

REVIEW: Vasilis Kremmidas, *To Emporio tis Peloponnisou sto 18o Aiona (1715-1792)* [*The Commerce of Peloponnesos in the 18th Century*], Athens, 1972, 418 p.

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Modern scholarship has paid little attention to the history of Greece under Ottoman rule. This is all the more true concerning the socio-economic history of Greece during this period, since we have scarcely any monographs on this topic, with the notable exception of *Le commerce de Salonique au XVIII siècle* of N.G. Svoronos. The difficulty lies in the disorderly manner in which the primary sources are kept, which remain to be thoroughly surveyed.

The work to be reviewed here is based primarily on the French archives and makes clear not only the French commercial activities in the Levant but generally deals with the socio-economic conditions of Peloponnesos and their transformations throughout the 18th century.

Given the current stage of scholarly works on modern Greek history, this book can be considered the pioneer work not only in the domain of socio-economic studies of the province under Ottoman rule but also in the studies of the nationalist movement of the Greeks, which culminated in the "Greek Revolution of '21".

The archives used are as follows: (1) *Archives Nationales de France* in Paris, (2) *Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères* in Paris, (3) *Archives de la Chambre de Commerce de Marseille*, (4) *Archives Départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône* in Marseille. All of these contain the correspondence of the consulate in Peloponnesos to the Chambre de Commerce de Marseille and to the Ministry of Marine Transportation in Paris with many statistics and other evidence concerning the commercial activities of the French and of the other peoples in the Levant. According to the author, no other sources are more accessible and useful than the above-mentioned archives for the study of the commerce of Peloponnesos on account of the fact that "the French trade was the most vigorous – although just one fourth of the total in quantity – at the eastern basin of the Mediterranean until the end of the 18th century and their records kept by the officials at the consulate cover a variety of aspects generally in relation to the socio-economic conditions of Peloponnesos". The author studied those materials during his stay in France in 1965-1967.

Then, with numerous of tables and diagraphes through historical and economic examinations he submitted the former two parts of this book (until p. 239) as his doctoral dissertation to Thessaloniki University in 1972 and was awarded Doctor of Philosophy in the same year.

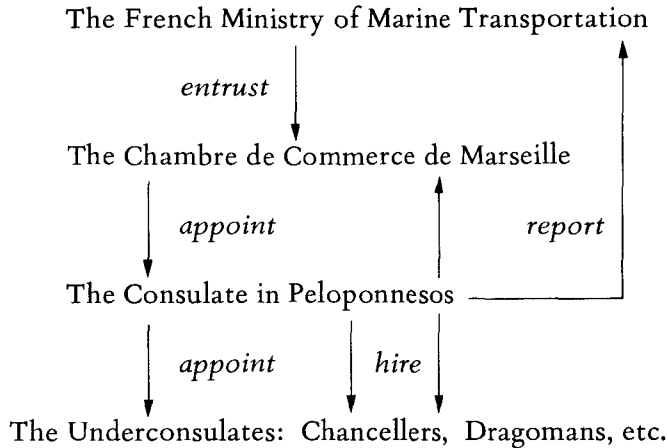
The whole work is divided into three parts: (1) the framework, (2) the element and (3) the management, which are further divided into chapters and sections.

In part one, the author examines the stage of the commercial activities from three aspects, namely (1) Peloponnesos, its demography, commercial centers and the geographical division, (2) the commercial organizations: mainly of the French, but also of the other European nations and of the Turks and (3) the taxation, mainly of the Turkish authority and of the French consulate, the goods which were prohibited by the Turks to export.

The population did not change much under Turkish rule. At the beginning of the second Turkish rule in Peloponnesos (1715), it was about 270,000 (245,000 Greeks, 25,000 Turks) and the population fell again to this level at the end of the 18th century. During the wars over Peloponnesos (1768-1772), especially during the Greek rebellion incited by the Russians, a serious depopulation was caused by the bloodshed and emigration to the neighboring islands. Furthermore, the epidemics continually breaking out here and there in Peloponnesos throughout the 18th century were also a panic cause of its demographic stagnation, and this brought about grave devastation of the land, which in turn threatend the country with famine. Therefore, the author concludes that the demographic condition of Peloponnesos was basically unfavorable for economic development during the 18th century, pointing out that this is all the more true for the other provinces under Ottoman rule and stating that depopulation is the general characteristic for any area suffering under colonial rule. In Peloponnesos there were no international-scale commercial centers as Marseille in Europe or other centers in the Ottoman Empire (Thessaloniki, Smyrna and so on). Only three cities had a population of over 10,000: Patras, Tripolitza and Mistra.

