Observations on the Demography of the Byzantine Empire[1]

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IN 1911 a general history of the Byzantine empire appeared in England, written by Edward Foord. It was a small book, characterized by a straightforward narrative simply told, with no attempt at an analysis of the institutions of the empire or of the various problems associated with its historical evolution. It is a book which no scholar today will use as a reference. But the ordinary reader may still read it with profit, for the general narrative is on the whole sound and the spirit which impregnates it is one of sympathy for the empire. Foord's critical observations on the image of the Byzantine empire created by such men as Voltaire, Gibbon, and Lecky are well taken.

What is particularly interesting in Foord's book, however, at least in so far as the present study is concerned, is the series of tables which he appended.[2] The peculiarity about these tables is this: in three of them we are given the area in square miles of the empire at various epochs of its existence; in only one are we given an estimate of its population. This is at the end of the reign of Theodosius I (395), when, according to Foord, the combined population of the provinces which came to form the eastern empire numbered (on estimate) 65,000,000 souls. In giving this figure Foord gives no reference to his sources nor does he explain the basis of his calculations. The omission is serious, but what immediately comes to one's mind is not so much this omission as the question, why was it that he gave a figure for the population of the empire in 395 and failed to do so for the other periods for which he gave the area of the empire in square miles. The answer, I think, is simple: he had no sources and no basis for making a calculation himself.

Fifty-five years have elapsed since the appearance of Foord's book and, despite the tremendous progress we have made in our knowledge of Byzantium, we are hardly any further advanced than he was. The problem, however, has not remained without some investigation. W. G. Holmes in the second edition of his *Age of Justinian* examined the question and came to the conclusion that the population of the empire during the reign of Anastasius numbered fifty-six million. His reasoning for so concluding, however, has no real scientific value. He urges, and gives as evidence the existence of a number of large cities, that the regions which constituted the empire towards the end of the sixth century were much more flourishing and 'considerably more, perhaps even double, as populous' as the same regions at the

[1] These observations do not include Italy and chronologically do not extend, except incidentally, much beyond the end of the twelfth century.

[2] Edward Foord, *The Byzantine Empire: The Rearguard of European Civilization* (London, 1911), Tables I and III.

beginning of the twentieth century, when, according to him, they had a population of twenty-eight million.[1]

The first really systematic attempt, however, to examine the question of the size of the population of the Byzantine empire was made by A. Andreades. This was in the form of a paper which he delivered at the Fourth International Congress of Byzantine Studies held in Sofia, published in 1935.[2] But all that Andreades did in this paper was to pose the problem, expose its difficulties, and analyse the various factors which affected favourably or unfavourably the size of the population of the empire. Except for the population of Constantinople to which he had previously devoted a monograph he gives no figures.

About the same time that Andreades published his paper, E. Stein, then in the United States, prepared a series of lectures on the history and institutions of the Byzantine empire which he intended to deliver during the academic year 1935–6. But owing to the illness of the author which occurred in 1936, the lectures were not delivered. However, after the war the text which Stein had prepared was revised by G. G. Garitte and J. R. Palanque and was published in *Traditio*. Stein in this work gives actual figures of what he thought the size of the population of the empire was at certain periods of its existence: 26 million during the fourth century (the eastern and Balkan provinces only); 30 million under Justinian; 20 million during the first half of the eleventh century; 10 to 12 million during the period of the Comneni and about 5 million during the reign of Michael VIII Palaeologus.[3] Stein gives no references, nor does he discuss the basis of his calculations. Hence, if there is any validity in these figures, this validity must rest on the profound erudition of the author, an erudition, however, which in its profundity did not extend much beyond the end of the sixth century.

Another scholar by no means as well versed in the history of the Byzantine empire as Stein has also given some figures. J. C. Russell in his monograph on ancient and medieval population offers the following figures of the size of the population of the eastern empire; 24 million in the year 350; 19 million in 600; about 11 million in 800; 15 million in 1000; and about 7 million in 1200.[4] Russell's work is a serious and comprehensive study, but there is reason to doubt its conclusions. The figures which he gives are based, in the final analysis, on the assumption that the principal city of a region constituted approximately one and a half per cent of its population. But, apart from the arbitrariness of this assumption, there is also this problem: if the estimate of the population of the city involved is wrong, then the estimate of the population of the region will also prove to be wrong. To give an example: he estimates the population of Edessa at the time of the Crusades at 24,000. He considers Edessa as the second ranking city in Syria and relates its population, according to another formula which he worked out, to the population of Antioch, the first ranking city of the region. The population of Antioch he fixes at 40,600, and so

[1] W. G. Holmes, *The Age of Justinian and Theodora* (2nd ed., London, 1912), i, p. 137. In note 2 on the same page Holmes writes: 'Taking all things into consideration, to give a hundred millions to the countries forming the Eastern Empire, in their palmy days, might not be an overestimate.'

[2] A. Andreades, 'La population de l'Empire byzantin', *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique bulgare*, ix (Sofia, 1935), pp. 117–26.

[3] E. Stein, 'Introduction à l'histoire et aux institutions byzantines', *Traditio*, vii (1949–1951), p. 154.

[4] J. C. Russell, *Late, Ancient and Medieval Population* (= *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, N.S. xlviii, part 3; Philadelphia, 1958), p. 148.

comes to the conclusion that Syria at the time of the Crusades had a population of about 2.7 million.[1] But according to information recently cited by Vryonis[2] and whose accuracy can hardly be doubted, the population of Edessa about this time numbered 36,000. If we take this figure as the actual population of Edessa and use the formula of calculation which the author worked out, we will get for Antioch a population of just over 60,000 and for Syria as a whole a figure of about 4 million, 1.3 million more than the figure given by Russell. Accordingly, in the figures given by Russell there is indeed much room for doubt.

These are, as far as I know, the only attempts made to arrive at figures of the population of the empire at some of the periods of its existence. Boak's work, while giving some figures of the population of the empire at the time of Constantine, deals essentially with the west and is concerned primarily with the problem of manpower shortage, which he thinks was brought about by a decline in population.[3] A. H. M. Jones in his monumental work which covers the period from 284 to 602 delves into the matter of population, but with the exceptions of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch gives no figures.[4] And my own sketch, which discusses the problem in the thirteenth century, does no more than to point out that there was a decline. The figures which it gives relate to a few cities, including Constantinople.[5]

In one of his studies A. Andreades stated that on matters relating to the demography of the empire the sources are lacking. The statement has been challenged by D. Jacoby who has himself devoted two important works to the problem, one relating to the question of the size of the population of Constantinople and the other to the population of the countryside for the period covered by the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries.[6] In the latter work Jacoby seems to have taken his cue from Dölger, who, in the introduction to his edition of certain documents, *praktika*, relating to the monastery of Iveron, discussed among other things certain rural demographic phenomena which these documents reveal.[7] What Dölger pointed out in particular was that in certain villages, as, for instance, Gomatou in western Macedonia, certain conditions in the population after 1301 may be noticed: there is some decline in the number of households; new households make their appearance; but while some of the old ones disappeared, others continued to exist. And so, despite the fluidity in the agrarian population in the first half of the fourteenth century, caused by the general disturbance which characterized the period, there was nevertheless a certain degree of stability in the rural population of the empire. Jacoby's study, based on the same kind of documents, i.e. *praktika* and others of a similar nature, is more extensive and covers more villages but comes pretty much to the same conclusions. On the matter of numbers, of the twelve villages which Jacoby

[1] Ibid., p. 101.

[2] Speros Vryonis, 'Problems in the History of Byzantine Anatolia', *Ankara Üniv. D. T. C. Fakültesi Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Cilt I. (1963), p. 119, n. 21.

[3] A. E. R. Boak, *Manpower Shortage and the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West* (Ann Arbor, 1955), pp. 5–6. On Boak's book see the critical review by M. I. Finley, *Journal of Roman Studies*, xlviii (1958), pp. 156–64.

[4] A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602* (Oxford, 1964), ii, pp. 1040–45.

[5] P. Charanis, 'A Note on the Population and Cities of the Byzantine Empire in the Thirteenth Century', *The Joshua Starr Memorial Volume* (New York, 1953), pp. 135–48.

