-woven» clothes), the imatia leptozela (μιάτια λεπτόζηλα, fine woven clothes), the monodespota hypogyra imatia (μονοδέσποτα υπόγυρα μιάτια, long tunics) and the disschista mesozela imatia (δίσχιστα μεσόζηλα μιάτια, two-fold fine clothes),

agallochum, aquilaria malaccensis), ambar (άμπαρ μυρενικών κόπρος ιχθύος, άμπαρι, ambra grisea, anbar), moschus (musk, muschus, μόσχος, αμπαρόμοσχος, μοσχάμπαρ), livani (incense, λίβανος, olibanum), smyrna (σμύρνα, myrrh, commifora abyssinica), barze (βαρζήν, βαρζίν, αιματόξυλο, balsam), indigo (λουλάκιν, indigofera tinctoria, lilak), lachan (λαχάς, cartheria lacca, sweet-smelling herbs), lazuri (λαζούριν, lapis lazuli, lazward, centaurea), chrysoxylon (χρυσόξυλον, θάψος, thapsia garganica, wood for yellow dye) and zygaia (ζυγαία, ζυγέα, ύσσωπος, hysore, caper, capparispinosa, oregano).

The wax candler (κηρουλάριοι) sold wax products, mainly candles for the churches, while the saponopratai (σαπωνοπράται, soap merchants) were trading with three named items: gallikon soap (Γαλλικό σαπούνι), stakte (στάχτη, ashes) and hygra katastallakte (υγρά κατασταλακτή, liquid residuals used as poison).

The saldamarior or grocers (σαλδαμάριοι, σάρδη, σαρδίνη, salgamarius, salgama, sardina) sold 16 items (16%), like meat, salted fish, neuron (sausages or fish sort), tyros (τυρός, cheese), meli (μέλι, honey), olive oil, ospria (όσπρια, beans), butter (βούτυρο), pissa (πίσσα, άσφαλτος, άσphaltos, άσphalton, a word meaning asphalt / bitumen), kedraia (κεδραία, cedar oil), cannabis (κάνναβη, cannabis sativa, cannabis indica, cannabis ruderalis), linari (λινάρι, linum usitatissimum, linum grandiflorum, linum austriacum), gypsos (γύψος, clay), skafidia (σκαφίδια, «εγώ είχον ασημοχρύσαφον και συ είχες σκαφοδούγας και σκάφην του ζυμόματος», «I brought gold and silverware; you your scrubbing boards, one board for kneading dough», says Ptochoprodromos, in: Alexiou, M., *Ploys of Performance: Games and Play in the Ptochoprodromic Poems*), bouttia (βουττία, wooden boxes) and karfia (καρφία, nails).

The saddlers (λωροτόμοι, lorotomoi, μαντοποιοί, imantopioi) sold three items: leather strips (λώροι, loroi, μάντες, imantes), skins (δέρματα, dermatata, βύρσες, byrses) and leather shoes (pedila).

The butchers (μακελάριοι, makelarioi) sold meat from old and young (arnion) sheep, the pork meat merchants sold pork meat, the fishmongers (ιχθυοπράται, ichtyopratai) sold fish either «white» or «dark», while the white fish sorts were more expensive.

The bakers sold bread all over the city and had to be very careful because of fire danger. The innholders (κάπηλοι) were not respected as much as a guild because the offer as usual wine products and oxycraton or «pusca» (a possible connection with the «punsch», a Christmas drink in Austria and Germany).



From G. Schlumberger, Sigillographie de l'Empire Byzantin]

PLATE IX. A. SEAL OF CHIEFS OF THE PURPLE FACTORIES

*Figure 4: Seals of Chiefs of Purple Factories (N...EP KIA ...ΩΝΣ ΑΡΧΟΝΤΩΝ ΤΟΥ ΒΑΑ<ΤΤΙΟΥ>)
Source: Lopez, R. S., 1945, Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire*

4. The markets – streets and places

In Constantinople of the tenth century there existed two-tier fish trade systems, one for wholesalers

and another one for retailers. The first was performed at the waterfront («οι ιχθυοπράται την εξώνησιν ποιείτωσαν εν ταις αιγιαλοῖς και εν ταις σκάλαις ...μη ανερχόμενοι αυτοί εν ταις εποχαῖς», while the second in the urban area of Constantinople, exactly in their stalls in the Megistai Kamarai («οι ιχθυοπράται έστωσαν εν ταις λεγομέναις μεγίσταις καμάραις της πόλεως», Maniatis, Fish market, DOP, Vol. 54, 2000, pp. 13-42).