The French organization for commerce in Peloponnesos was well-organized through the 18th century. From the middle of the 17th century under Corverian policy the *Chambre de Commerce de Marseille* began to play a more important role in Levantine trade. The legislation (the nineteen articles on the commerce of the Levant) shows the consistent policy of the French government: (1) the promotion of the Mediterranean trade under the control of the government through the *Chambre de Commerce de Marseille*, (2) the protection of the domestic industry (mainly silk cloths). As is well educed above, the office in Marseille could enjoy the priority of monopolizing trade in the Levant and consequently experiencing all the ebb and flow of the commercial activities of Levant in the modern period.

The actual organization and the relationship of between each part was generally as follows:



As for the other nations in Europe, they never had any permanent organization. Indeed there existed in Peloponnesos the Venetian, Austrian and Russian consulates as well as the English consulate and underconsulates, but actually the Greek merchants contracted the business in Peloponnesos. It was not a rare case that one Greek merchant served as the representative for more than two nations.

Compared with the analysis on the French side, that on the Turkish side gives us only a vague idea concerning Turkish organization in Peloponnesos or their taxation system. This would be considered natural if we remember that this study was based solely on French sources. Nevertheless, the obscurity itself indicates the very confusion of the Turkish administration and their arbitrariness in taxation in Peloponnesos during the period under study. The capitulation offered to the French early in the middle of the 16th century and effective until the beginning of the 20th century allowed the French to trade without reserve in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean. The Turks, being traditionally indifferent to commercial activities, entrusted the French with handling the agricultural products of their estates. This is why the French merchants could enjoy, at least until the 1770's an almost monopolistic position in Levantine trade and allowed economic settlement in Peloponnesos. The French merchants had to go along with the local Turkish officials to make a success of their business in Peloponnesos. The local Turkish officials who were at the same time grand landowners in Peloponnesos also welcomed, for their own profit, the commercial development brought about by the Europeans. The international status quo favoured the French as well, for the Turks believed that in the near future the French would become a strong bulwark

against the Russians who had been consistently menacing the northern borders of the Empire.

In part two of this book, the author analyses the dynamic elements of the commercial activities. The first chapter is on the external elements: (1) the wars, (2) the Küchuk-Kainarja treaty, (3) the pirates and corsairs and (4) the smuggling.

Besides the wars which besieged Peloponnesos, those between European nations (the War of the Austrian succession, the Seven years' war and so on) brought about considerable transformation of commercial activities of the Levant, as usually both warring nations encouraged piracy of their privateers or even hired native fleets to attack their opponents. This finally gave the Greeks a chance to emerge as a marine people. The piracy during wartime allowed them to gain enough economic power thereby enabling them to invest their capital in mercantile goods. The author states that the piracy was a primitive but effective way to capital-accumulation in this pre-capitalistic age. The interesting point here is that some of the pirates were eulogized by the people as heroes who attacked the Turkish tax-collecting fleets on the neighbouring seas and that certain pirates, especially those of Mani, were said to have special economic relations with the powerful Greek landowners in Peloponnesos.