[6] D. Jacoby, 'Phénomènes de démographie rurale à Byzance aux XIIIe, XIVe et XVe siècles', *Études Rurales, École Pratique des Hautes Études* (Sorbonne), VIe Section (5–6) (1962), pp. 161–86.

[7] F. Dölger, 'Sechs byzantinische Praktika des 14. Jahrhunderts für das Athoskloster Iberon', *Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse*. Neue Folge, xxviii (1949), pp. 23–30.

studied only four seem to show a slight increase in population as between an earlier and a later date. The general picture is that of decline.

The documentation used by Dölger and Jacoby has thus been made to yield some rather interesting results. Knowing the nature of this documentation, however, and its fragmentary condition, it is hardly possible to expect that it can be made to produce any figures as to what the total rural population of the empire may have been at any one time during the period over which this documentation extends. As for the period not covered by this documentation, i.e. the period before the middle of the eleventh century, the task of arriving at any figure for the rural population of the empire is absolutely hopeless.

The social and economic structure of the Byzantine empire was predominately agrarian, but it was never just a society of villages. Numerous agglomerations of people, which, whatever their character, we may call cities, existed throughout the long history of the empire. The Byzantine city has recently become the subject of considerable discussion, but this discussion has been centred around two points: (1) the form and evolution of the Byzantine city[1] and (2) the question as to whether the Byzantine city did not cease to exist during the critical period in the history of the empire covered by the seventh and eighth centuries.[2] On the matter of population only Constantinople has been the subject of systematic discussion.

We need not go here into details with reference to the sources on the question of the size of the population of Constantinople. They have been repeatedly examined. Andreades, who was the first to study the problem systematically, at one time came to the conclusion that from the fourth to the twelfth century the population of the Byzantine capital must have rarely fallen below 500,000 souls, and at times must have approached the 800,000 or 1,000,000 mark.[3] Subsequently, however, he revised his figures. In a study published posthumously, he wrote, 'The population of Constantinople in its palmy days cannot have been under 500,000 souls and, occasionally perhaps, was in excess of that figure'.[4] In making the last statement Andreades was perhaps influenced by E. Stein who had in the meantime re-examined the problem and come to the conclusion that the population of Constantinople in the first quarter of the fifth century was probably in the neighbourhood of 250,000, but by the beginning of the reign of Justinian it must have risen to well over 500,000, very close indeed to 600,000 and perhaps more than this.[5] But the same Stein some years later, in a more general work to which reference has already been made, expressed the view that from the period of Justinian to 1204, when Constantinople was sacked by the Crusaders, its population was without doubt never inferior to 500,000 and may have at times reached the figure of 900,000.[6]

[1] See, for instance, the important study by Ernst Kirsten, 'Die byzantinische Stadt', *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress* (Munich, 1958), pp. 1–48. Also the discussion of this paper where additional bibliographical references are given: *Diskussions-Beiträge zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress* (Munich, 1961), pp. 75–102.

[2] George Ostrogorsky, 'Byzantine Cities in the Early Middle Ages', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xiii (1959), pp. 45–66. The problem of town and village was one of the subjects which was given full discussion at the twelfth international Congress held in Ochrida, Yugoslavia, in 1961: *Actes du XII Congrès International d'Études Byzantines* (Belgrade, 1963), i, pp. 1–44, 275–98. Some Russian scholars hold that the city in the Byzantine empire disappeared in the course of the seventh and eighth centuries, but this is not the generally accepted view.

[3] A. Andreades, 'De la population de Constantinople sous les empereurs byzantins', *Metron*, vol. i, no. 2 (1920), pp. 69–119. This is a revised and enlarged article which was published in Greek in 1917, and republished in his *Œuvres*, i (Athens, 1938), pp. 387–421.

[4] In *Byzantium*, ed. N. H. Baynes and H. St. L. B. Moss (Oxford, 1948), p. 53.

[5] Ernst Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, i (1959), pp. 128, 480, n. 194.

[6] 'Introduction à l'histoire . . .' (see p. 446, n. 3), p. 154.

Since Stein, if we except two or three incidental notices,[1] there have been two other systematic re-examinations of the question, one by J. C. Russell and the other by D. Jacoby. Russell puts the population of Constantinople at the height of its prosperity (the reign of Justinian before 541) at no more than 192,000,[2] and Jacoby thinks that it did not exceed 375,000, or at the most 400,000. Russell's figure is somewhat vitiated by calculations essentially hypothetical in nature and also by the fact that he interprets the 8,000,000 measuring units of grain, reported in Edict XIII, *c.* 8 of Justinian as the quantity which Egypt was required to furnish annually to Constantinople, to have been *modii*. To be sure the measuring unit in this instance is left out, but, as elsewhere in the same edict (*c.* 6) the *artaba*, a unit roughly three times as large as the *modius*, is specifically stated as the measuring unit, the *artaba* must have been meant. Now 8,000,000 *artabae* were enough to feed considerably more than 500,000 persons, indeed, according to Russell himself, 670,000. Jacoby's study, a piece of work most cautiously done,[3] takes into account and examines minutely all the material that there is, but in the final analysis what constitutes the basis of its calculations is the area of the city and the density of the population per hectare. This would work perfectly if the area and the density of the population per hectare were both known, but in the case before us, while the area given may be accepted as fairly accurate, the density is conjectural, based on elements — the existence in Constantinople of large public buildings, squares, gardens, open cisterns, and analogies with western medieval towns of a later period and with Ottoman Constantinople — whose significance in determining the density of population per hectare of Byzantine Constantinople is itself conjectural. Russell, using the same approach, comes out with entirely different figures from those given by Jacoby. Both Russell and Jacoby, in giving their estimates, do not take seriously the testimony of Procopius as to the number of victims of the pestilence which hit Constantinople in 541. Procopius, an eye-witness to the outbreak, says that the greatest virulence of the disease lasted three months, with between 5,000 and 10,000 and at times more dying each day.[4] If, taking this information, we strike an average

[1] R. S. Lopez puts the population of Constantinople between Heraclius and Leo VI (d. 912) at no more than 100,000. In arriving at this figure Lopez says that he used his 'own judgment and the preliminary data collected by [his] student John Teall': 'East and West in the Early Middle Ages, Economic Relations', *Relazioni del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche*, iii (Florence, 1955), p. 120, and note 1. When Lopez wrote this article, Teall had not yet published his work. It appeared in 1959: John L. Teall, 'The Grain Supply of the Byzantine Empire', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xiii (1959). He estimates the population of Constantinople as follows: 'probably 500,000 souls within the walls' in about 400 (p. 92); the disasters, ushered in by the reign of Heraclius, 'probably all but halved the population of Constantinople and its suburbs' (p. 100); 250,000 before the plague of 747 (pp. 104–5); attained probably its maximum population, i.e. over 500,000, in the tenth century (p. 106 et seq.). On page 134 Teall justifies his figures, but his references pertain only to the fifth century.

[2] Russell, op. cit., p. 66: about 147,880 as of the middle of the fifth century; p. 93: 'the city would have had about 192,000 persons at its height under Justinian'.

[3] D. Jacoby, 'La population de Constantinople à l'époque byzantine: un problème de démographie urbaine', *Byzantion*, xxxi (1961), pp. 81–109. For figures, pp. 107–8.

[4] Procopius, II. xxxiii. 1–3; for figures given by John of Ephesus, J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* (London, 1923), ii, pp. 64–65. Further outbreaks of the pestilence took place in 555, 558, 560–61, 585, and 608. Agathias (*Historia*, Bonn ed., p. 297), describing the outbreak of 558, says that tens of thousands died in Constantinople. Also Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. by J. Bidez and L. Parmentier (London, 1898), pp. 177–9. Writing about the pestilence of 585, a late oriental writer says that it carried away 400,000 of its inhabitants: Agapius de Menbidj, *Histoire Universelle*, tr. by A. A. Vasiliev, *Patrologia Orientalis*, viii (Paris, 1912), p. 439. This figure is, of course, an exaggeration, but it does indicate a populous city at the end of the sixth century. On the plague of the sixth century, see further John L. Teall, 'The

of 7,500 victims daily, this would mean that during the three months that the disease was at its greatest virulence something like 675,000 persons died. But even if, allowing for exaggeration, we reduce this figure by two thirds, we are still left with 225,000 victims. This figure is not at all impossible, if we assume, as we shall have to assume, a population larger than either Russell or Jacoby are willing to admit. How much larger is, of course, difficult to say, but Stein's estimate of close to 600,000 at the beginning of the reign of Justinian is, for the reasons he gives, very reasonable indeed.

