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UNDERSTANDING THE USE OF BYZANTINE ROUTES IN CENTRAL ANATOLIA (CA. 7TH–9TH CENTURIES)

Introduction

The Byzantine routes in central Anatolia were previously studied in the series of *Tabula Imperii Byzantini*¹ by Austrian scholars. The TIB gives invaluable information about the routes in Byzantine Central Asia Minor; however, this is the first attempt to understand the use of the main routes in the region within the context of ‘transformation’ and ‘continuity’. In this regard, this paper aims to explain and understand the use of the main routes in Byzantine Central Anatolia by taking into consideration the change in the role and the status of the main urban centres².

The period from the seventh to the ninth century is known and often defined as the age of ‘transition’³. Radical changes which occurred in the political and administrative structure of the Byzantine Empire had an impact on the urbanization and the use of the main routes in Byzantine Asia Minor between the seventh and ninth century. The changes in the political/administrative and economic context that Asia Minor witnessed were more transformative, when compared to the previous centuries. The main factor behind this transformation was the situation of warfare that continued until the ninth century⁴.

¹ See K. BELKE, M. RESTLE, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, vol. IV, *Galatien und Lykaonien*, Wien 1984; K. BELKE, N. MERSICH, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, vol. VII, *Phrygien und Pisidien*, Wien 1990; F. HILD, *Das Byzantinische Strassensystem in Kappadokien*, Wien 1977.

² This paper presents one of the case studies of my ongoing doctoral dissertation, entitled *Communications, Routes and Urbanization in Late Roman and Early Byzantine Anatolia (c. 4th–9th centuries)*.

³ The term “Dark Ages” is replaced by “Transition”. Cf. J.F. HALDON, *Commerce and Exchange in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries: Regional Trade and the Movement of Goods*, [in:] *Trade and Markets in Byzantium*, ed. C. MORRISON, Washington 2012, p. 103; IDEM, *The Empire That Would not Die. The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640–740*, Harvard 2016, p. 3.

⁴ John F. HALDON (*The Empire...*, p. 1) mentions that the Byzantines were able to prevent the continued Arab raid after the war occurred in Acroinos (Afyonkarahisar) in Phrygia in 740. It can be suggested that the Arab world witnessed the changing dynamics in the political and administrative

Three main routes in the northwest-southeast axis are known to have passed through central Anatolia: 1) The Pilgrim's Road⁵, which ran from Constantinople to the Cilician Gates via Ancyra (Ankara); 2) 'The Imperial Military Route'⁶, which ran from Constantinople to Sebasteia (Sivas) and Caesarea (Kayseri) in the east and to the Cilician Gates in the south; 3) 'The Arab Invasions Route'⁷, which ran from Constantinople to the Cilician Gates via Dorylaion (Eskişehir) (Fig. 1).

1. Connecting the West to the Holy Lands, the Pilgrim's Road became the main route for the pilgrims with the rise of Christianity. Before Constantinople became the capital of the eastern Roman Empire, the Pilgrim's Road was in fact the main arterial route in Asia Minor⁸, running through the heartland of Anatolia. The main city of this route was Ancyra in Galatia. This route continued to be used after Constantine established Constantinople as the capital of the Roman Empire. Transforming into a main arterial network, this road made Asia Minor a bridge for the pilgrims travelling between the West and the Holy Lands, especially after pilgrimage spread beyond the Holy Land. The presence of *mutationes*⁹ and *mansiones*¹⁰ along the Pilgrim's Road made the route suitable for official or private travellers as well. W. Ramsay states that this route, which became the main artery in the third century AD¹¹, continued to be maintained from the fourth to the sixth century¹². By the seventh century, however, there is no evidence related to the maintenance of this route.

situation of the Arab rule after the Abbasids had defeated the Umayyads. It seems that the Arab conflict continued in the second half of the eighth century and in the ninth century as some "small states", i.e. the Umayyad Andalusian dynasty (756–1031), the Idrisi dynasty (788–985), the Aghlabi dynasty (800–900), the Tahirî dynasty (821–873), and Saffârî dynasty (868–908) emerged in the western and eastern lands under the control of the Abbasid Caliphate. M.A. KÖYMEN, *Selçuklu Devri Türk Tarihi*, Ankara 1998, p. 9.

⁵ For detailed description, information and discussion on the Pilgrim's Road, see D. FRENCH, *Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor*, Fasc. 1, *The Pilgrim's Road*, Ankara 1981; IDEM, *Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor*, vol. IV, *The Roads*, Fasc. 4.1, *Notes on the Itineraria*, Ankara 2016; K. BELKE, M. RESTLE, *Tabula...*, p. 97–101.

⁶ This route was described by William RAMSAY, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, Amsterdam 1962, p. 197–221; also see, F. HILD, *Das Byzantinische...*, p. 33–37, 77.

⁷ K. BELKE, N. MERSICH, *Tabula...*, p. 139–144; H. AHRWEILER, *Études sur les structures administratives et sociales de Byzance*, London 1971, p. 7–11; J.F. HALDON, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World: 565–1204*, London 1999, p. 56–59.

⁸ K. BELKE, *Communications: Roads and Bridges*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. R. CORMACK, J.F. HALDON, E. JEFFREYS, Oxford 2008, p. 298; IDEM, *Transport and Communication*, [in:] *The Archaeology of Byzantine Anatolia from the End of Late Antiquity until the Coming of the Turks*, ed. P. NIEWÖHNER, Oxford 2017.

⁹ *Places where it was possible to change and rest*, C. FOSS, *Ankara in the Byzantine Age*, BIAA Library in Ankara (n.d.), p. 3.

¹⁰ *Small towns which offered overnight accommodation*, *ibidem*, p. 3.

¹¹ K. BELKE, *Communications...*, p. 298.

¹² W. RAMSAY, *The Historical...*, p. 242.

