

# Conclusion

The *banausos*, *douleutēs*, *cheirōnax*, *cheiromachos* (βάνουσος, δουλευτής, χειρώναξ, χειρομάχος), or experienced *cheiro-technarios* (χειροτεχνάριος) and *polytechnos maistōr* (πολύτεχνος μαΐστωρ), men involved in manual labour and, to an extent, commerce as well, were held in low regard by the ancient Greeks and Romans, as these types of activities were considered inappropriate for free citizens and were exercised with the intermediation of slaves and freedmen<sup>535</sup>. In Late Antique times, in larger cities, a new production model emerged. Apart from the few large state workshops, production moved from the well-known model of Antiquity of large operations worked by slaves under the ownership of rich civilians, to smaller units owned by the workers themselves in pursuit of their own livelihood<sup>536</sup>. As smaller urban centres gradually declined during Late Antiquity, so did too the standard of living of artisans. It has also been assumed that since artisans were dependant on large landowners, when many of the latter moved to their properties in the countryside, the artisans followed them. This shifting of the artisans and increased role of the countryside led to a deterioration in the quality of products and tools that were being produced, compared to the higher technological standards of urban production in Antiquity<sup>537</sup>. This situation was openly expressed in an Imperial law of 400, referring to the lost splendour of the cities and the migration of craftsmen, *collegiati*, semi-servile guildsmen, to the countryside<sup>538</sup>.

Little is known specifically about the economic and social status of craftsmen in Roman society. Generally speaking, the social status of Roman workers and craftsmen and artisans was low, regardless of the fact that they constituted a populous and often thriving group in the city, and it seems that

they belonged to the lower social classes. This perception was based on the prejudices of the landed aristocracy who believed that working with one's hands was undignified. Rather than credit the craftsmen who produced the work, society honoured the patrons. It appears that these ideas continued into the Christian period, notwithstanding the disapproval of the Christian Church Fathers. Another reference to the low social esteem of the artisans and to the way in which their fellow citizens dealt with them in the late fourth century is found in a homily of Saint John Chrysostom (397-404) in which he reproves those who treat craftsmen like slaves. He specifically named shoemakers, dyers, coppersmiths, tent makers, wood-cutters and beaters, which must have been the lowest social groups of artisans<sup>539</sup>. According to the ecclesiastical historian Evagrius (mid-sixth century), craftsmen belonged to the lower classes of the city's society<sup>540</sup>. Furthermore, the livelihood of the workers, the *banausoi* (βάνουσοι), which comprised the largest part of Rome's population, was made on a day-to-day basis, as was mentioned explicitly by Procopius (mid-sixth century)<sup>541</sup>. Just like the ancient Greeks and Romans before them, these attitudes led the Byzantines to consider the market traders and manual labourers to belong to humble and brutal occupations<sup>542</sup>. Such views kept the aristocracy from taking up trades of this type and they were instead exercised by the middle and lower classes of Byzantine society. Some clerics also took up business, despite the fact that the Church had forbidden several professions, both noble ones, such as medicine, or less noble ones, such as barkeeping (κάπηλος)<sup>543</sup>.

According to the social dictates of the time, the majority of professions were exercised by men, although women could also be professionally active. In theory, women should not

535 On Roman craftsmen in general, see Morel, *The Craftsman* 214-44. – On a thorough presentation of written and archaeological information on all artisanal trades in the Late Antique world, see Sodini, *L'artisanat urbain à l'époque paléochrétienne* 71-119.

536 Loungēs, *Ēkoinōnia* 92, with further bibliography.

537 Loungēs, *Ēkoinōnia* 92-93.

538 The Law of Honorius proclaimed to Vicentius, the Praetorian Prefect of Gaul, by which he recalls forcibly those civic collegiates charged with the maintenance of urban infrastructure who had escaped their ministeria for the countryside. *CTh*, XII, 19, 1: »*Destitutae ministeris civitates splendorem, quo pridie nituerant, amiserunt: plurimi siquidem collegiati cultum urbium desertentes agrestem vitam secuti in secreta sese et devia contulerunt*« [»Destitute of the splendour of the civil ministries, from which yesterday they were shining, they [the cities] decline: since very many members of the guilds abandoning the urban care are pursuing the peasant's life and they gather themselves in hidden and secluded [places]«]. See also Lenski, *Servi Publici* 354.