The poet Ausonius,[1] writing sometime after 379, described twenty notable cities of the Roman world and ranked Constantinople immediately after Rome and ahead of Alexandria and Antioch. By the end of the first quarter of the fifth century, according to another writer of the period, Constantinople outstripped Rome both in wealth and numbers[2] and, of course, stayed ahead of Alexandria and Antioch, ranked by Ausonius about even. Beloch[3] has estimated the population of Alexandria in the period of Augustus at about 500,000 including slaves, but by the middle of the third century, as the result of the civil wars and pestilence, if we are to believe Eusebius, it diminished considerably.[4] Russell estimates the population of Alexandria at one period, after a document[5] somewhat similar to the *Notitia* of Constantinople, at 215,877 and for a later period at 121,948.[6] Neither period, because of the nature of the document, can be given chronological precision but in both cases it is before the end of the third century. Russell, however, is notoriously low in his estimates, and besides this there is a certain arbitrariness in the way he interprets this document. In any event before the end of the fourth century Alexandria had fallen behind Constantinople, and, if we are to believe Ausonius, was no larger than Antioch. Now, the population of Antioch towards the end of the fourth century probably did not exceed 200,000. Libanius says that it numbered 150,000 *anthropoi*, while John Chrysostom in one of his sermons, in a passage which has been variously interpreted, speaks of its *demos* as numbering 200,000.[7] Alexandria then, at the beginning of the fifth century, must be given a population of about 200,000. But it is quite possible that both cities grew in population in the course of the fifth century. The statement of Malalas that in the earthquake which hit Antioch in 526, 250,000 persons perished (Procopius puts this figure at 300,000) is no doubt an exaggeration, but does indicate a populous city. Another earthquake in 528, the sack of the city in 540 by Chosroes who carried many of its citizens away to found another Antioch

Barbarians in Justinian's Armies', *Speculum*, xl (1965), pp. 305–7. Teall minimizes the figures given by the historians, but cites official documents which show the destructiveness of the pestilence of 541–3.

[1] *Ordo Urbium Nobilium*, consulted in the edition of the works of Ausonius, *Loeb Classical Library*, vol. i (London, 1961).

[2] Sozomen, cxiii.

[3] J. Beloch, *Die Bevölkerung der griechisch-römischen Welt* (Leipzig, 1886), p. 479.

[4] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (Loeb Classical Library, London, 1932), ii, p. 183. Cf. Allan Chester Johnson, *Roman Egypt to the Reign of Diocletian* (Baltimore, 1936), p. 235.

[5] P. M. Fraser, 'A Syriac Notitia Urbis Alexandrinae', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, xxxvii (1951), pp. 103–8.

[6] Russell, op. cit., pp. 66–67.

[7] On the population of Antioch see G. Downey, 'The Size of the Population of Antioch', *American Philological Association: Transactions*, lxxxix (1958), pp. 84–91. Downey gives various figures found in the sources and various estimates given by modern scholars, but comes to no conclusion of his own. The passage of Chrysostom, he thinks, refers to the population of Antioch in the time of Bishop Ignatius of Antioch, who was martyred at Rome under Trajan, *c.* 100–117. This is difficult to believe, for Chrysostom, in talking to his audience, must have had in mind the city of his time, if they were to understand his allusions.

near Ctesiphon, the pestilence of the sixth century, and still another earthquake in 588, said to have killed 60,000 persons, must have reduced Antioch by the end of the sixth century to a mere shadow of what it had been at the beginning of that century. As for Alexandria, it is said that in 552, as a result of the riot which broke out over religion, 200,000 Monophysites were massacred;[1] and, according to an Arab writer, when it was first taken by the Arabs it numbered 600,000 inhabitants.[2] These are grossly exaggerated figures, of course, but they do suggest a populous city.[3]

The information which we have about the three principal cities of this early period of the empire has made possible certain estimates, however conjectural, of their population; but to pursue this inquiry into the numerous provincial towns would be a fruitless task. Apart from an isolated reference here and there, as for instance the statement of 'Joshua the Stylite' that when Amida was taken by the Persians during the reign of Anastasius more than 80,000 perished and many were led away,[4] or that of Theophanes to the effect that when the Persians captured Caesarea in 611/12 they took tens of thousands of prisoners,[5] there is simply no information. This at the end of the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh. As for the period that followed, i.e. the seventh and eighth centuries, the state of our information is much worse, indeed virtually non-existent.

This lack of information, and the radical changes that took place in the society of Byzantium in the seventh and eighth centuries, have led some scholars to the belief that the city in the Byzantine empire had ceased to exist during this period. This is not a tenable view, for while some cities did indeed disappear, in the Balkan peninsula especially, and others must have declined,[6] while still others, with the loss of Syria and Egypt, ceased to be under the jurisdiction of Byzantium, the city as a phenomenon of the Byzantine landscape continued nevertheless to exist. But if it is certain that cities continued to exist, it is equally certain that we know very little about them, especially as concerns the size of their population. It is only with the ninth century that we begin to find some references here and there; and though these references, as we enter the period covered by the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, become more numerous, they help us very little in determining the population of the cities to which they relate. Terms and expressions such as these: 'marvellous', 'great', 'populous', 'large', 'famous', 'city with a numerous population', or with 'a multitude of inhabitants', are frequently met with in the sources, particularly in those of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, but also of the tenth.[7] Obviously, while they may give us some idea of the importance

[1] Jean Maspero, *Histoire des Patriarches d'Alexandrie* (Paris, 1923), p. 163.

[2] Alfred J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Last Thirty Years of the Roman Dominion* (Oxford, 1902), p. 366, n. 3.

[3] A. H. M. Jones (op. cit., ii, p. 1040) estimates the population of Alexandria in the sixth century on the basis of its *annona* at between 250,000 and 375,000. He may be very close to the truth.

[4] *The Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*, tr. by W. Wright (Cambridge, 1882), pp. 42–43.

[5] Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883), ii, p. 594. The statement of Zonaras (xii, 23: Bonn ed., ii, p. 594) that about the middle of the third century Caesarea had a population of 400,000 seems fantastic.

[6] The following passage drawn from Arabic sources of the ninth century does indicate a reduction in the number of cities even in Asia Minor: 'In the days of old cities were numerous in Rūm but now they have become few. Most of the districts are prosperous and pleasant and have each an extremely strong fortress, on account of the frequency of the raids which the fighters for the faith direct upon them.' *Hudūd al-'Ālam: The Regions of the World*, tr. by V. Minorsky (London, 1937), p. 157.

[7] For instance, Nicaea: Theoph. Cont., Bonn ed., p. 464; Demetrias: John Cameniates, Bonn ed., p. 506; Trebizond: Maçoudi, *Les prairies d'or*, tr. by C. B. de Meynard et P. de

of the cities to which they relate, they are of no help in determining the size of the population.