2. 'The Imperial Military Route' started from Constantinople and went to Armenia, to Commagene, and to the Cilician Gates¹³. This route, which joined the west-east route¹⁴ at Dorylaion as well as the Pilgrim's Road at Ancyra and its variants leading to Sebasteia in the north, Melitene (Malatya) in the east, and Germanikeia (K. Maraş)¹⁵ in the south is known to have been used by the armies and invaders¹⁶. However, there is no literary evidence providing direct information about the use of this route during the period in question¹⁷. It is known to have been used in the middle Byzantine period¹⁸, though.

3. 'The Arab Invasions' Route, which emerged in the 'transition' period¹⁹ and was frequently used by the armies, is the most well-known route. Textual evidence provides specific information about the use of it. This diagonally planned new route and its variants covered the regions of Phrygia and Galatia, including Pisidia and Lycaonia. Radiating from Constantinople, the route in question ran to the Cilician Gates via Dorylaion. The main cities of this route were thus Dorylaion and Amorion in central Anatolia. This route and its variants, which also consisted of some of the existing roads and *facilitated rapid movement of men and materials between the inner provinces and the frontiers*²⁰, became the penetration corridors used by the Arab raiders²¹.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 197–221.

¹⁴ The west-east route, joining at Dorylaion, radiated from Smyrna (İzmir) and went up to Caesarea in Cappadocia. K. BELKE, N. MERSICH, *Tabula...*, p. 150–151; K. BELKE, M. RESTLE, *Tabula...*, p. 105–106; F. HILD, *Das Byzantinische...*, p. 77.

¹⁵ On the eve of the Arab raids, bridges over the Sangarios and Cydnus Rivers were constructed; city walls, castles and fortresses were built and restored by the emperor Justinian I, and thus the cities on the frontier were strengthened against the Sassanid attacks, as is mentioned by PROCOPIUS, *Works*, vol. VII, *Buildings*, trans. H.B. DEWING, ed. J. HENDERSON, Harvard 2002, p. 199, 201, 327, 329, 333–335, 341–343.

¹⁶ The eastern section of this route from Ancyra to Caesarea emerged in the sixth century, passing through Kırşehir, F. HILD, *Das Byzantinische...*, p. 83; it was preferred to the southern variant of this route via Parnassos (Parlasan) since it was shorter. W. RAMSAY, *The Historical...*, p. 199.

¹⁷ Although there is no literary evidence about the use of this route, its eastern variants over the Taurus ranges were most probably used. Raids conducted against the eastern cities and the conflict between the Byzantines and the Arabs at the frontier continued. The cities established on this route and its variants, such as Caesarea, Melitene and Germanikeia, were exposed to the Arab attacks from the second half of the seventh century to the second half of the eighth century. W. Ramsay mentions that primary sources such as the chronicles of Cedrenus and Theophanes give information about the raids at the frontier, but our knowledge about the route taken by the raiders or the imperial army is scarce regarding this period. See W. RAMSAY, *The Historical...*, p. 277; W.E. KAEGI, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, Cambridge 2000, p. 67; H. AHRWEILER, *Etudes...*, p. 7–11.

¹⁸ W. RAMSAY, *The Historical...*, p. 197–221, 277; J.G.C. ANDERSON, *The Road System of Eastern Asia Minor with the Evidence of Byzantine Campaigns*, JHS 17, 1897, p. 22–44; E. HONIGMANN, *Bizans Devleti'nin Doğu Sınırı*, trans. F. İŞİLTAN, İstanbul 1970, p. 36–39.

¹⁹ For the information about the variants of this route, see K. BELKE, N. MERSICH, *Tabula...*, p. 141–146; K. BELKE, M. RESTLE, *Tabula...*, p. 97–101.

²⁰ J.F. HALDON, *Warfare...*, p. 56.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

Of these three routes, “the Arab invasions’ route” and its variants were frequently used by armies and invaders when the Arabs systematically attacked Asia Minor.

Beginning in the 640s and continuing for over a hundred and fifty years, the Arab raids focused mainly on penetrating the inlands of Asia Minor. When the Taurus and Anti-Taurus Mountains constituted the frontier zone between the Byzantines and the Arabs by the early eighth century²² (Fig. 2), the Arab troops had an opportunity to follow the main arterial route via Dorylaion and Amorion, and raided the main cities in central Asia Minor. Rather than going for the well-fortified urban centres established along the main arteries, they aimed at raiding settlements, situated far from the main routes²³, taking booty, and threatening the capital and thus the empire. These incursions, passing through the main routes in the northwest-southeast axis in central Anatolia as mentioned above, affected the political and economic condition of the empire, and had an impact on the use of the routes in question. They also changed the function and role of the main urban centres thereby reflecting the shifting political and economic dynamics during the Arab presence in central Anatolia. Determining the impact of the changes in the political/administrative and economic structure – and therefore the role of the cities – of the Byzantine Empire on the use of the main routes, their effects can be explained in two ways – through the written sources and through the archaeological evidence. In the light of these two sources of data, this paper intends to explain and understand the question of ‘transformation’ and ‘continuity’ in the main urban centres, such as Dorylaion, Amorion and Ancyra, which were established along the main route in question in Byzantine central Anatolia, and the use of this route from the seventh to the ninth century.

Understanding the use of Byzantine routes in central Anatolia

The Eastern Roman Empire witnessed significant changes during the period of ‘transition’. Radical changes that occurred in the political/administrative and economic structure of the empire had an impact on the urbanization, and the use of the main routes in Byzantine Asia Minor. From the mid-seventh to the ninth century, these changes can be summarized as follows: 1) Situation of warfare with the Arabs, and change in the frontier zone²⁴; 2) Change in political/administrative

²² E. HONIGMANN, *Bizans...*, p. 36–39.

²³ H. AHRWEILER, *Etudes...*, p. 8.

²⁴ The frontier zone changed in certain ways. *Limes Orientis* lost its importance, since the Byzantines fought their enemies far from the *limes* in the seventh century. E. HONIGMANN, *Bizans...*, p. 35. The frontier zone that was considered as such until the seventh century consisted of the line lying from Amida to Theodosiopolis, as E. HONIGMANN (*Bizans...*, p. 7–11) states. The empire lost its territories of Syria, Palestine and Egypt in the battle of Yarmuk in 636 to the Arabs, and then the Byzantines retreated to the regions of northern Syria, Mesopotamia, and the Taurus and anti-Taurus

system, and the emergence of four military divisions (*Anatolikon*, *Opsikion*, *Armeniakon*, and *Thrakesion*), later established as *themata* in the first half of the ninth century²⁵; 3) Economic developments, and change in the context and pattern of trade and commerce, and as a result²⁶; 4) Change in the status of urbanization, and the changing role of urban settlements as military centres²⁷.

