Περίληψη :

The conquest of Constantinople on May 29th 1453 resulted in the captivity of all its inhabitants and the transfer of most of them away from the city. Right after the Fall, Mehmed II the Conqueror began his efforts to revive the city and restore its glory. Consequently, an edict was issued forcing the transportation of Muslim, Christian and Jewish population from other cities within the Ottoman Empire to Constantinople.

Χρονολόγηση

15th century

Γεωγραφικός εντοπισμός

Constantinople (İstanbul)

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1. Introduction

During the period of expansion for the Ottoman state, the sultans systematically implemented the forced migration policy (*sürgün)*, in order to successfully incorporate the newly-conquered areas within the governmental and social framework of the Ottoman Empire. These migrations involved both the introduction of Muslims to newly-conquered areas, as well as the depopulation and dispersal of part of the indigenous population to other areas – aiming to fracture the unity and compact ties of the local population, which in a newly-acquired area could raise questions with regard to its loyalty to the sultan. Besides that, the translocation of people also intended to repopulate and revive cities or areas that at one point had suffered a significant decrease of population. That was the case with Constantinople (Istanbul) right after the Ottoman conquest. These migrations (sürgün) were forced, but accompanied by benefits as well, such as tax reductions or the attribution of land or lodging to the new inhabitants, in order to facilitate their settlement at their new residence; voluntary migrations also took place. However, the repopulation of Ottoman Constantinople after the Fall was mainly achieved through the practice of forced migrations.

2. Framework

Mehmed's intent to conquer the Byzantine capital involved important symbolic, as well as practical aspects. The sultan nurtured ideas for the city and its significance, which had been shaped within a certain geopolitical, ideological and cultural context. Firstly, Constantinople itself was perceived as an independent pocket, which lay at the most central part of the Ottoman Empire; moreover, non-occupation of Constantinople meant that complete control over the Straits would be obstructed and, consequently, so would the consolidation of Ottoman power in the Black Sea. Furthermore, Constantinople had gradually acquired a special symbolic status within the Islamic tradition as well, through the establishment of the legend of Prophet Muhammad, according to which he had guaranteed the future leaders of the Islamic world its conquest. Moreover, the potential occupation of Constantinople by Muslims was associated with teleological and eschatological aspirations.[1] Lastly, Mehmed II the Conqueror himself was imbued with the Romeo-Byzantine ideas of ecumenical monarchy and embraced the symbolical part Constantinople occupied in those ideas. All these ideas constituted the conquest of the city and the transfer there of the Ottoman capital as the sultan's top priority.

The circumstances, under which the city was conquered, constituted extended forced migrations necessary. By putting the conquest of the city in such high a priority the sultan wanted to preserve its population, in order to immediately incorporate it to the Ottoman urban plexus, thus constituting the transfer of the Ottoman capital there easier. This intention on behalf of the Sultan justifies his proposal to Constantine XI Palaiologos to peacefully surrender Constantinople to him, a proposal accompanied by generous concessions, since if the city was violently conquered the sultan would not be able to stop his soldiers from enslaving its inhabitants. The sultan's goal, of course, was not to preserve Constantinople as a Christian city, but to transform it into an Islamic centre, despite its "cosmopolitan" character; the same had happened to other significant cities yielding to Ottoman power.[2] In that case, a less extensive translocation of, mostly, non-Muslim population would be necessary. The way the events progressed, however, led to the violent occupation of the city and, consequently, the enslavement of its inhabitants, who were transferred by soldiers to various

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Μετάφραση :   *Τσοκανή Άννα*
Για παραπομπή :   *Μουστάκας Κωνσταντίνος , "Forced migration (sürgün) in Constantinople after the Ottoman conquest", Εγκυκλοπαίδεια Μείζονος Ελληνισμού, Κωνσταντινούπολη*
URL: <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=11349>

locations to be sold. So, the city's revival, until it gradually morphed into a new Ottoman capital, would turn into a time-consuming procedure and would demand extended migrations.

3. General framework of forced migration to Constantinople

From the Fall of 1204 onwards and during the whole Late Byzantine Period, the capital of the empire did not preserve such high figures of population as in the past, figures which constituted it a unique cosmopolis within the context of the contemporary European and Mediterranean world. In fact, its population was gradually decreasing due to emigration and the effect of epidemics since the time of the "Black Death" (1347) onwards. The vast ground covered by the Theodosian Walls was never densely-populated, during the last period of Byzantine history; however, the city was so sparsely inhabited that its 13 regions constituted more of a plexus of distinct settlements rather than an integrated residential area. Still, the population of Constantinople remained relevantly high given the period.[3]

These were the conditions in Constantinople with regard to its population, when the violent conquest of the city on May 29th, 1453 resulted in the enslavement of all its inhabitants and the transfer of their majority elsewhere. Shortly after the Fall, the sultan began his efforts to revive the city and create characteristics of an Islamic capital for it; within that context, he proceeded to steps, such as the appointment of a governor (subaşı) – it is said that the initial choice was Loukas Notaras, but it appears that the Sultan immediately reconsidered and selected a Turk as governor, while Notaras was executed. Other steps included the institution of a guard, the transformation of the most significant church, the Hagia Sophia, as well as other churches, into mosques, the construction of palaces, the introduction of forced migrations, but also the appointment of a Patriarch; the new Patriarch was Gennadios, who settled in the city from the beginning as the religious leader of the Christian Orthodox population. The efforts to revive Constantinople were quite time-consuming and the sultan did not permanently transfer his capital there from Adrianople (Edirne) until after many years after the Fall.[4]