Here and there, however, some figures are given which may help to conjecture an estimate, but the instances are very few. Both Greek and oriental sources agree in calling Amorium in Phrygia the greatest city of the empire next to Constantinople (probably of the cities in Asia Minor). Already in the eighth century it is referred to as a great city, a city of great extension.[1] At the time of its capture by the Arabs in 838 it is said by Mas'ūdi that 30,000 persons were killed, and according to another Arab writer many thousands were taken prisoners, many of whom were sold into slavery, while 6,000 of them were killed for lack of food and water as they were being led away to the Moslem lands. The figure of those killed while being led away did not include the wealthier element, presumably because they might be ransomed at a high price or exchanged for important Arabs held prisoners by the Byzantines.[2] One does not know how many of those killed or taken prisoners may have been villagers who had sought safety behind the walls of Amorium, but, with some allowance made for this, one may suppose, if the figures given are correct, that Amorium at the time of its capture by the Arabs in 838 may have had a population in the neighbourhood of 40,000 souls. We have some similar information about Thessalonica, called by Theophanes at the end of the eighth century the megalopolis of Illyricum. When this great city of the Greek peninsula was sacked by Leo of Tripolis in 904, 15,000 persons were killed while 30,000 more were taken prisoners and were eventually sold as slaves.[3] As most of the prisoners were made up of children, youths, and women, and in view of the later literary tradition that Thessalonica was indeed a most populous city, in this respect second only to Constantinople, one may suppose that its population at the beginning of the tenth century may have been as high as 100,000 and that in the course of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries it may have passed that figure.[4] A few more figures may be given. When the Turks took Erzeroum in 1049 they killed, it is said, 140,000 persons;[5] Edessa about 1071 is said to have had a population of 35,000;[6] the population of Nicaea has been put at between 25,000 and 30,000, while that of Prusa has been estimated at about 30,000.[7] Tralles, when reconstructed by Andronicus during the reign of his father, Michael VIII, was settled by 36,000 people.[8] The statistical information given by Benjamin of Tudela might have been very useful, if, besides giving the number of Jews who inhabited the cities which he visited, he had also given some idea of the ratio of the number of Jews to that of the rest of the population. Still, when he says that in the

Courteille, ii (Paris, 1904), p. 3; Claudiopolis in Galatia: Leo Diaconus, Bonn ed., p. 68; Attalia: H. Grégoire, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d'Asie Mineure*, i (Paris, 1922), p. 104, n. 304. Also on Attalia and Trebizond: Ibn Hauqal in A. Vasiliev–H. Grégoire, *Byzance et les Arabes*, ii, 2 (Brussels, 1950), p. 414.

[1] Ghevond, *Histoire des guerres et des conquêtes des Arabes en Arménie*, tr. from Armenian by G. V. Chahnazarian (Paris, 1856), p. 151; Michael Syrus, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199)*, ed. and tr. by J. B. Chabot, iii (Paris, 1905), p. 95; Yaqubi, in Vasiliev–Grégoire, *Byzance et les Arabes*, i (Brussels, 1935), p. 275.

[2] V. Vasilievsky and P. Nikitin, *Skazaniya o 42 Amoriiskikh Mučenikakh* (*Martyres XLII Amorienses*) (=Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences de St. Pétersbourg, VIIIe serie, classe historico-philologique, vol. vii. no. 52. St. Pétersbourg, 1905), pp. 4, 11, 42, 71; Vasiliev–Grégoire, op. cit., pp. 275, 294–5, 172, 173, 332, 337.

[3] H. Grégoire, 'Le communiqué arabe sur la prise de Thessalonique (904)', *Byzantion*, xxii (1952), pp. 373–5.

[4] Cf. Charanis, 'A Note on the Population . . .', 140.

[5] Cedrenus, Bonn ed., ii, p. 558.

[6] Vyronis, op. cit., p. 119, n. 21.

[7] Charanis, op. cit., pp. 144–5.

[8] Ibid., p. 145.

city of Thebes there were 2,000 Jews, we are entitled to suppose that the population of that city may have been 10,000 and perhaps more.[1]

The figures given here are really of no great significance compared to the relatively large number of cities which are attested to have existed at different periods of the empire. Nor can we turn to archaeology for help. We must agree, therefore, with Kirsten that 'estimates of the number of inhabitants of cities or of their losses . . . are not possible. For even when the perimeter of a city fortification is preserved, the proportions of the surface actually covered with houses, as well as the number of the houses, cannot be determined'.[2] Thus it is absolutely impossible to estimate on the basis of the extant sources the total urban population of the empire at any one period of its existence. As pointed out above, it is also impossible to give any estimate of the total rural population of the empire. This in turn makes it impossible to give any figures as to what the total population of the empire at any one time may have been. All we can say is that at times Byzantium was a great power, and as a great power it must have had a population whose size must have been considerable.

But if it is not possible to determine in figures the size of the population of the empire at any one period of its existence, it is possible nevertheless to discern certain trends. The view is generally accepted that the Roman empire suffered serious losses in population during the third century, and that these losses continued on into the fourth and fifth centuries. These losses were apparently greater in the west than in the east, but the east suffered also. We have already noted the decline in the population of Alexandria in the course of the third century; the Egyptian countryside seems also to have suffered;[3] and there are indications that there was some decline also along the western coast of Asia Minor and in the islands of the Aegean.[4] By the end of the fourth century, however, this process of decline (we are thinking of the regions which constituted the eastern empire only) seems to have come to an end, with a recovery taking place in the century that followed. The indications attesting to this recovery are few, but unmistakable. The researches of Tchalenko into the highlands of northern Syria between Cyrrhus, Antioch, Apamea, and Chalcis *ad Belum* have revealed a prosperous countryside, especially for the period between 450 and 550.[5] The diocese of Cyrrhus, a territory of about 1,600 square miles, is said by Theodoret, its famous bishop in the early part of the fifth century, to have had 800 parishes of orthodox Christians. Taking the number 250 as the average for each parish, Cumont, who was the first to make use of the information given by Theodoret, puts the population of the diocese of Cyrrhus during the period of the bishopric of Theodoret at 200,000, and this without taking into account the heretics who apparently were many but for whom no figure is given.[6] Another scholar, applying the number of inhabitants per square mile which these figures give, comes to the conclusion that Syria, including Palestine and Trans-

[1] Benjamin of Tudela, *Travels*, in Manuel Komroff, *Contemporaries of Marco Polo* (New York, 1932), p. 262. Benjamin calls Thebes a large city.

[2] Kirsten, op. cit., p. 46.

[3] Arthur E. R. Boak, 'The Population of Roman and Byzantine Karanis', *Historia*, iv (1955), pp. 157–62.

[4] A. H. M. Jones, 'Census Records of the Later Roman Empire', *Journal of Roman Studies*, xliii (1953), pp. 49–64.

[5] Georges Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du nord. Le massif du Belus à l'époque romaine*, i (Paris, 1953), pp. 422 et seq.

[6] Franz Cumont, 'The Population of Syria', *Journal of Roman Studies*, xxiii (1933), pp. 187–90.

jordania, must have had a population of something like 10,000,000, almost twice as much as the estimates given by Beloch.[1] This figure is probably too large, but the fact that the diocese of Cyrrhus, a great deal of which was barren hill country, may have had more than 200,000 inhabitants in the early part of the fifth century offers some proof that Syria, whatever its losses in population — if any — as the result of the crises of the third century, had recovered, at least to some extent, by the end of the fourth century. On Egypt the information is of a different type, but here again we are justified in supposing an increase of, or at least a stability in, its population following the decline which may have taken place in the third century. At the time of its conquest by the Arabs, we are told, there were 6,000,000 Egyptians, not including women, old men, and boys below the age of puberty, subject to the poll tax.[2] This compares favourably with the figure given by Josephus who says that during the reign of Nero the population of Egypt, not including Alexandria, numbered 7,500,000.[3] We have no figures on Asia Minor, but given the fact that the fifth century was free of any pestilence and that at the same time, besides a minor skirmish, there were no invasions by the Persians, Asia Minor too must have more than recovered whatever ground it might have lost in population in the course of the third century. Only in the Balkan peninsula, as the result of the repeated and devastating raids of the barbarians, do we have a definite decline. For this we have no less an authority than the emperor Anastasius himself who noted officially that the incursions of the barbarians had reduced the agricultural population of Thrace.[4] But the population of the Balkan peninsula in relation to the population of the oriental provinces, including Egypt, must have been very small, and hence the decline that it may have suffered could not have affected very materially the population of the empire as a whole. One may say, therefore, that by the beginning of the sixth century the combined population of the regions which constituted the eastern empire was larger than the combined population of the same regions at the beginning of the fourth century.