Mountains. J.F. HALDON, *The Palgrave Atlas of Byzantine History*, Basingstoke 2005, p. 68. Along with the retreat, a new frontier zone, known as *al-thughūr*, including the regions of the Euphrates, the Taurus and anti-Taurus Mountains, was created between the Byzantines and the Arabs. *Al-thughūr* is described as a 'frontier region' rather than a 'frontier line'. For detailed information, see A.A. EGER, *The Islamic-Byzantine Frontier. Interaction and Exchange Among Muslim and Christian Communities*, London 2014 [= LMEH], p. 2–12; also see H. AHRWEILER, *La Frontière et les frontières de Byzance en Orient*, [in:] *Actes du XIV^e congrès international des études byzantines I, Bucarest in Septembre 1971*, ed. M. BERZA, E. STĂNESCU, Bucharest 1974, p. 216–219; R.J. LILIE, *Die byzantinische Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber Studien zur Strukturwandlung des byzantinischen Staates im 7. und 8. Jhd.*, München 1976.

²⁵ It is known that due to the situation of warfare the Byzantine state focused on establishing strong points, which were strategically located on the frontier areas and the inlands of Asia Minor. This was related to the insufficient defence of the field armies against the raids. Together with the soldiers being distributed across the provinces in order to be managed directly, the system of administration regarding this aspect changed in Asia Minor. The local administrative system in the provinces and the military commands garrisoned across the provinces shaped this administrative mechanism in the course of the eighth century, which is known as *themata* by the early ninth century. For detailed information about these changes in administration, see W. BRANDES, J.F. HALDON, *Towns, Tax and Transformations: State, Cities and Their Hinterlands in the East Roman World, c. 500–800*, [in:] *Towns and Their Territories between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. G.P. BROGIOLO, N. GAUTHIER, N. CHRISTIE, Leiden 2000; J.F. HALDON, *Warfare...*; L. BRUBAKER, J.F. HALDON, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680–850. A History*, Cambridge 2011.

²⁶ It seems that the condition of continuous warfare by the seventh century reduced the economic activity in Asia Minor. The state, however, continued to survive despite the economic disruption. Despite an unfavourable impact of the attacks on the economic activities, commercial activities continued in a restricted way. G. DAGRON, *The Urban Economy, Seventh-Twelfth Centuries*, [in:] *The Economic History of Byzantium. From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. A.E. LAIOU, Washington 2002, p. 406. It is known that the economy of exchange shifted in this period, which consisted of the administered and small-scale trade, as is mentioned by A. LAIOU, *Exchange and Trade, Seventh-Twelfth Centuries*, [in:] *The Economic History...*, p. 735. Longer-distance commercial activities also continued in a much reduced scale. The use of land routes for large scale trade was not favoured any more as the use of sea routes was much cheaper for the transportation purpose especially in the seventh and eighth centuries, *ibidem*, p. 697–698. It should be kept in mind that in order to better understand the local and regional/inter-regional use of the main routes and their variants concerning commercial activities in Byzantine Central Anatolia during the period of Arab invasions further archaeological research is necessary.

²⁷ There is clear evidence that the situation of warfare adversely affected urbanization, and hence the communication routes in Byzantine Asia Minor, which differed from the urban changes that happened in the fifth and sixth centuries. (I discuss the change in urbanization and the use of routes between the two time spans, i.e. the 4th–6th and 7th–9th centuries, in detail in my ongoing doctoral thesis). The role of cities as developed and vivid urban centres began to change in Byzantine Asia Minor. Many cities such as Ephesus, Smyrna and Ancyra were transformed into fortresses and continued

The changes mentioned above indicate the effects of the raids. The ‘transformation’ of urban centres, which is related to the political/administrative and economic shifts during the period in question, provides information that helps us better understand the use of the main routes in Byzantine Central Anatolia. In this regard, the transformed urban centres are of importance in terms of reflecting the changing dynamics of the region²⁸.

The Byzantines were confronted, inevitably, with the difficulties of the terrain along the routes they passed during the invasions. The exposed harsh terrain, the waterless roads in central Anatolia, and the rough mountainous land made the pass of the armies a very difficult action. The Byzantines had to ensure the security of

to be inhabited as military centres rather than ‘urban centres’ in the classical understanding. In this regard, the main characteristic of the urban centres of the period from the seventh into the ninth century is that most now transformed into *kastra*, known as fortified sites. L. BRUBAKER and J.F. HALDON (*Byzantium...*, p. 538–542) state that *the transformations which affected the eastern part of the late Roman world did not necessarily involve an abandonment of formerly urban sites (poleis) in favour of fortified sites (kastra) as in the case of Euchaita, and also Amastris*. S.J. HILL, *Preliminary Survey at Amasra, Zonguldak*, [in:] VII. Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı, Antalya in May 1989, Ankara 1999, p. 81–87; S.J. HILL, J. CROW, *Amasra Yüzey Araştırması Ağustos 1990-Survey at Amasra*, [in:] IX. Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı, Çanakkale in May 1991, Ankara 1992; J.F. HALDON, *The Empire...*; P. NIEWÖHNER, *Archäologie und die “Dunklen Jahrhunderte” im byzantinischen Anatolien*, [in:] *Post Roman Towns Trade and Settlement in Europe and Byzantium*, vol. II, Byzantium, Pliska, and the Balkans, ed. J. HENNING, Berlin 2007 [= *Mil.S.* 5.2], p. 123–127; *The Archaeology of Byzantine...*