As mentioned before one of the most serious events of Peloponnesos in the period under study was the unsuccessful uprising in 1770. When this rebellion finally failed, annual production decreased by half due to a shortage of farm workers. In 1770-1772 the total quantity of exports was one-third and that of imports, one-fourth the usual amount. It was not until 1790 that Peloponnesos economically recovered its former stage of development. While the war (1768-1772) was crucial blow to agricultural development, the Küchuk-Kainarja treaty resulted in being quite favorable to the Greeks who were occupied with naval affairs. This treaty between the Ottoman Port and Tzarist Russia afforded the Russians hegemony in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean. From that time on Greek mariners started to take an active part in Mediterranean transportation by carrying Ukrainian wheat to the European market under the Russian flag. One of the articles of the treaty, which prohibited the Greeks of Peloponnesos from leaving their native land and become seamen, proves the extent of the devastation of the land and the consequent great number of the Greeks who threw themselves eagerly into navigation. The smuggling was at that time an indispensable part of their commercial activities and was another way of capital accumulation. As surveyed above the Turkish administrators, and French and Greek merchants as well as shipowners, all cooperated and brought the illegal wheat to the ports of Europe. "There is no doubt", says the author, "that the quantity of goods which was brought by smuggling is more than 50% of the total, taking into consideration the fact that 15% of the ships carrying the wheat which arrived at Marseille were from the

barren islands of Hydra, Proti and so on.”

Chapter two is a study on the means of exchange: (1) the currency, (2) the bills of exchange, (3) the credit loans and usury, (4) the measure for the products.

The French, the Turks and the Greeks, had had financial ties through credit and also borrowing. Among the natives the Jews were specialists in usury. Their rates were high – 20-30% a year. “If it is 12%”, a Frenchman wrote, “it is rarely a good case.” Thus, taking up examples the author concludes that “the heavy rate of the usury common to Peloponnesos was the grave obstacle for the healthy development of the commercial as well as financial achievements of the people – it must be strongly insisted that the heavy usury was more oppressive for the peasants than the Ottoman taxes.”

The next chapter on the import and export goods, which shows the tremendous work the author put into the research can be summarized in the following paragraph:

Until the 1770's imports from Europe into Peloponnesos were under French monopolistic control and the conditions were decided by the following two elements: (1) French commercial policy, (2) the demand and the ability of consumption of Peloponnesian markets. According to the author's categorization, the goods are divided into three categories: (1) industrial products, (2) colonial products, (3) products from the other countries. Among them, drape was the only one that they handled in considerable amount. The quantity of the drape traded, however, was limited since the article was a luxurious material and was consumed only by the privileged class. After the Küchuk-Kainarja treaty other Europeans attempted to enter Peloponnesian markets and thus arose competition, which opened the way also to native merchants taking part in the commercial activities in Peloponnesos as well as in Levant. As for the export goods from Peloponnesos, more than 70% items are given in the list, which indicates the variety of the goods in Peloponnesian markets and the fact that those had gained reputation for their sufficiently high quality in the international market.

As a primary product, olive oil had a special position until the end of the 18th century. Summarizing the import-export relations, the author points out the main characteristics of the economic organization as the typical style of colonial trade, saying that “until the 1770s Peloponnesos has been the agricultural tributary of the French financial-industrial capital, for until almost that time the French merchants enjoyed monopoly in Peloponnesian markets, where they brought French industrial products as primary sources.” The natives seems to have been satisfied with domestic trade and the peninsula has remained almost self-sufficient. After the 1770s, as international conditions changed, the economic situation in Peloponnesos also was confronted with transformation in many aspects. Carrying out the Industrial Revolution

the English by necessity had to expand their economic activities to the east. The Küchuk-Kainarja treaty allowed the Russians to advance southward. Thus markets in Peloponnesos became open to international competition, where we find the active participation of the Greek merchants. This process shows how the hitherto autonomous Peloponnesos was involved in the international economy in the 18th century.

In part three, taking up many concrete examples quoted at length from the French statements, the author vividly illustrates the actual conditions of commercial management in Peloponnesos during the 18th century.