A new chapter in the demographic evolution of the empire began in 541. In that year broke out the great pestilence so vividly described by Procopius and which, at intervals, continued to manifest itself down to the end of the sixth century. A modern scholar has estimated the loss in population by 600 as a result of this pestilence at 40 per cent for the Balkan peninsula and Asia Minor, and at 10 per cent for Syria and Egypt. How he arrived at these figures I do not know and in general I distrust his estimates, but there can be little doubt, even if we show the greatest reserve in accepting the testimony of Procopius, John of Ephesus, and Evagrius, that the loss of life was great.[5] And this at a time when the Persians were devastating the eastern provinces, looting their villages, and emptying their cities of their inhabitants, while Kotrigurs, Utigurs, and then Avars were turning the Balkan peninsula into a desert, destroying its cities and making it ready for its occupation by the Slavs.[6]

This depopulation, particularly of the Balkan peninsula, explains why some emperors, especially Tiberius and Maurice, sought to remedy the evil by transferring

[1] F. M. Heichelheim, 'Roman Syria' in Tenney Frank (ed.), *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, iv (Baltimore, 1938), p. 158.
[2] Eutychius, *Annales*, *P.G.* cxi. col. 1105.
[3] Josephus, *De Bello Judaico*, II. xvi. 4. Cf. Johnson, *Roman Egypt* . . ., pp. 245 et seq.
[4] *Codex Justinianus*, X, xxvii, 2.
[5] See above, p. 449, n. 3; Russell, op. cit., p. 148.
[6] P. Charanis, 'Ethnic Changes in the Byzantine Empire in the Seventh Century', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xiii (1959), p. 39, n. 99.

people from the newly acquired regions of Armenia to Thrace and elsewhere.[1] In these transfers many motives were involved, but the military and economic were the dominant ones: to furnish the lands where the transferred people were settled with soldiers for their defence, but also with the necessary manpower for the revival of their economic life. This is made clear by the statement of Evagrius in connexion with the transfer of 10,000 Armenians to Cyprus in 578: 'Thus land which previously had not been tilled was everywhere restored to cultivation. Numerous armies also were raised from among them and they fought resolutely and courageously against other nations. At the same time every household was completely furnished with domestics because of the easy rate at which slaves were provided.'[2]

We need not enter here into details concerning the big political and military events of the seventh century. These are well known matters, at least in broad outline, and can be found in any general manual on Byzantine history. The immediate demographic consequences of these events are also obvious. The loss of Egypt, Syria and, by the end of the seventh century, Armenia deprived the empire of millions of inhabitants. In Egypt alone, as we have pointed out, the loss in population amounted to more than 6,000,000 souls. Meanwhile the Balkan peninsula was flooded with Slavs to such an extent that Thrace south of the Balkan mountains, Thessalonica and its immediate surroundings, Attica, the eastern Peloponnesus, certain points on the Adriatic, and the Aegean islands were the only regions left under the direct and effective jurisdiction of the empire.[3] Here, too, the immediate effect of the new developments was to reduce the population controlled by the empire.

Asia Minor was saved, but not without a protracted struggle in the course of which the countryside was ravaged and thousands of inhabitants were killed or carried off to slavery.[4] After the Byzantine victory at Acroinon in 740, said to have been decisive in the saving of Asia Minor, the Arab invasions of Asia Minor took the form of raids, but not just along the frontier; they often went deep into the peninsula. These raids were in general conducted for booty, but this booty included people and often involved the killing of thousands of inhabitants of the regions affected. Reference has already been made to the thousands that were taken prisoners at the time of the capture of Amorium and to the many more thousands that were killed. But Amorium was not an isolated instance. In a homily probably delivered in 864 at the time of the inauguration by the emperor Michael III of the palatine church of Our Lady of the Pharos, the Byzantine patriarch Photius declared that the emperor 'reerected subject cities which have long lain low, and built others from the

[1] On these transfers see P. Charanis, 'The Transfer of Population as a Policy in the Byzantine Empire', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, iii. No. 2 (1961), p. 141.

[2] Evagrius, op. cit.; the translation is taken from the English version of Evagrius which appeared in Bohn's Ecclesiastical Library: Theodoret and Evagrius, *History of the Church* (London, 1854), p. 444.

[3] An old theory that Slavs did not settle south of the Danube until the reign of Phocas, now generally rejected, has been revived by Ion Nestor: 'La pénétration des Slaves dans la péninsule balkanique et la Grèce continentale. Considérations sur les recherches historiques et archéologiques I', *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, i (1963), pp. 41–69. Nestor's arguments are not convincing. For the Slavs in Greece see Charanis, 'Ethnic Changes . . .', pp. 40–41. I am pleased to see that Paul Lemerle has accepted my view, except for some minor reservations not really tenable, of the soundness of the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* as a historical source; 'La Chronique improprement dite de Monemvasie: Le contexte historique et légendaire', *Revue des Études Byzantines*, xxi (1963), pp. 5–49.

[4] On the Arab raids in Asia Minor from 641 to 743 see E. W. Brooks, 'The Arabs in Asia Minor (641–750) from Arabic Sources', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, xviii (1898), pp. 182–208. Also H. Arhweiler, 'L'Asie Mineure et les invasions arabes (VIIe–IXe siècles)', *Revue Historique*, ccxxvii (1962), pp. 1–32.

foundations, and re-peopled others and made the boundaries secure for the towns'.[1] This was a homily delivered before, and addressed to, the emperor and hence allowance should be made for rhetorical exaggerations. It is known from inscriptions, however, that Michael III, probably about 858–9, reconstructed Ancyra and that he also restored Nicaea.[2] About Ancyra we know that it was devastated by the Arabs in 806, restored by Nicephorus I, and devastated again in 838 during the reign of Theophilus.[3] There is some evidence that other towns seem to have suffered considerably. Pergamon, taken by the Arabs at the beginning of the eighth century, seems to have undergone a serious decline during the Isaurian period, while Nyssa in Cappadocia was in a state of ruin about the middle of the ninth century.[4] And in 863 Amisos, the important seaport on the coast of the Black Sea, was taken and ravaged. Indeed the entire Armeniac theme was devastated.[5] Along the frontier both Lycandos and Tzamandos are said to have been abandoned, and a whole region, whose location is not exactly known, but which is probably to be identified with Sobesos-Suveš, south-west of Caesereia, and was called Symposion, had been reduced to a desert. This region, re-peopled by Armenians under the leadership of Melias, who had reconstructed both Lycandos and Tzamandos, was included in the theme Lycandos, organized during the reign of Leo VI.[6]

Meanwhile the western and north-western coastal region of Asia Minor must have also suffered. As is well known, the Arabs seized the peninsula of Cyzicus in 670 and made it the basis of operations for their attacks on Constantinople, which began in earnest in 674 and lasted until 678. During this period they lived on the country which they must have devastated terribly. That their incursions left wide open spaces in this part of Asia Minor can be easily inferred from the fact that numerous new peoples were settled there by action of the government. The settlement in 691 of the Cypriots in the region of Cyzicus by Justinian II,[7] the settlement of thousands of Slavs in Bithynia by the same emperor, and yet more thousands (208,000) settled by Constantine V in the eighth century about the Artanas River, a little stream which flows into the Black Sea west of the Sangarius and not far from the Bosphorus, are facts too well known to need detailed elucidation.[8] The new settlements were no doubt effected in part for military purposes, but also in order to re-people and rehabilitate regions which had become sparsely inhabited. The conquest of Crete by the Arabs in 827 or 828, and the subsequent Arab raids in the

[1] C. Mango (tr.), *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 185.

[2] H. Grégoire, 'Inscriptions historiques byzantines', *Byzantion*, iv (1927–28), pp. 437–49. For Nicaea, A. M. Schneider and W. Karnapp, *Die Stadtmauer von Iznik* (Nicaea) (Berlin, 1938), pp. 51–52. Also A. M. Schneider, 'The City Walls of Nicaea', *Antiquity*, xii (1938), p. 441.

[3] Vasiliev–Grégoire, *Byzance et les Arabes*, i, pp. 144 et seq. On Ancyra, see also Cedrenus, ii, p. 34, where it is said that Ancyra was reconstructed by Nicephorus I, but then destroyed again by the Arabs shortly afterwards.

[4] Vasiliev–Grégoire, *Byzance et les Arabes*, i, p. 152.

[5] Ibid., p. 250.

[6] P. Charanis, *The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire* (Lisbon, 1963), pp. 29–30. For the possible identification of Symposion with Sobesos–Suveš see H. Grégoire, 'Notes épigraphiques', *Byzantion*, viii (1933), pp. 86–87. Cf. R. J. H. Jenkins (ed.), *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De Administrando Imperio*, ii. *Commentary* (London, 1962), p. 190.

[7] Charanis, 'Transfer of Population . . .', 143.