²⁸ It should be kept in mind that the change in urban centres in Byzantine Asia Minor differs from one region to another. It is difficult to mention and compare all the regions in detail here as the topic is very broad. For the most recent study, see T. KAYA, *Communications in Byzantine Asia: Change and Continuity*, Porph (= *X^e Rencontres Annuelles Internationales des Doctorants en Études Byzantines Porphyra Confronti su Bisanzio 7, Paris in October 2017*, ed. L. CIOLFI, J. DEVOGE), 2019, p. 34–51. Small and rural settlements are not taken into consideration in this paper since there are a few in-depth surveys conducted in all the regions concerning this period. For the frontier settlements, see A.A. EGER, *The Islamic-Byzantine...*, p. 54–68; for a multidisciplinary approach to the topic, see A. ENGLAND, W.J. EASTWOOD, C.N. ROBERTS, R. TURNER, J.F. HALDON, *Historical Landscape Change in Cappadocia (central Turkey): A Palaeoecological Investigation of Annually Laminated Sediments from Nar Lake*, *Hol* 18, 2008, p. 1229–1245; J.F. HALDON, N. ROBERTS, A. IZDEBSKI, D. FLEITMANN, M. MCCORMICK, M. CASSIS, O. DOONAN, W. EASTWOOD, H. ELTON, S. LADSTÄTTER, S. MANNING, *The Climate and Environment of Byzantine Anatolia: Integrating Science, History, and Archaeology*, *JIH* 45, 2, 2014, p. 113–161; J.F. HALDON, H. ELTON, J. NEWHARD, *Archaeology and Urban Settlement in Late Roman and Byzantine Anatolia. Euchaita-Avkat-Beyözü and its Environment*, Cambridge 2018; M. CASSIS, O. DOONAN, H. ELTON, J. NEWHARD, *Evaluating Archaeological Evidence for Demographics, Abandonment, and Recovery in Late Antique and Byzantine Anatolia*, *HE* 46, 2018, p. 381–398; for a study on rural settlements, see A. IZDEBSKI, *Rural Settlements*, [in:] *The Archaeology of Byzantine...*, p. 82–90; see also R. MATTHEWS, *Project Paphlagonia: Regional Survey in Çankırı Province 1997*, [in:] XVI. Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı II, Tarsus in May 1998, ed. K. OLŞEN, H. ÇAKMAK, F. BAYRAM, F. KAYMAZ, N. TARLAN, A. ÖZME, K. ATAŞ, H. DÖNMEZ, Ankara 1999, p. 245–255; *idem*, *Project Paphlagonia: Regional Survey in Çankırı and Karabük Province, 2001*, [in:] XX. Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı II, Ankara May 2002, ed. K. OLŞEN, F. BAYRAM, A. ÖZME, İ. GENÇTÜRK, Ankara 2003, p. 219–223.

the frontier region in the Taurus and anti-Taurus Mountains after the owners of Cilicia changed from the Byzantines to the Arabs in the early eighth century²⁹. The geography and roads remained the same; the strategy used to support the army and the efforts to maintain it in good state in the frontier region changed³⁰.

Of the three main Byzantine routes inherited from the Roman roads³¹, the 'Arab Invasion's Route' in the northwest-southeast axis (NW-SE DR)³² became the main artery of central Anatolia in this period. The route starting from Constantinople and stretching to the Cilician Gates via Dorylaion and Amorion reached the gorge of Podandos (Pozantı) in the frontier region (*al-thughûr*). This strategically important route also branched off at Dorylaion (Eskişehir), Amorion (Emirdağı) and Iconion (Konya) in the west-east, northwest-southeast, and north-south directions respectively³³. The variants of NW-SE DR passed through some urban centres, such as Kotyaeion (Kütahya) and Ancyra (Ankara), established along the west-east route (W-E DR), coming from Smyrna (İzmir), and also along some other diagonal routes³⁴. Of these urban centres, Amorion and Ancyra were the capitals of the *Anatolikon* and *Opsikion Themes* with regard to the changing administrative system mentioned above (see footnote 24).

Textual evidence gives much information about the changing status and the role of the main cities in question as military centres. The Arab troops probably passed through the NW-SE DR or its variants during the raids in the years 643/644, 666/667, 708, 715/716, 778/779, 781/782, 795/796, mentioned below respectively:

²⁹ J.F. HALDON, *The Empire...*, p. 140.

³⁰ IDEM, *Warfare...*, p. 60.

³¹ D. FRENCH, *A Road Problem: Roman or Byzantine?*, IM 43, 1993, p. 445–454.

³² Our knowledge about the existence and use of this route comes from milestones, erected on this road, D. FRENCH, *Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor*, vol. III, *Milestones*, Fasc. 3.5, *Asia*, Ankara 2014, p. 165–168; IDEM, *Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor*, vol. III, *Milestones*, Fasc. 3.4, *Pontus*, Ankara 2013, p. 17–23; from cartographic sources – *Tabula Peutingeriana* – *Die Peutingersche Tafel*, ed. K. MILLER, Stuttgart 1962; and from both Byzantine and Arab chroniclers, and geographers, see *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813*, trans. et ed. C. MANGO, R. SCOTT, G. GREATREX, Oxford 1997 (cetera: THEOPHANES); *Constantine Porphyrogenitus Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, ed. et trans. J.F. HALDON, Wien 1990 [= CFHB, 28]; *İbn'ül Esîr İslâm Tarihi: el-kâmil fî't-târih tercümesi*, vol. IV, trans. A. AĞIRAKÇA, A. ÖZAYDIN, Y. APAYDIN, Z. TÜCCAR, M.B. ERYARSOY, A. KÖŞE, ed. M. TULUM, İstanbul 1985–1987 (cetera: IBN AL-ATHİR); *Abû'l Farac Tarihi*, vol. I, trans. Ö.R. DOĞRUL, Ankara 1999; *The History of al-Tabarî*, vol. XVIII, *Between Civil Wars. The Caliphate of Mu'awiyah A.D. 661–680 / A.H. 40–60*, trans. M.G. MORONY, Albany 1987; *Configuration de la Terre (Kitab Surat al-Ard) I*, trans. et ed. J.H. KRAMERS, G. WIET, Paris 1964, p. 189; AL-IDRİSÎ, *Kitâb nuzhat al-mushtâq fi ikhtirâq al-âfâk*, [in:] *La Géographie d'Édrîsî*, trans. P. JAUBERT, Amsterdam 1975, p. 306; *Yollar ve Ülkeler Kitabı*, trans. M. AĞARI, İstanbul 2008, p. 87–88.