539 Ioannis Chrysostomi, *Homiliae* 20 col. 168.

540 Evagrius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.7 p. 226. »τὸ πᾶν τῆς πόλεως κεφάλαιον ἐς τὴν Ἀστερίου μοῖραν ἀπεκρίθη, προσέλαβε δὲ, καὶ εἴ τι δημῶδες ἦν καὶ τὰς τέχνας τῆ πόλει συνεπιλήρου« [the higher ranks of the city sided with Asterios, and were supported by the populace, and by those who were engaged in trades]. Translation into English based on Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* (431-594 AD), translated by E. Walford (1846) 291.

541 Procopius, *De Bellis* 5.25.11. »καὶ τοῦ δήμου τὸ πλεῖστον μέρος πενία τε πιεζομένων καὶ τῶν ἀναγκαίων σπανίζοντας, ἅτε γὰρ βαναύσοις ἀνθρώποις ἐφήμερά τε ἅπαντα ἔχουσι καὶ ἀργεῖν διὰ τὴν πολιορκίαν ἠναγκασμένοις πόνος οὐδεὶς τῶν ἐπιτηδείων ἐγένετο.« [and the largest part of the citizens (of Rome) were pressed by poverty and necessary things were scarce, because the artisans earn all these for each day and since they were forced, due to the siege, to not work they were not creating any income from their trade].

542 For Byzantine texts referring to this topic, see Koukoules, *Vios kai politismos*, B2, 221-223, 229-231. – For the social status of the artisans in Middle and Late Byzantine society, see Oikonomidēs, *Hommes d'affaires passim* and esp. 114-123.

543 Koukoules, *Eustathiou Iaographika* 399.

be exposed to men's sight. Several references from different periods are preserved that prove that they were engaged in commerce; some rather successfully. Furthermore, other references mention that they were also engaged in other artisanal as well<sup>544</sup>.

During the ninth century, it appears that the social perception regarding the relatively low status of artisans temporarily improved. The ascendancy of Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118), a member of the landed aristocracy, to the throne brought this to an end and ushered in a new period of depreciation that lasted until the end of the Empire. In addition, peasants increasingly engaged in arts and crafts, mainly as occasional potters and blacksmiths, from the eleventh century to the end of Byzantine Empire<sup>545</sup>. However, during the late twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the number of artisans increased and they appear to be better incorporated into political and social life, occupying a middle place in society. These were the *mesoi* (μέσοι)<sup>546</sup> and *mesē moira* (μέση μοίρα)<sup>547</sup>, who enriched themselves by their trade, *epistēmē* (ἐπιστήμη)<sup>548</sup>. Of course, there was a differentiation among them as well, and minor craftsmen, workmen and peasants were considered to be part of the *dēmos* (δῆμος)<sup>549</sup>. The social acceptance and rise of the *mesoi* in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries appears to be connected with the fact that increasing numbers of the aristocracy were engaging in commercial activity, apparently due to the loss of large tracts of their lands to foreign enemies, leaving them deprived of important revenues, which they were obliged to recover with the potential profits of their commercial activities<sup>550</sup>.

Thessaloniki, initially as the capital of part of Macedonia and from 148 BC of the entire province, underwent a great economic and commercial flourishing. The economic potential of this Mediterranean port attracted foreigners to settle here, such as Italian merchants (*negotiatores*) and Jews. Many kinds of trades and professions were needed to meet the needs of the constantly growing city. Builders, stoneworkers, mural painters and mosaicists were in constant demand in and around the city.

As is only natural in a populous city of the size of Thessaloniki, a large number of workshops operated throughout the city and its vicinity, e.g. metalworkers, armourers, brick and tile makers, potters, glassworkers, jewellers, bone carvers, drapers, textile dyers (including purple dyers), tan-

ners, carpenters and mat and basket weavers. They mostly built makeshift structures or re-used older buildings. It also seems that both necropolises were used for the workshops of marbleworkers, clay-lamp makers and glassworkers, while in the area to the west of the city several potters as well as brick and tile makers established workshops. In the city, workshops were found in even the most central and well-constructed *insulae*, co-existing with the private dwellings of the wealthy. However, workshops were mainly located near the city walls, especially on the western side, while open public spaces that had lost their original function during the Late Roman period, such as the Ancient Agora, were occupied by diverse workers who adopted them according to their needs and thus gradually began to shape the medieval profile of the city.

Several Middle Byzantine commercial and artisanal activities are revealed in the historical sources, as for instance in Kaminiates' *On the Capture of Thessalonica*, where he refers to the central role of the city's main street, the *Leōphoros*, describing large crowds of both locals and visitors gathering there to buy the many commodities on offer. The goods that are mentioned as being on sale cover several trades, such as wool and silk weaving, jewellery (creations of gold and silver embellished with precious stones are cited), glassworking and metallurgy (products of copper, iron, pewter and lead are noted).