[8] See Charanis, 'The Slavic Element in Byzantine Asia Minor in the Thirteenth Century', *Byzantion*, xviii (1946–48), pp. 70–71. Cf. 'Ethnic Changes . . .', p. 43, where I accept the correction made by Maricq and Ostrogorsky. In my 'Slavic Element . . .' I downgraded the figure of 208,000 Slavs, who, according to Nicephorus, were settled by Constantine V. It should perhaps be taken at its face value.

Aegean which left some of the islands virtually uninhabited, must have also affected the coast of Asia Minor.[1]

The last word has not yet been said on Byzantine Asia Minor, and least of all on the fluctuations of its population. It may be taken, however, as very probable that from about the middle of the sixth century a decline set in in the number of its inhabitants and that the decline continued, now less, now more, throughout the seventh, the eighth, and at least the first half of the ninth centuries. The emperors were aware of this and tried to remedy the situation by the settlement of new peoples, but whether these settlements fully made up for the losses is highly questionable. It is more than probable, therefore, that the population of Asia Minor at the end of the fifth century was much more numerous than it was in the middle of the ninth. There must have been some increase, however, beginning with the second half of the ninth century and in the course of the tenth; this increase may have continued until the appearance of the Turks and the consequent debacle of Byzantine power in Asia Minor in the second half of the eleventh century. Our information for this is meagre, but we know at least that Asia Minor was no longer subjected to the almost continuous Arab raids which in the centuries before contributed so much to the thinning of its population. There are a few references to the existence of some fairly large and prosperous cities. There was an increase in the number of episcopal sees.[2] And, as Ostrogorsky remarks, the insatiable drive of the landed aristocracy for more land presupposes a certain degree of abundance of agricultural labour.[3] Then, too, the influx of the Armenians, which started about the middle of the tenth century and continued into the eleventh, however it may have disturbed the ethnic stability of Asia Minor, must have increased the number of its inhabitants.[4] It is understood, of course, that the reference, territorially speaking, is still to the Asia Minor before the great Byzantine expansion. That expansion, which eventually came to include all of Armenia and northern Syria, gave to the empire in its Asiatic possessions a population much more numerous than it had possessed at any other time since the great losses to the Arabs in the seventh century.

In Europe the occupation of the Balkan peninsula by the Slavs probably had the effect of increasing rather than decreasing the population as a whole. But for at least two centuries the empire profited very little, except indirectly, to the extent that it was able to seize Slavs and settle them in Asia Minor. Constantinople itself, which had no doubt recovered from the destructive pestilence of the sixth century, suffered another blow, the pestilence of 746–7, which so reduced its population that the emperor Constantine V found it necessary to transfer a number of people from the Aegean islands and from elsewhere in the empire, including Greece, in order to re-people it.[5] Thrace, which had escaped Slavic occupation, was apparently sparsely populated. This may be inferred from the fact that the thousands of Armenians and Monophysite Syrians who had been gathered by the Byzantine armies at the time of the reign of Constantine V (741–75) during their raids in the regions of Germanicea (Marash), Miletene, and Erzeroum, were settled in Thrace.

[1] K. M. Setton, 'On the Raids of the Moslems in the Aegean in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries and their Alleged Occupation of Athens', *American Journal of Archaeology*, lviii (1954), pp. 311–19; George C. Miles, 'Byzantium and the Arabs: Relations in Crete and the Aegean Area', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xviii (1964), pp. 5–10.

[2] Cf. Ahrweiler, op. cit., pp. 28 et seq.

[3] G. Ostrogorsky, 'Das Steuersystem im byzantinischen Altertum und Mittelalter', *Byzantion*, vi (1931), p. 233.

[4] Charanis, *The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire*, pp. 29, 31–33.

[5] Charanis, 'Transfer of Population . . .', p. 144.

Some years later, during the reign of Leo IV, thousands more — 150,000, according to an oriental source — were seized by a raiding expedition into Cilicia and Syria and were also settled in Thrace. In making these settlements the emperors involved no doubt thought of the protection of Thrace, but if Thrace was reasonably densely populated, there would have been no need to bring settlers from the outside. The people seized could have very well been settled in Asia Minor, as indeed some of them were.[1]

Ostrogorsky, in an article published in 1952, formulated the theory that 'the gradual establishment of the Byzantine thematic system in the Balkan peninsula reflects . . . the process of the gradual establishment of Byzantine authority in certain Balkan regions from which it had been driven out by the Slavic migrations'.[2] This theory is not entirely correct, for Thrace, central Greece (at least Attica), and the eastern Peloponnesus were not occupied by the Slavs, and yet they were not erected into themes until some time after the Slavic migration: Thrace, some time between 680 and 687, probably as a measure against the Bulgars who had already established themselves south of the Danube; Hellas, after 687, but not later than 695, probably to resist the pressure of the Slavs; and the Peloponnesus, some time before 780, probably as the result of the reorganization of the command in the Aegean.[3] But in general it may be conceded that where the theme organization did not exist, there, too, the jurisdiction of Byzantium was not effective. On this basis it was not until about the middle of the ninth century that the empire re-established its effective jurisdiction over the coastal regions of the Balkan peninsula, along the Aegean and the Adriatic to a point somewhat north of Dyrrhachium. Meanwhile, the theme of the Peloponnesus was extended to include the western part of that peninsula, long occupied by Slavs, and its population was strengthened by the settlement of new peoples, Greeks brought from Calabria, and a variety of other peoples, brought from other parts of the empire.

The question of how populous the Balkan regions now definitely under the effective jurisdiction of the empire were depends on two other questions: how numerous were the Slavs who had come to settle there and to what extent the older population had been eliminated. To both these questions there is really no answer. Most of the Slavs, it may be recalled, settled in the interior of the Balkan peninsula, but there are notable indications in the sources that significant numbers of Slavs settled at various times around the lower Strymon, in the region of Thessalonica, in Epirus, in Thessaly, in central Greece, and in the Peloponnesus. However, they could not have been overwhelmingly numerous compared to what was left of the original population, which must have suffered terribly by their coming, for, if they had been so numerous, they would not have lost their identity as most of them did, though the process took a long time. Accordingly, if we assume, as we have indeed assumed, that Thrace was sparsely populated, and take into account the destructiveness of the pestilence of 746–7, and consider the fact that urban life in some of the regions newly integrated had been reduced to a minimum, we shall not be far from the truth if we conclude that the Balkan regions of the empire, which by the middle of the ninth century had come effectively under its jurisdiction,

[1] Charanis, 'Transfer of Population . . .', p. 144.

[2] Ostrogorsky, 'Postanak Tema Helada i Peloponez', *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta SAN*, i (1952), p. 64. This work was translated for me by Michael Petrovich.

[3] On the Peloponnesus see P. Charanis, 'Hellas in the Greek Sources of the Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Centuries', *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.* (Princeton, 1955), pp. 174 et seq.

could not have been very populous. The efforts of the emperors to strengthen the population of some of these regions, as for instance the western Peloponnesus by Nicephorus I,[1] and Thrace by Constantine V and his successor,[2] were offset at least to some degree by the depredations of the Bulgarians, particularly by those of Krum. It is only towards the end of the ninth century that we begin to notice some degree of greater activity, but this is a matter to which we shall come back.

The Seljuk assault, begun already during the first half of the eleventh century, culminated, as is well known, in the battle of Manzikert in 1071, an event which broke the power of the Byzantines in Asia Minor. There was a partial recovery under Alexius Comnenus, but already by the middle of the twelfth century there are serious signs indicating that the part of Asia Minor under Byzantine control was internally in a state of decay. Dorylaion, which at one time had been a city of some size, was by the end of the reign of Manuel I in complete ruin;[3] so were Sublaeum,[4] Attalia,[5] Ephesus,[6] Nicomedia,[7] and perhaps Tralles[8] and also Pergamon, which earlier in the century seems to have been in a flourishing position. With the foundation of the empire of Nicaea a certain recovery no doubt took place, but the situation worsened in the course of the second half of the thirteenth century. It is said that the Meander region became a desert, with no inhabitants, not even monks, left.[9] Nor was the situation in the Cayster, Hermus, and Caicus regions much better. Pergamon, early in the fourteenth century, was certainly completely in ruins, as was Smyrna.[10] Conditions were no better farther north in the region of the Sangarius. It is well known that many Christians fled from these regions and sought refuge in the European possessions of the empire.[11] The cause of all this, of course, was the push of the Turks towards the coast. This push caused desolation and drove out many of the inhabitants, but it would be a mistake to claim that it emptied all the country completely of its Christian population. In the fourteenth century we find many Greeks in the Osmanli realm[12] and also in Attalia,[13] which apparently, in its new location, prospered under Moslem rule.