³³ The variants of the NW-SE DR route were actively used by the ninth century. For detailed information about the variants of this route, see K. BELKE, M. RESTLE, *Tabula...*, p. 97–101.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

In this year Mu'awiyah launched a summer offensive and reached Amorion, accompanied by some of the Companions of the messenger of God³⁵.

They also took Amorion in Phrygia and, after leaving there a guard of 5,000 armed men, returned to Syria. When winter had fallen, the emperor sent the same *cubicularius* Andrew, and he reached Amorion at night when there was much snow. He and his men climbed on the wall with the help of planks and entered Amorion. They killed all the Arabs, all 5,000 of them, and not one of them was left.³⁶

Maslamah and 'Abbās b. al-Walid took Amorion and the castle of Erzuliye. After taking Amorion, they captured Heracleia and Kammuniye. 'Abbās b. al-Walid organized the expedition via Bezendūn in the summer.³⁷

Maslamah headed for 'Ammūriyyah, where he encountered a large body of Byzantines. Byzantines were defeated. Maslamah conquered Hiraqlah and Qamūdiyyah. Al-Abbas made the summer campaign from the direction of al-Budandūn.³⁸

In this year Masalmas made an expedition against Constantinople. He sent in front of him Souleiman with a land army and Oumaros by sea, while he himself followed them with much military equipment. When Souleiman and Bakcharos had reached Amorion, they wrote the following to Leo, *strategos* of the Anatolics... And, taking down their tents, they departed. Meanwhile the *strategos* introduced the turmarch Nikaïas with 800 soldiers into Amorion and ejected most of the women and children. And he himself went off Pisidia.³⁹

In this year Madi, the leader of the Arabs, waxed angry and sent Asan (Hasan b. Qahtaba) with a great force of Mourophoroi, Syrians, and Mesopotamians and they advanced as far as Dorylaion. The emperor ordered the *strategoï* not to fight an open war, but to make the forts secure by stationing garrisons of soldiers in them. He appointed high-ranking officers at each fort and instructed them to take each 3,000 chosen men and to follow the Arabs so as to prevent them from spreading out on pillaging raids, while burning in advance the horses' pasture and whatever other supplies were to be found. After the Arabs had remained fifteen days at Dorylaion, they ran short of necessities and their horses went hungry and many of them perished. Turning back, they besieged Amorion for one day, but finding it fortified and well-armed, they withdrew without achieving any success.⁴⁰

Qahtabah led the summer expedition with 30,000 regular troops. He reached Hammah al-Adhrūliyyah (Dorylaion) and wrought great destruction and damage in Byzantine lands without capturing a fortress or meeting an army.⁴¹

³⁵ *The History of al-Tabarī. The Conquest of Iran A.D. 641–643 / A.H. 21–23*, vol. XIV, trans. G.R. SMITH, Washington 2005, p. 164.

³⁶ THEOPHANES, p. 490.

³⁷ IBN AL-ATHĪR, IV, 479.

³⁸ *The History of al-Tabarī*, vol. XXIII, *The Zenith of the Marwānid House: The Last Years of 'Abd Al-Malik and the Caliphate of Al-Walid A.D. 700–715 / A.H. 81–96*, trans. M. HINDS, New York 1990, p. 146, talks about the same raid as IBN AL-ATHĪR, IV, 479, mentioned above.

³⁹ THEOPHANES, p. 538–539.

⁴⁰ THEOPHANES, p. 624.

⁴¹ *The History of al-Tabarī*, vol. XXIX, *Al-Mansur and al-Mahdi A.D. 763–786 / A.H. 146–169*, trans. H. KENNEDY, New York 1990, p. 206 states the same raid with THEOPHANES, p. 624, mentioned above.

That the raid, having taken place in 781/782, passed through Nacoleia (Seyitgazi)⁴² indicates the use of the NW-SE DR during the attack on Constantinople:

While the Roman army was busy with these matters, Madi's son Aaron sallied forth with an enormous armed force composed of Maurophoroi and men from all of Syria, Mesopotamia, and the desert and advanced as far as Chrysopolis after leaving Bounousos to besiege Nakoleia and guard his rear.⁴³

Once again the Arab troops came as far as Amorion in 795/796; however their endeavours proved to be in vain:

In the same year, the Arabs came as far as Amorion, but did not achieve any success and withdrew after taking captives in the surrounding country⁴⁴.

As the textual evidence demonstrates, the Arab attacks were generally conducted against the main urban centres⁴⁵. While the chronicles mention the invasions against the cities in question as well as the probable use of the NW-SE DR, the archaeological evidence provides information about change in the main urban centres, but at the same time about 'continuity' in habitation in this regard. There is no doubt that the cities serving as military centres in central Anatolia as well as in other provinces in Asia Minor did not have the characteristics of the late Roman period after the middle of the seventh century⁴⁶ (see footnote 26).

The changing character of the urban centres established along the NW-SE DR shows the degree of continuity in urbanization. It may also indicate the use of this military route in this period. Among the main cities, Dorylaion and Amorion were the local centres of communication and also played a significant role as the military bases of the *Opsikion* and *Anatolikon Themes*.

Excavations carried out at the site of Şarhöyük⁴⁷ in Eskişehir (Dorylaion) demonstrate that the city was transformed into a centre of defence and a military base⁴⁸

⁴² Nacoleia was an important settlement in the late Roman period, which also passed through the route in the north-south axis in west central Anatolia. K. BELKE, M. RESTLE, *Tabula...*, p. 344 state that the raid in the year of 782 against western Asia Minor passed through Nacoleia in which the Seydi Stream (Parthenios) flows.

⁴³ THEOPHANES, p. 629.

⁴⁴ THEOPHANES, p. 646.