Sheep were to be sold in the predefined forum (αγορα) of Strategion (Στρατήγιον), while young sheep and pork had to be sold in the forum of Tauros. The forum of Amastrianus (Αμαστριανού) was specified for the work of the vothroi (animal inspectors) where animals were first inspected and then offered for sale.

Spices were sold only in the Portico of Achilles close to the Augustaion. Grocers, taverns and bakers were located throughout the city; butchers were instructed to travel beyond Nicomedia to the Sangarius River in order to obtain better prices in buying the animals from the sheep and goat farmers. «Sheep probably arrived in the Proosphorion harbor by the Strategion, where they were to be sold, while pigs may have been unloaded at Julian's harbor and led up to the Theodosian forum, where lambs were also sold at Easter.» (Mango, 2000, Commercial Map)

There is no specific information in the EB for the places where bakers were instructed to operate. Probably there was no specific place for their Artopoleia (αρτοποιεία) which means that they could work at all parts of the city, although some places were especially preferred by them like the Bronze Tetrapylon on the Mese Odos (see Mango, 2000, Commercial Map).

The same location regime system was foreseen for the oil and wine traders – the grocers (saldamarioi) and Inn-holders or innkeepers (kapeloi), who were located throughout the city as well. The locations of markets for nonfood goods like textiles, precious metals, saddles, soap and candles are not specified. In the Book of the Prefect exists an indication about some candle makers to be attached to Hagia Sophia and a regulation that the premises of candle - and soap makers had to be separated from other buildings for safety reasons.



(From G. Millet, *Sceaux des commerciaires byzantins*)

**PLATE IX. C. SEAL OF JOHN, *Hypatos* AND
GENERAL *Kommerkiarios* OF THE *Apotheke*
OF HELLESPONT AND LYDIA**

Figure 5: Seals of John, Hypatos and General Kommerkiarios (ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΥΠΑΤΟΥ – ΓΕΝΙΚΟΥ ΚΟΜΜΕΡΚΙΑΡΙΟΥ ΑΠΟΘΗΚΗΣ ΕΛΛΙΣΠΟΝΤΟΥ)

Source: Lopez, R. S., 1945, *Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire*

There is a regulation for silversmiths (argyropratai) to use the Mese Odos for their business. «Theophanes indicates that their shops stretched along the Mese from the Forum of Constantine to the Palace of Lausus» (Vryonis, Byzantine Δημοκρατία and the guilds in the eleventh century). Metaxopratai (silk

merchants) were advised to sell in the Forum of Constantine, while other «poorer» silk merchants (metaxarioi, melathrarioi, katartarioi, serikarioi, vestiopratai) had no specified locations. Linen merchants were not allowed to display their goods on counters («abbakia») or in their workshops, but they had to carry the stuff on their shoulders.

As Mango states the Syrian cloth shops (prandiopratai) «may have been at the corner of the Mese and forum» (see Mango, 2000, Commercial Map). According to the EB the Syrians were instructed to keep their merchandise in the Mitata («Μητάτα» were compounds for accommodation and warehousing) and sell it in the Embolus market.

The artopoioi had their bakeries between the Forum of Constantine and the Forum of Theodosius along the Mese. The candle-makers had their shops in the forum and also in the church of St. Sophia. The life of St. Andrew the Fool (Άγιος Ανδρέας ο δια Χριστόν σαλός) is of particular interest in this connection, for it takes place in the milieu of the guilds, shops, and working people.