In the European possessions of the empire the demographic evolution was somewhat different. There, as in the orient, the destruction of the Bulgarian kingdom and

[1] Charanis, 'Nicephorus I, the Savior of Greece from the Slavs', *Byzantina–Metabyzantina*, i, pt 1 (1946), pp. 79 et seq. Nicephorus I is also said to have rebuilt Thebes: Cedrenus, ii, p. 34.

[2] In the Arab work known as *Khitab al Uyun*, composed sometime after the middle of the eleventh century, but based in part on Arab writers of the ninth century, we have the following passage on Thrace, that part of Thrace, no doubt, nearest to Constantinople: 'And, when Maslama had encamped at Kustantiniyya, he blockaded the inhabitants and attacked them with siege engines. . . . And the district of Marakiya [Thrace] was at that time waste . . .; but at the present time is well-peopled'. E. W. Brooks, 'The Campaign of 716–718 from Arabic Sources', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, xix (1899), p. 23. Brooks in note 6 of that page remarks: ' "At the present day" therefore means soon after 800'. But this must have been before the devastation by Krum.

[3] Cinnamus, *Historia*, Bonn ed., p. 294.

[4] Nicetas Choniates, *Historia*, Bonn ed., p. 229.

[5] Edrisi, *Géographie*, tr. by P. A. Jaubert, ii (Paris, 1840), p. 134.

[6] Ibid., p. 303.

[7] Ibid., p. 299.

[8] Charanis, 'A Note on the Population . . .', p. 145.

[9] Pachymeres, *Historia*, i, Bonn ed., p. 310.

[10] *Voyage d'Ibn Batoutah*, tr. by C. Defrémery et B. R. Sanguinetti, ii (Paris, 1914), p. 315 for Pergamon, p. 310 for Smyrna.

[11] Pachymeres, ii, p. 389.

[12] G. G. Arnakis, 'Captivity of Gregory Palamas by the Turks and Related Documents as Historical Sources', *Speculum*, xxvi (1951), pp. 114–16.

[13] Ibn Batoutah, 258–60.

the consequent territorial extension of the empire added, of course, considerably to its population. But a revival had already set in by the beginning of the tenth century. In Greece Corinth,[1] Patras, Lacedemon, Thebes,[2] Athens, and farther north Demetrias,[3] and Serres, to give a few examples, began to show considerable activity. Thessalonica seems to have recovered fully from the disaster of 904, for an Arab traveller early in the tenth century refers to it as a 'huge and large' city.[4] And there is the reference in Cecaumenus to a populous city in Hellas which the Bulgar Symeon tried to take.[5] Unfortunately he does not name the city. The Bulgar wars under Symeon and Samuel may have retarded somewhat the process of growth. Arethas of Caesarea, for instance, wondered if the Cadmeia of Thebes still stood after the incursions of Symeon.[6] And a passage in the life of St Peter of Argos, no doubt referring to the campaign of the Bulgarians during the reign of Symeon, reads: 'barbarians for three years possessed the Peloponnesus; they massacred many people and thoroughly devastated the whole country, completely destroying the traces of former wealth and good order.'[7] Notice the expression 'former wealth and good order,' which shows that the Peloponnesus was clearly on the road to recovery after the dark period of the earlier centuries. The Bulgarian wars caused, of course, hardships, shifting of population and loss of life elsewhere as well, but once they were over a period of relative prosperity and growth in population seem to have set in. P. Tivčev in a recent article[8] mentions a number of cities, described by the sources of the twelfth century by one or more of the following terms: 'megalopolis', 'well-peopled', 'populous', 'prosperous', 'beautiful', 'wealthy', 'famous'. The cities he cites are Corinth, Athens, Thebes, Larissa, Kitros, Janina, Castoria, Thessalonica, Serres, Zichna, Philippi, Rodosto, Mossinopolis, Demotica, Adrianople, Serdica (Sofia), Philippopolis, Niš. To them I may add Lacedemon, Libadhia, Demetrias, Armyros, Carystos, Ochrida, Scopia, Christopolis, Drama, Selymbria, Heracleia, Gallipoli, Panados.[9] Edrisi, from whose work most of the information referring to these cities is derived, adds further that the Peloponnesus was very prosperous, and that one could count in it about fifty cities among which sixteen were very important.[10] One is tempted to say, especially when one recalls that it was about this time that Vlachs and Albanians appear in numbers, that the Balkan regions effectively controlled by the empire were more populous in the twelfth century than ever before in their history. But all this was shattered by the foundation of the second Bulgarian kingdom, the Fourth Crusade, and the disasters of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This is a period into which we shall not enter,

[1] On the evolution of Corinth see R. L. Scranton, *Medieval Architecture in the Central Area of Corinth* (Corinth XVI) (Princeton, 1957), pp. 33, 49, 67, 83.

[2] Patras, Lacedemon, Thebes, rebuilt and re-peopled by Nicephorus I; see p. 559, n. 8 above.

[3] Cameniates, p. 506.

[4] A. Vasiliev, 'Harun-Ibn-Yahya and his Description of Constantinople', *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, v (1932), p. 162. Cf. Grégoire's review in *Byzantion*, vii (1932), pp. 666–73.

[5] Cecaumeni *Strategicon* et incerti scriptoris *De officiis regiis Libellus*, ed. V. Vasilievsky and V. Jernstedt (St. Petersburg, 1896), pp. 32–33.

[6] N. Bees, 'The Incursions of the Bulgars under Tsar Symeon and the Related Scholia of Arethas of Caesarea' [in Greek], *Hellenica*, i (1928), p. 337.

[7] A. A. Vasiliev, 'The "Life" of St. Peter of Argos and its Historical Significance', *Traditio*, v (1947), pp. 173 et seq.

[8] T. Tivčev, 'Sur les cités byzantines aux XIe–XIIe siècles', *Byzantino-Bulgarica*, i (1962), pp. 145–82.

[9] Edrisi, pp. 125, 512, 296, 296, 295, 288, 289, 298, 298, 297, 297. The page references correspond to the order of the cities given in the text.

[10] Ibid., p. 124.

hoping that the remarks which we made at the beginning of this paper will suffice.

We may now summarize the fluctuations of the population of the empire as follows. At the beginning of the sixth century the combined population of the regions which constituted the eastern empire was more than the combined population of the same regions at the beginning of the fourth century. A decline set in in 541 and this decline continued, or at the most there was no appreciable increase, down to about the middle of the ninth century. Meanwhile the empire suffered huge losses in population by the conquests of the Arabs and the occupation of virtually all the Balkan peninsula by the Slavs. A new era began towards the end of the ninth century and lasted till 1071. The huge territorial expansion of the empire during this period added, of course, greatly to its population, but there was also an increase in the old provinces. The loss of the eastern provinces following Manzikert decreased the population of the empire, but there was also a decline in the course of the twelfth century in that part of Asia Minor which had been recovered by Alexius Comnenus and his immediate successor. In the Balkan peninsula, beginning with the end of the ninth century, but especially after the Bulgarian wars, a definite increase set in and this increase continued almost down to the end of the twelfth century. No figures can be given for any one of these periods.