⁴⁵ Also see H. AHRWEILER, *Etudes...*, p. 7–11.

⁴⁶ L. BRUBAKER, J.F. HALDON, *Byzantium...*, p. 545.

⁴⁷ It is situated 3 km NE from Dorylaion, and S of Porsuk River (Tembris). A.M. DARGA (*Şarhöyük-Dorylaion Kazıları (1989–1992)*, [in:] *XV. Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı I, Ankara in May 1993*, ed. H. EREN, N. ÜLGEN, F. BAYRAM, F. KAYMAZ, A.H. ERGÜNER, Ankara 1994, p. 481) mentions that the city gained importance especially in the sixth century.

⁴⁸ See THEOPHANES, p. 575.

(Fig. 3). Dorylaion gained importance in this period since the city was at the cross-roads, stretching to the Propontis (the Sea of Marmara) in the north, the Aegean coasts in the west and the Mediterranean in the south. Thus, Dorylaion joined all the routes in the directions of northwest, west and south. The city walls (Fig. 4), dated to antiquity, continued to operate in this period, as archaeological findings show⁴⁹. That the city walls of Dorylaion⁵⁰ were similar to those of Amorion demonstrates the degree of continuity in the habitation of the two fortified sites. The two military bases ensured the security of the NW-SE DR route and also of the capital. As in many other cities, i.e. Sardis⁵¹, Ephesus⁵², Miletus⁵³, Euchaita⁵⁴, the inhabitants of Amorion⁵⁵ settled in the lower town during the period of invasions (Fig. 5). Archaeological excavations carried out at Amorion are more indicative in terms of 'transformation' and 'continuity' (Fig. 6.). Excavations north of the church in the lower city proved that the excavated area continued to be inhabited in this period⁵⁶. Pottery and glass found in Amorion showed continuity in production at the site⁵⁷. Evidence such as silk textiles and local production of pottery also

⁴⁹ A.M. DARGA, 1993 *Yılı Şarhöyük-Dorylaion (Eskişehir) Kazıları*, [in:] XVI. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı I, Ankara in June 1994*, ed. İ. EROĞLU, F. BAYRAM, H. EREN, N. ÜLGEN, F. KAYMAZ, A.H. ERGÜNER, Ankara 1995, p. 351–369; A.M. DARGA, T. SIVAS, H. SIVAS, 2001 *Yılı Şarhöyük/Dorylaion Kazısı ve Karatuzla Nekropolü Temizlik Çalışmaları*, [in:] XXIV. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı II, Ankara in May 2002*, ed. K. OLŞEN, H. DÖNMEZ, F. BAYRAM, A. ÖZME, N. GÜDER, İ. GENÇTÜRK-KILIÇ, Ankara 2003, p. 49.

⁵⁰ Located on this NW-SE DR and 11 km SW of Dorylaion, Karacahisar Castle was of an important position along the route. E. PARMAN (*Eskişehir Karacahisar Kalesi 2001 Yılı Kazı Çalışmaları*, [in:] XXIV. *Kazı Sonuçları...*, p. 69) states that the castle communicated with the Kayser Castle, situated between Kotyaion and Dorylaion, by means of beacon fire which was used during the Arab as well as the Seljuk raids. The exact dating of the castle is unknown, but it is known to have been used in the period of Arab invasions when we consider the communication system of beacon fire. Taking into consideration the 'continuity' of the excavated site at Şarhöyük, it is reasonable to assume that the castle, as a 'kastron', might have served a similar purpose as in Amorion and Euchaita, and the inhabitants of Dorylaion might have moved there in case of an attack.

⁵¹ C.H. GREENEWALT, *Sardis: Archaeological Research in 1994*, [in:] XVII. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı I, Ankara in June 1995*, Ankara 1995, p. 411.

⁵² S. LADSTÄTTER, *Bizans Döneminde Ephesos: Büyük bir Antik Kentin Tarihinde Son Sayfa*, [in:] *Bizans Döneminde Ephesos*, ed. S. LADSTÄTTER, F. DAIM, İstanbul 2011, p. 14.

⁵³ L. BRUBAKER, J.F. HALDON, *Byzantium...*

⁵⁴ H. ELTON, J.F. HALDON, J. NEWHARD, S. LOCKWOOD, *Avkat Archaeological Project, 2007–2008*, [in:] XXVII. *Araştırma Sonuçları III, Denizli in May 2009*, ed. H. DÖNMEZ, C. KESKİN, Ankara 2010, p. 29–51.

⁵⁵ Situated 170 km SW of Ankara. C. LIGHTFOOT, Y. ARBEL, *Amorium Kazısı, 2002*, [in:] XXV. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı I, Ankara in May 2003*, ed. K. OLŞEN, H. DÖNMEZ, A. ÖZME, Ankara 2004, p. 3.

⁵⁶ C.S. LIGHTFOOT, N. TSIVIKIS, J. FOLEY, *Amorium Kazıları, 2009*, [in:] XXXII. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı I. İstanbul in May 2010*, ed. A.N. TOY, H. DÖNMEZ, Ö. ÖTGÜN, Ankara 2011, p. 47–69; C.S. LIGHTFOOT, Y. ARBEL, B. BÖHLENDORF-ARSLAN, J.A. ROBERTS, J. WITTE-ORR, *The Amorium Project: Excavation and Research in 2001*, DOP 58, 2004, p. 356–363.

⁵⁷ C. LIGHTFOOT, O. KOÇYİĞİT, H. YAMAN, *Amorium Kazıları, 2003*, [in:] XXVI. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı I, Konya in May 2004*, ed. K. OLŞEN, H. DÖNMEZ, A. ÖZME, Ankara 2005, p. 249.

indicated that the city acted as a commercial *entrepôt* with no major interruption⁵⁸. Ancyra, established along the Pilgrim's Road and connected with the variants of the NW-SE DR, was also a significant military base (Fig. 6–7) in central Anatolia, becoming the capital of the *Theme Opsikion* in 776 and of the *Theme Bucellarion* in 799⁵⁹. Although Ancyra was exposed to the first wave of attacks, as were Amorion and Euchaïta⁶⁰, the city survived. It seems that its strong walls which were strengthened in the seventh and eighth centuries⁶¹ ensured the security of the city⁶² and of the main roads in the region. As predominantly a military centre and despite its limited production and trade, Ancyra continued the economic activities throughout the eighth century⁶³, as is the case with Amorion⁶⁴.