Although there is no direct reference to the local production of these commodities it is probable that most of them were produced in Thessaloniki and that only a few were imported. In the *Timariōn* many merchants are described as importing wares, mainly textiles, from distant areas of the then known world to Thessaloniki, to sell at the fair of Saint Dēmētrios. His description, along with what is known about the trade of wares from Thessaly in the city – or even from Slavic and Bulgarian areas during the ninth and tenth centuries – offer additional arguments for the fact that the Empire's second most important city and port continued to function in the Middle Byzantine era as a centre of regional, inter-regional and »international« trade<sup>551</sup>. In addition, the constant presence of foreign traders in the city is well-attested.

Eustathios of Thessalonica, at the end of the twelfth century, commented on the low income of various trades, such as weavers, who worked for a few copper coins, and tailors, coppersmiths, tent makers and leatherworkers who worked

544 On references in Byzantine texts concerning the economic activity of women, see Koukoules, *Vios kai politismos*, B1, 232-235, and Laiou, *Women in the Marketplace* 261-273.

545 Laiou/Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* 111-112, with bibliography.

546 Oikonomidēs, *Hommes d'affaires* 116. – Eustazio, *La espugnazione* 32:8.: »πλωρίζονται εις εκείνον οί μεγάλοι, οί μικροί, οί μέσοι« [Sail there large and small and middle (size traders)].

547 Oikonomidēs, *Hommes d'affaires* 117.

548 Ševčenko, *Alexios Makrembolites* 207: »ἢ γὰρ ἐξ ἐπιστήμης ἐπιλοῦταισέ τις ἢ ἐξ ἐμπορίας, ἄλλοι δ' ἐξ ἐγκρατείας« [Because if someone became rich from its trade or from commerce, but others from their self-restraint].

549 Oikonomidēs, *Hommes d'affaires* 118.

550 Oikonomidēs, *Hommes d'affaires* 120-122. – Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins* 41-43.

551 Oikonomidēs, *Le kommerkion* 241-248. – Laiou/Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* 81-82.

for the equivalent of a morsel of bread<sup>552</sup>. In addition, a quotation that illuminates the hardships of the craftsman's life is given by the same Thessalonian prelate (c. 1178-1195/1196). Eustathios reproaches those monks who do not live spiritually like true monks, despite wearing rags, but continue to deal with worldly matters and with what is profitable for them, toiling like any hard-working craftsman<sup>553</sup>.

Overall, on the basis of archaeological finds and textual references, it can be stated that metalsmiths (both private and in the state armoury), stone and marbleworkers, mural painters, mosaicists, potters, glassworkers, weavers, textile dyers, tanners, furriers, carpenters, basket makers, candle makers and copyists were all active in the city. Finally, activities traceable through excavation, have been located in several parts of the city: near the sea walls; in the centre of the city on the *Via Regia*; in residential quarters; and also in the immediate proximity of large churches. Outside the city walls, on the flat coastal areas east and west of the city diachronically, potters and mainly brick and tile makers operated.

Generally speaking, during the second half of the thirteenth century and in the early fourteenth century, Thessaloniki was a thriving city, functioning as a major marketplace. The city was in a buoyant financial situation, being an important station in the Venetian commercial trade subsystem consisting of western Greece and the western Balkans. In consequence, its inhabitants saw an improvement in their social conditions. Church fairs played an important part in the commercial life of the city in this period; as did foreign merchants – mainly Venetians, but also Pisans, Genoese and Ragusians – to such an extent that they had their own market, primarily for textiles, but for other commodities as well. It is also probable that many trades were organised in guilds, e.g. saltern workers, furriers, milliners, perfumers, marbleworkers, builders and other artisans as well, such as painters, whose art went beyond the boundaries of the city and into the wider area of the Balkans. Potters were also very active and quite successful since their products are found in distant Mediterranean harbours. Glassworkers, metalworkers, weavers and gold-embroiders were also active members of the city's trade. Copyists of classical, religious and legal texts also operated within the culturally and intellectually favourable climate of Palaeologan Thessaloniki.

We see a downturn in Thessaloniki's economy from the middle of the fourteenth century until the capture of the city by the Ottomans in 1430. The city had become cut-off from its hinterland and was deprived both of its agricultural

products and of the income that the city's middle and upper classes had formerly derived from their estates. It was with this income that they had financed local trade and artisanal production. Due to the almost constant blockade of the city, the inflow of merchants and other traders had diminished, restricting both the import and export of goods, and leading to a further decline in the city's production levels.