According to the author, already under Venetian rule the Greeks were known as agents carrying the goods of Peloponnesos in their small vessels to the foreign ships which frequented the coastal regions of Peloponnesos. After a short period of decline in their activities caused by the Turco-Venetian war early in the 1740s, we see a resurgence of the activities of the Greek merchants who gathered and sold domestic products to the French merchants at the commercial centers in Peloponnesos. Those merchants also went outside the peninsula in their small vessels for business. The Greeks succeeded in gaining such commercial status that they found themselves competing with the French in the Peloponnesian markets. During wartime when piracy was rampant in the Mediterranean, many Greek fleets took part, by which they eventually succeeded in accumulating capital (1750-1770). Before the 1770s the Greek marine merchants of Korinthos, Hydra and Misolonghi were known to the Europeans. They sailed as far as the eastern periphery of the Italina peninsula. In place of the merchant marine of Korinthos whose shipping center was destroyed during the abortive insurrection of 1770, those of the islands – Hydra, Spetza, Psara and so on – distinguished themselves in the trade of Ukrainian wheat from Odessa to the ports of Europe in their large ships of more than 100 tons under the Russian flag. People without a nation as they were, the Greek merchants fearlessly sailed over the whole of the Mediterranean. European witnesses say that Greek ships frequented many ports in Italy and France, but there are no means to identify them definitely, for they usually hoisted other nations' flags at their convenience. The present writer should like to invite the reader's attention to the fact that later, at the mutual blockade between France and England during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, the Greek merchants, especially those of Hydra, succeeded in gaining very high profits by the same wheat trade, which they carried on with their armed ships that also played active role as part of the Turkish fleet in the Russo-Turkish war of 1787-1792.

The second interesting point to notice in this part is the emergence of powerful landowners in Peloponnesos and their development. The reports of the French consulate explain that the French regarded the Greek notables as opponents, more difficult than the Turks to negotiate with, concerning their

commercial management. Their influence is typically described by the comment on "*Panagiotis Benakis* in Kalamata", who was "perhaps the greatest capitalist of Peloponnesos, cooperated with Maniotes, supported by the pasha and kadis, is occupied with the piracy and robbery" and the consulate complained that "his control over the Greeks in Peloponnesos created difficulty for the commercial activities of the French in Peloponnesos."

Offering in this way many interesting descriptions, the author states his own standpoint on the social conditions of Peloponnesos in the period under study. According to him, there was a bitter dispute in Greek historiography concerning the characterization of the socio-economic condition of Peloponnesos before the Revolution. The importance of this dispute lies in the fact that the social condition and various social relationships have a decisive meaning for correct understanding of the character of Revolution of 1821. According to M. B. Sakellarios' point of view, "the social condition of Peloponnesos remained basically agricultural throughout the 18th century and still more in the years leading up to the Revolution." On the contrary, M. Kordatos, from his sociological point of view states that "the bourgeoisie, who existed already at that time, organized the Revolution." The author himself points out that the contradiction of the above two opinions is caused by the fallacious method in which the historians based their researches on the productive power, not on the productive relations as the author does.

This work is characterized by the abundant use of diagrams of traded goods (export, import), fluctuation of prices, and so forth. The present reviewer is skeptical about the method by which the author treats the French documents (the data on trade supplied by the French consulate, etc.), since these data do not necessarily reflect the actual condition of trade in this period. However, this work together with the laboriously prepared statistical data would be of great value so long as we keep in mind the limitation of statistics as described above. The author has contributed to an understanding of Peloponnesian trade not in the context of regional history but in that of world economic history in the 18th century. This work might be considered instructive for those who undertake research in the socio-economic history of the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean under Ottoman rule, particularly in its latter phase. Nevertheless, we should not put aside the methodological limitations of this work which depends solely on French sources. We might add that his viewpoint on the social condition of Peloponnesos in this period does not surpass that of Professor Sakellarios stated in his work "*I Peloponnisos kata tin deuteran Tourkokratian 1715-1821*". One of the few perspectives newly supplied by the author is the emphasis he lays on the flow of European capital into Peloponnesos which, he thinks, is the major element in the emergence of Greek notables as great merchants, who came to rule over Peloponnesos toward the end of the 18th century. With this in mind this work would better be called "French

trade in Peloponnesos and its influence, 1715-1792". As for Greek sources we have already several published ones on Hydra, Spetza, Psara and so forth. We are expecting the publication of the Benaki Archives which form the basic documents on one of the Greek notable families in Peloponnesos. It will not be, therefore long before new monographs doing full justice to these Greek sources become available on the theme the author pursued.

To sum up, this work can claim its usefulness for the understanding of the structure of the French Levantine trade, especially in Peloponnesos, and will remain one of the essential works on the commercial activities of the Greeks in the 18th century, to be complemented by works based on the Greek and Ottoman sources on the same theme.