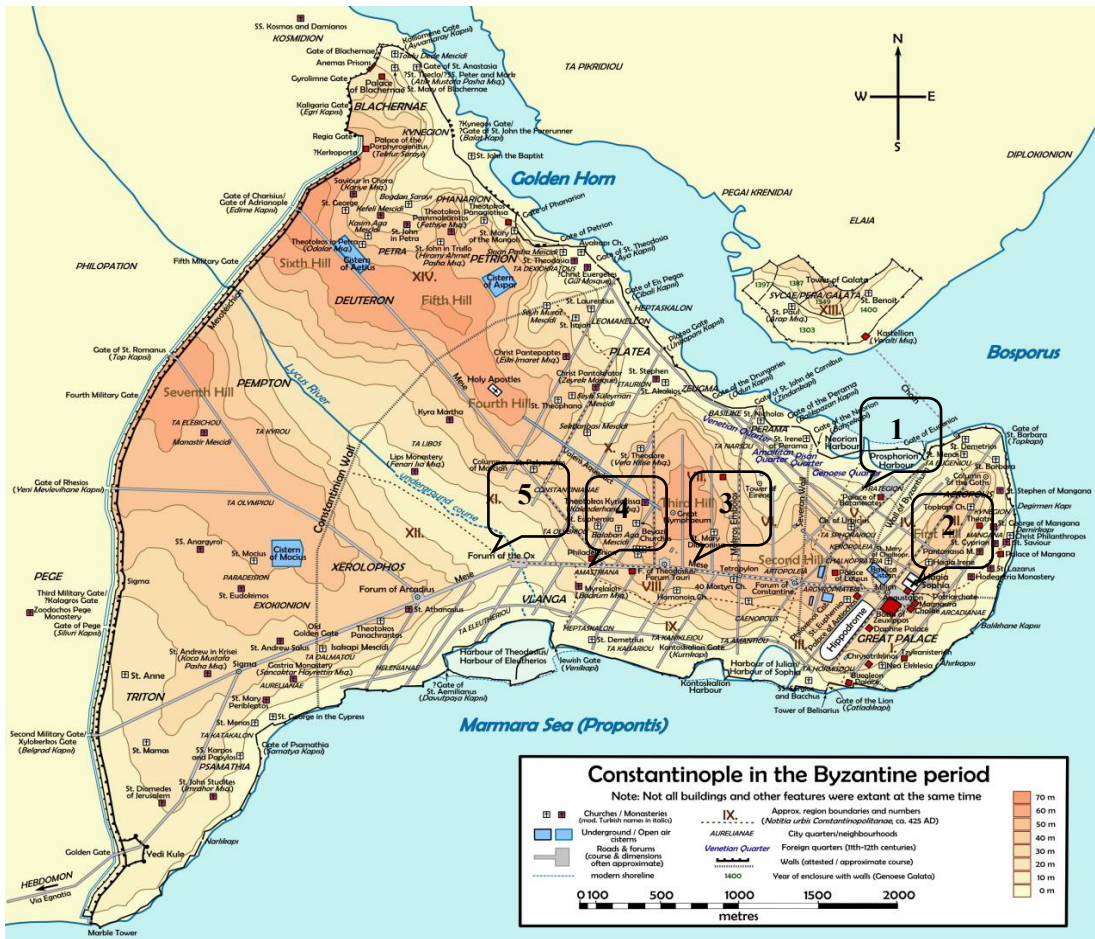


Figure 6: The markets of Constantinople (1: Strategion – for sheep, 2: Agia Sophia, for perfumes, wax and candles, 3: Mesi Odos – for gold, silver, jewelry and silk stuff, 4: Amastrianou – for animal inspection, 5: Tauros, for pork meat and sheep meat) Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantinople> (with own adjustments)

The Book of the Eparch says of the saldamarior that they were to have their shops all over the city so

that the provisioning of the inhabitants would be facilitated. It also includes a rather interesting specification concerning the place of business of the myrepsoi. «They shall place their show ables with the containers in a line extending from the sacred image of Christ our Lord which is by the Chalce up to the Milestone, so that these may send forth a savory aroma befitting the image, and make pleasant the porches of the palace» (Vryonis, Byzantine Δημοκρατία and the guilds in the eleventh century).

5. Conclusions

The performed analysis in the present paper shows that the various guilds sold only those items which were prescribed in the EB. Furthermore they had to take various regulations into consideration set by the Eparch or Prefect of the City (Constantinople). Those «best or bad practices» were rewarded with privileges or with various kinds of punishments. The punishments concern fees, monetary contributions and in some extreme cases with sentence to death. Apart of the regulation concerning the items or services foreseen for every guild to be offered the EB had regulations about the places (forum), streets (emboli), harbors (neorion, proosphorion), fishing grounds (epochai, skalai), animal areas (Nicomedia, Sangarius), importing countries (Bulgaria, Strymon, Syria, Pontos, Kerasous, Trapezous, Chaldia),

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