With regard to the forced migrations, which constitute the main aspect of the attempts to revive the city, they continued for the duration of the reign of Mehmed II the Conqueror (1451-1481); in fact, towards the end of the reign they yielded impressive results, since the population of Constantinople was greater than before the Fall. In a 1477 census archive 14,803 households were registered, roughly representing an approximate population of 70,000 or 75,000, the majority being Muslim. In detail, the distribution of population in 1477 was as follows:

Ethnic/religious group	Number of households
Muslims	8.951
Orthodox Christians	3.151
Jews	1.647
Kaffians (probably referring to Italians)	267
Armenians	372
Orthodox and Armenian Karamanli	384
Gypsies	31
Total	14.803[5]

The translocation of residents to Constantinople greatly contributed to the extent of the forced migrations phenomenon during this period, since the same practice was applied within the context of respective attempts to revive other significant cities like Thessaloniki, which had also suffered a population decrease after the 1430 Fall, or in cases of cities where political reasons dictated alterations in the composition of the population.

4. Individual cases of migrations to Constantinople

Mehmed II the Conqueror took the first measures for the revival of Constantinople in population directly after the Fall with regard to ransoming himself some of the prisoners. They were released and allowed to stay in town, while respective attempts were made for prisoners ransomed by their own means.[6] At the same time, an edict was issued dictating the transfer of Muslim, Christian and Jewish

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population from other areas of the Ottoman Empire.[7] Contemporary sources do not offer any information for this first migration wave, so its different aspects are rather indirectly assumed. Characteristic is the case of Jews from Balkan cities that were already under Ottoman rule. The fact that they are not recorded in 15th century tax catalogues from these Balkan cities, some of the catalogues dating close to the time of the Fall – i.e. 1455, indicates that they had already been transferred (as were, for example, the Jews of Serres or Trikala). A later record of the Jewish communities of Constantinople from the 16th century, which includes place of origin, manifests that the Balkan Jewish population of the Late Middle Ages had been translocated to Constantinople almost en masse.

Moreover, data from the sources refer to cases of migrations from newly-conquered cities; consequently, most of these cases involve Christian population, but also Muslims (as in the case of Karaman). In these instances, the translocations had a double purpose: on one hand to reinforce Constantinople population-wise and on the other to alter the composition of the population in the newly-acquired area, in order to smoothly incorporate it to the Ottoman state (characteristic is the example of Trabzon, where in the place of those who were transferred, Muslims from other areas of Anatolia were settled). These translocations mainly regarded urban population with artisan and mercantile skills; their presence aimed to contribute to the city's financial revival.

Well-known cases of forced migrations to Constantinople after new conquests were Ainos (1455), Old Phokaia (Old Phocaea) and Nea Phokaia (New Phocaea) (1456),[8] Amastris (1458)[9], the Peloponnese[10], Trabzon (1461, where those forced to migrate included all of the nobles and officials who were to staff the ottoman administration), Mytilini (1462),[11] the cities of Karaman (1468, where the translocations mainly regarded Muslims; Ottoman sources record that in this case the measure was brutally enforced)[12] and Kaffa (1475, the transfer probably regarded Italian population). The transfer of prisoners from Serbia, Hungary and Bulgaria referred to in records regarded rural population that settled in the agricultural outskirts of Constantinople, which had been also abandoned during the 1453 siege.[13]

Data from 1477 indicate that within 20 years, the forced migrations program had lead to a great increase in population for the time, although the total number of inhabitants did not come close to the impressive figures it would reach the following century. The data also manifest the extent of the migration program, as well as the high levels of mobility for the people of the time, provided that the migrations were not only focused on Constantinople. The repopulation of the city was chiefly achieved through forced migrations; rather impressive is the number of Muslims being translocated, despite the fact that these transfers were not extensively recorded.

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1. Babinger, F., *Mehmed the Conqueror and his Time* (Princeton 1978), pp. 84-85.

2. Lowry, H., "From Lesser Wars to the Mightiest War: The Ottoman Conquest and Transformation of Byzantine Urban Centers in the Fifteenth Century", in Bryer, A.A.M. – Lowry, H.W. (ed.), *Continuity and Change in Late Byzantine and Early Ottoman* Society (Birmingham – Washington D.C. 1986), pp. 323-338. The example of Trabzon is characteristic. Since the city surrendered without a fight, by right of Islamic law and standard Ottoman custom its population could have remained safely in town. However, the need to securely incorporate the city within the Ottoman system, as well as the Ottoman practice of attributing Islamic characteristics to newly-annexed important cities, resulted in the transportation of a significant part of the local population to Constantinople and their replacement with Muslim colonists from other cities of Anatolia. For Trabzon, see Lowry, H.W., *Trabzon Şehrinin Islâmlaşma ve Türkleşmesi, 1461-1583* (Istanbul 1998).

3. Jacoby, D., "La population de Constantinople à l'époque byzantine: Un problème de démographie urbaine", *Byzantion* 31 (1961), pp. 81-109.

4. Babinger, F., *Mehmed the Conqueror and his Time* (Princeton 1978), pp. 102-104.

5. See *Encyclopedia of Islam* IV (Leiden 1978), p. 238, see entry "Istanbul" (H. Inalcik).

6. Κριτόβουλος I 73.4.

7. Doukas XLII 42; Kritovoulos II 1.

8. Doukas XLIV 44; Kritovoulos III 17.4.

9. Kritovoulos III 11.2.

10. Kritovoulos III 11.

11. Kritovoulos IV 12.9.

12. Babinger, F., *Mehmed the Conqueror and his Time* (Princeton 1978), p. 272.

13. Doukas XLII 42; Kritovoulos II 22.

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