That the NW-SE DR is shorter and more passable than the Pilgrim's Road in central Asia Minor may indicate its significance. Streams such as Seydi Çayı (Parthenius)⁶⁵, Bardakçı Deresi⁶⁶ and Divle Çayı⁶⁷, and rivers such as Kocaçay (Rhyndacus), Porsuk (Tembris) and Sakarya (Sangarius) must have provided convenient access to the troops. There were 'small' settlements located on this route, and among the 'small' settlements, Nacoleia (Seyitgazi) was defined as *Stadt mit Mauerring*⁶⁸. The settlements established along the NW-SE DR such as Kaleköy (45 km NW of Karaman)⁶⁹ and Heracleia (13 km SE of Ereğli)⁷⁰ were un-walled cities with a fortress or an upper castle. Some other settlements, i.e. Orkistos (Ortaköy)⁷¹,

⁵⁸ C.S. LIGHTFOOT, O. KOÇYIĞIT, H. YAMAN, *Amorium Kazısı*, 2005, [in:] XXVIII. Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı I. Çanakkale in May-June 2006, ed. B. KORAL, H. DÖNMEZ, Ankara 2007, p. 286.

⁵⁹ K. BELKE, M. RESTLE, *Tabula...*, p. 127.

⁶⁰ F.R. TROMBLEY, *The Decline of the Seventh-Century Town: The Exception of Euchaïta*, [in:] *Byzantine Studies in Honor of Milton V. Anastos*, ed. S. VRYONIS, Undena 1985, p. 74.

⁶¹ N. SEVGİN, *Anadolu Kaleleri I*, Ankara 1959, p. 52.

⁶² The Arab troops damaged the city during the attack in the year of 798/799, but did not inhabit it. K. BELKE, M. RESTLE, *Tabula...*, p. 63.

⁶³ C. FOSS, *Late Antique and Byzantine Ankara*, DOP 31, 1977, p. 76; U. PESCHLOW, *Ancyra*, [in:] *The Archaeology of Byzantine...*, p. 203–217.

⁶⁴ According to the most recent study based on climate change and environmental sources of data, central Anatolia had a more humid climate than in the previous two centuries until the eighth century. J.F. HALDON, *Some Thoughts on Climate Change, Local Environment, and Grain Production in Byzantine Northern Anatolia*, [in:] *Environment and Society in the Long Late Antiquity*, ed. A. IZDEBSKI, M. MULRYAN, Leiden 2018, p. 19. Despite the difficulty in interpreting the impact of climate change on the habitation of cities, as there are few studies on the topic, it seems to have had some effects on continuity in local production. For discussion, see *ibidem*, p. 18–24.

⁶⁵ K. BELKE, N. MERSICH, *Tabula...*, p. 344.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 372.

⁶⁷ K. BELKE, M. RESTLE, *Tabula...*, p. 119.

⁶⁸ K. BELKE, N. MERSICH, *Tabula...*, p. 344.

⁶⁹ F. HILD, *Das Byzantinische...*, p. 62.

⁷⁰ F. HILD, M. RESTLE, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, vol. II, *Kappadokien*, Wien 1981, p. 188.

⁷¹ K. BELKE, M. RESTLE, *Tabula...*, p. 211.

Santabaris (Bardakçı)⁷², and Laodicea Cecaumene (Ladik)⁷³, were unfortified. These settlements were vulnerable to Arab attacks, which must have been an opportunity for the raiders. Despite this, it seems that the well-fortified cities, i.e. Amorion and Dorylaion like many others established along the main arteries, acted as barriers to the devastating attacks, and continued to be inhabited in this period.

Conclusion

This paper explains the Byzantine routes in central Anatolia, considering that the ‘transformation’ of the main urban cities into ‘fortified centres’ had an impact on the use of the main routes in the region. The route of the Arab invasions, which passed through the heartland of Anatolia in the northwest-southeast axis, was frequently used by the Byzantine armies and the Arab troops. The incursions, being the most important reason behind the political/administrative and economic changes in the Roman (Byzantine) Empire, affected the main urban centres. The transformed cities in question, which also reflect the change in the economic and political/administrative structure of the eastern Roman Empire between the seventh and ninth centuries, played an important role in the use of the routes. Established in the strategically important locations, the cities in question determined the use of the main arteries in the region. In this regard, the NW-SE DR acted as the main route of central Asia Minor, stretching to the western coasts, to the capital in the northwest, to the Taurus and anti-Taurus frontier region in the south, and to the eastern Asia Minor. It also played a significant role in the changing dynamics of the empire. Textual and archaeological evidence shows the change in the role of the main cities, mentioned above, and therefore in the use of the main arterial route in this regard.

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⁷² K. BELKE, N. MERSICH, *Tabula...*, p. 372.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 327.

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Abstract. This paper mainly focuses on the impact of the change in the political equilibrium in the East caused by the effects of the Arab invasions on the main communication routes in Byzantine Central Anatolia. Beginning in the 640s and continuing for over 150 years, these incursions had an impact on the ways in which major routes in and through the new frontier zone were used, reflecting in part the fact that during this period the Taurus mountain range constituted the natural frontier between the Byzantines and the Arabs. The main communication routes in Central Anatolia, which lie on the northwest-southeast axis, were of importance in terms of the changing role of the main urban centres established along them, since Arab attacks were directed at both major and minor urban and fortified centres in Central Anatolia, as the Byzantine and Arab sources mention. Although the main centres such as Ancyra and Dorylaion were affected by the attacks, these and most other major cities continued to exist throughout the period in question. In this regard, the continued existence of such centres determined the ways in which the major routes of communication were used. A study of the changes in the role and functions of the cities in central Anatolia may thus help to understand the use of the main routes, based on the archaeological, i.e. building structures, ceramics, etc., and textual evidence, including that from narrative sources.