Archaeological and historical research demonstrates that a wide array of artisans, e.g. millers, lime kilners, potters, glassworkers, stoneworkers and sculptors, mosaicists, metalsmiths, jewellers, painters, wood carvers, basket weavers, bone carvers, tanners, furriers, weavers, dyers, gold-embroiders, candle makers and scribes, were, more or less, constantly active throughout the Roman and Byzantine periods in Thessaloniki. The professional character of these artisans remains unclear and the present research cannot answer the question whether they were exclusively artisans or rather partly farmers, agricultural workers and artisans. There is no archaeological indication for the presence of anything other than an intermediate level of artisanal activity in the city, i.e. the production of items for sale by the artisan himself or someone close to him, family or household member, or an employee, intended for the local or restricted regional market<sup>554</sup>. Sources do mention the existence of a mercantile export market reaching beyond local or regional distribution and into remoter areas and markets.

Artisanal installations consisted of small, makeshift constructions, operating mainly in converted older buildings or the ruins of monumental constructions. In these spaces, temporarily, and – according to the archaeological finds – probably fully aware of the temporary character of their enterprise, artisans of the city operated, occasionally sharing their premises, or working in parallel with other similar trades. Workshops owned by the Church and other *archontes* (elites) of the city were probably better built and situated more carefully within the city's fabric, but their actual location and distribution remains obscure. Apart from the area of the field west of the city where several potteries and many brick and tile makers operated, no special concentrations of workshops have been detected, either within or without the walls. Generally, workshops tended to be established in vacant areas in the centre or were scattered in commercial districts of the city, particularly on the outskirts, near the city walls, or outside them, in the area of the extended city's cemeteries or even farther afield. In many cases it can be established that they were *ergastēria*, having the dual role of workshop and

552 Eustathius, *Opuscula* 223.17-21: »Ἡ γὰρ οὐκ οἶδαμεν ἄνδρας, τοὺς μὲν ἰσθὺν ὑφαίνοντας ὀλίγου τιμώμενον, καὶ μόγις δι' ἡμέρας ἀποφερομένους κέρδος τοῦ καμάτου νούμμου εὐαριθμήτους, τοὺς δὲ ἱμάτια ράπτοντας, ἢ χαλκὸν κατακροτούντας, ἢ σκηνὰς καταρτύνοντας, ἑτέρουσ δὲ σκευαρούντας παντοῖα δέρματα, καὶ ἄλλουσ ὀχλούντασ τὴν θάλασσαν ἐπὶ ὀλιγίστοισ ἀλφίτοισ« [Moreover, do we not know men, some of whom weave sailcloth for a small price, whose exhaustion after a full day (of work) yields a profit of but a few coins, and others who sew garments, or work with copper, or make tents, and others who make every sort of leather, and others who suffer the sea's tyranny for a morsel of bread?].

553 Eustathius, *Opuscula* 245, 93-96: »Τεχνίτου βαναύσου δίκην κοπιᾶς, ὅς ἐν τοῖσ ἀγενέσιν ἔργοισ, δι' ὧν ρυπαίνεται ἢ κατατριβεται τὸ καλὸν ἄμφιον, ρακενδυτεὶ καὶ οὕτω κερδαλεώτερον τὴν τέχνην διαχειρίζεται« [toiling like any hard-working craftsman who wears rags in his hard physical labour, which gets new clothes dirty and tears them, and thus renders his craft more profitable].

554 As described by Dagron, *The Urban Economy* 395, citing Max Weber's differentiation of systems of artisanal activity, see Weber, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 110f.

retail premises, for they were situated on main streets and had their openings onto them.

During all these centuries, the populous city, thriving port and commercial hub that was Thessaloniki met its needs predominantly through local artisanal production of all sorts and at least some of the needs of its neighbours through export. Unfortunately, the low esteem in which such activities were held has largely kept them out of the written sources and centuries of constant habitation prevent us from gaining a more vivid and precise picture of this multifaceted aspect

of the economic and social life of the Roman *mētropolis* and Byzantine *symvasileusa*. We are left with fragmentary and obscure salvage excavations and indirect references in the written source. The entire corpus of this archaeological, literary and epigraphical evidence has been collected and presented for the first time in this volume, providing a clear picture of the constant presence of craftsmen, devoted to a great array of different activities, and the important role they played in the daily life of the city throughout its 2,300-year history.