In his account of the revolt of Thomas the Slavonian (820–23) against the emperor Michael II, the Byzantine historian Genesius lists a variety of peoples from whom the armies of the rebels had been drawn: Saracens, Indians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Medes, Abasgians, Zichs, Vandals, Getae, Alans, Chaldoi, Armenians, adherents of the heretical sects of the Paulicians and Athinganoi.[1] I have often quoted this statement because it reflects better than any other passage found in the sources the multi-national character of the Byzantine empire. It is a well-known fact that in its long history the Byzantine empire was never a true national state with an ethnically homogeneous population. The territorial losses of the seventh century, it is true, deprived the empire of huge groups of non-Greek speaking elements, but these groups were replaced by others. In the Balkan peninsula, among the new peoples, the Slavs were the most numerous, though it took some time before they came under the effective jurisdiction of the empire. But, as we have already pointed out, there were others, settled there for military, demographic, and cultural reasons by the central imperial authorities. These included Armenians in Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece; Monophysite Syrians in Thrace; Turks in Macedonia and Thrace; Mardaites in the Peloponnesus, in the island of Cephalonia, and in Epirus; and perhaps Persians also, though exactly where we do not know.[2] There were also some Jews.[3] The ethnic situation became more complicated by the appearance (beginning in the eleventh century) of Albanians and Vlachs, descendants of the Latinized Illyrians and Daco-Thracians, whom the Slavs had pushed into the mountains when they occupied the Balkan peninsula in the late-sixth and in the seventh centuries. The Vlachs were particularly numerous and aggressive. Towards the end of the twelfth century they were responsible for the foundation of the second Bulgarian kingdom at the expense of the empire. Only along the Aegean coast, in Greece proper, the Aegean and Ionian islands, and the Thracian regions near

[1] Genesius, *Historia*, Bonn ed., p. 33.
[2] Charanis, 'The Transfer of Population . . .', pp. 140–54.
[3] On the Jews in the Byzantine empire the fundamental book is still that of Joshua Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire* (Athens, 1939).

Constantinople and on the Black Sea coast was the Greek-speaking element predominant as the empire reached the apogee of its territorial extent and power. Slavs, of course, had settled in Greece,[1] but we may consider unfortunate a recent serious attempt to revive the theory of Fallmerayer.[2] The fact that these Slavs were absorbed and lost their identity and language — though in certain regions, such as the western Peloponnesus, they had remained undisturbed for over two hundred years — is in itself proof that they had not destroyed or driven out completely the native Greek element. Besides, the same sources which speak of the destructiveness of the Slavs state also that many of the native Greeks found refuge in other parts of the invaded regions. In the Hellenization of the Slavs in Greece the imperial government did indeed, as I have shown elsewhere, play a role,[3] but it is unthinkable that its efforts alone, without a considerable native Greek element to back them up, would have succeeded as thoroughly as they did. Books, the church, and the administration could hardly have perpetuated so many elements of Greek folk-lore and so many Greek names of 'hills and rocks, streams and gullies, capes and bays, cultivated plants and woods'.[4]

The ethnic situation in Asia Minor was somewhat different, but not radically so. There the ancient native population finally lost its identity, and Greek became the language spoken by the people, however different the racial antecedents of these peoples may have been.[5] But in Asia Minor, too, many new ethnic elements had been introduced. Goths who had been settled there are known to have existed down to the beginning of the eighth century, though by then they may have been partly Hellenized. The Vandals, mentioned by Genesius in the passage we have quoted, may have been the descendants of the Vandals settled in Asia Minor by Justinian. Towards the end of the seventh century and again about the middle of the eighth, thousands of Slavs, as we have already stated, were brought into Bithynia. How long these Slavs retained their identity cannot be determined, but elements of them are known to have existed down to the tenth century. A Bulgarian settlement near Ephesus is claimed for the eleventh century. Farther down, in the south-western corner of Asia Minor there existed in the tenth century a colony inhabited by a people called Mauroi (Black), whose rough behaviour toward the natives betrays their alien character and perhaps also the recent origin of their settlement. Who these Mauroi were is not known, but they may have been, as Rudakov suggests, Arabs from Africa who were settled in this part of Asia Minor in order to serve in the navy. Mardaites and also thousands of Saracens from the East were settled in Asia Minor.[6] In the twelfth century Serbs were brought to Asia Minor and in the

[1] To the large literature on the invasion of Greece by the Slavs I may add two recent items: Homer A. Thompson, 'Athenian Twilight: A.D. 267–600', *Journal of Roman Studies*, xlix (1959), pp. 61–72; D. M. Metcalf, 'The Slavonic Threat to Greece circa 580: Some Evidence from Athens', *Hesperia. Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, xxxi (1962), pp. 134–57.

[2] Romilly Jenkins, *Byzantium and Byzantinism* (The University of Cincinnati, 1963), pp. 21–42.

[3] Charanis, 'Nicephorus I, the Savior of Greece from the Slavs'.

[4] R. M. Dawkins, 'The Place-Names of Later Greece', *Transactions of the Philological Society* (London, 1931–32), pp. 1–46; S. P. Kyriakides, *Γλῶσσα καὶ Λαϊκὸς Πολιτισμὸς τῶν Νεωτέρων Ἑλλήνων* (Athens, 1946), pp. 3–97.

[5] Charanis, 'Ethnic Changes . . .', pp. 25–27. Cf. Vryonis, op. cit., 115–16, who makes an important observation on the persistence of Phrygian as a spoken language.

[6] On all of these, see in general my 'The Transfer of Population . . .'; 'The Slavic Element in Byzantine Asia Minor . . .'; on the Cumans, P. Charanis, 'On the Ethnic Composition of Byzantine Asia Minor', *Προσφορὰ εἰς Σ. Π. Κυριακίδην* (Thessaloniki, 1953), p. 145.

thirteenth, Cumans. But by far the most numerous non-Greek-speaking element in Asia Minor were the Armenians. To the Armenians in the Byzantine empire I have devoted a special study, so I need not enter into details here. Suffice to say that beginning with the seventh century, but especially during the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, they dominated the political and military life of the empire and also played a role in its intellectual activities.[1]

The various peoples — non-Greek-speaking in origin — to which we have referred were not passive subjects of the empire but were active participants in its life. Their role was particularly great in the army. The thematic armies of the empire, the core of its military organization, were largely made up of these peoples. This was, indeed, the principal reason why some of them were settled in the empire, though economic, demographic, and cultural considerations were sometimes taken into account. Individuals from among these peoples occupied high posts — at times the throne itself. Known by name are Saracens, Bulgars, Turks, Slavs, Georgians, and others who at times occupied important posts in the military, administrative, and ecclesiastical life of the empire.[2] This is a subject, however, which has not yet been fully studied. But here again, as we have already noted, the Armenians were most prominent. Byzantium knew no racial distinctions. Careers, one might say, were open to talent.

In this multi-national state, which was the Byzantine empire, the Greek-speaking element was most probably more numerous than any other single group, but most probably also it did not constitute a majority. This was certainly true at the time of the widest territorial extent of the empire, about the middle of the eleventh century. It should be pointed out, however, that the tendency was towards Hellenization, and as a consequence many non-Greek elements in time became Greek. This was particularly true of those who participated actively in the military and political life of the empire, especially those who came to occupy high posts. The latter, with few exceptions, integrated themselves thoroughly into the political and military life of the empire, identified themselves with its interests, and adopted the principal features of its culture, features which were essentially Greek, but Greek, of course, as they had evolved throughout the centuries. But the process of Hellenization involved masses of others, too. Thus many a Byzantine Greek was no doubt the product of a mixture, but whether the product of a mixture or not, he was a Greek nevertheless. I would like to leave it at that.

[1] See p. 456, n. 6.

[2] For the specific references, see P. Charanis, 'How Greek was the Byzantine Empire?', *Bucknell Review*, xi, no. 3 (1963), p. 115, n. 41. There is some evidence that Albanians, too, held high military posts already in the eleventh century, but on this see E. L. Vranouses, *Κομισκόρτης ὁ ἐξ Ἀρβάνων* (Jannina, 1962), pp. 5–29. The author, I think, is right in equating *κομισκόρτης* with *κόμις (τῆς) κόρτης* but is not convincing in denying the Albanian origin of the personage concerned.

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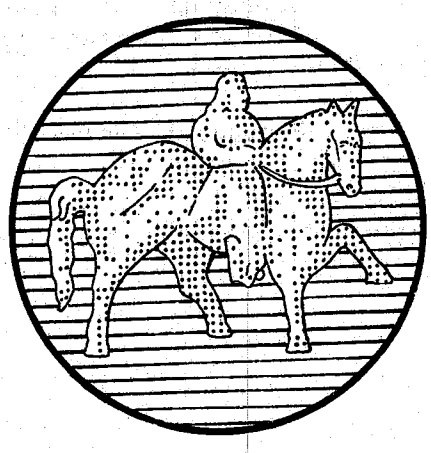
ANCIENT BULGARIA



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Edited by

A. G. Poulter

Part 2

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