Keywords: Byzantine routes, central Anatolia, Early/Middle Byzantine Anatolia, transformation, continuity.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

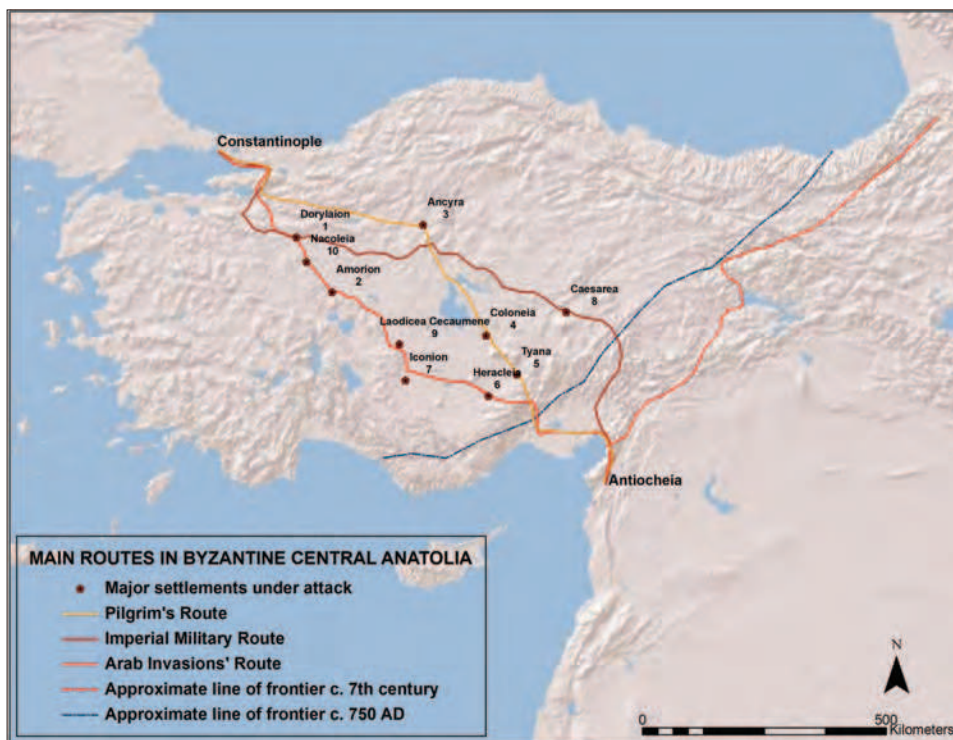


Fig. 1. Three main routes in Byzantine Central Anatolia.

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1. Dorylaion (651?, 708, 778)

2. Amorion (644/46, 669/70, 716, 796)

3. Ancyra (654?, 776, 798)

4. Coloneia (664?)

5. Tyana (706, 707)

6. Heracleia (708)

7. Iconion (723)

8. Caesarea (726/29, 732)

9. Laodicea Ce. (770)

10. Nacoleia (782)

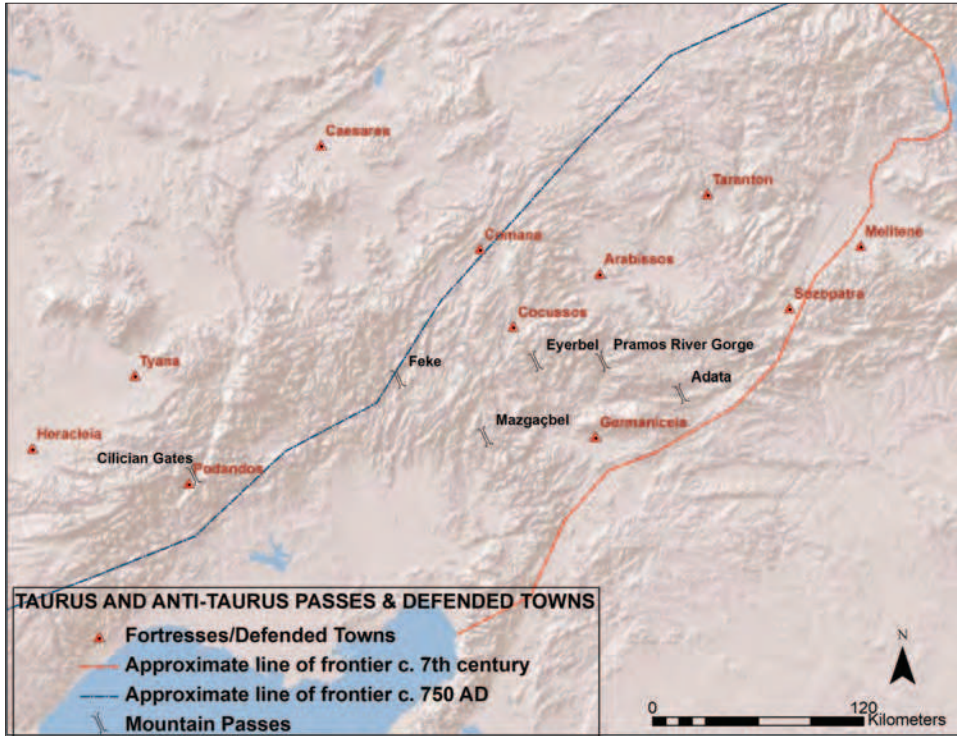


Fig. 2. Adapted from J.F. HALDON, *Byzantium...*, p. 106; W.E. KAEGI, *Byzantium...*, p. 241. Created by © T. Kaya, 2019

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Fig. 3. Eskişehir view from Şarhöyük (Dorylaion) excavation area. Photo by author, 2008



Fig. 4. Ruins of Şarhöyük (Dorylaion) city wall. *Photo by author, 2008*



Fig. 5. Amorion. Source: Emirdağ District Governorship, <http://www.emirdag.gov.tr/amorium-antik-kenti>



Fig. 6. Ankara Castle. *Photo by author, 2019*



Fig. 7. Ankara Castle. *Photo by author, 2019*