

Assessing the Economic Impact of Mongol Expansion into Asia Minor in the Thirteenth Century: A Methodological Attempt

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Assessing the economic impact of the Mongol expansion into Asia Minor is a tricky question because of not only the viability of the question itself but also the limitations on the material sources, literary or material. As a methodological attempt, my paper aims at first surveying the relevant studies on the Mongol westward expansion that have direct bearing on the economic development of Asia Minor as well as their limitations. Brief discussion of various literary sources shows the potential of studying economic activities as indications of economic conditions in central and southern Asia Minor during the thirteenth century. By focusing on these regions, my research ultimately aims at reconstructing the economic conditions, providing a basis for assessing such an impact by the Mongol expansion.

Understood in the context of past scholarly research on the Mongol expansion into Asia Minor,¹ the viability of my initial research question is challenged by the nature of

¹ Because I am not aware of any previous research on the economic impact of the Mongol expansion on Asia Minor, the literature review in this footnote starts with more general works on the Byzantino-Mongol relations. The most pertinent work on Byzantino-Mongol relations is the doctoral thesis by Bruce G. Lippard in 1984, *The Mongols and Byzantium 1243-1341*. His thesis provides a glimpse into the economic and political conditions in Anatolia in the corresponding period. By portraying Byzantino-Mongol relations as gravitating towards two political centres, Lippard viewed the contacts as a medium for both sides to establish equilibrium in Anatolia, while the Ilkhan Hülegü sought the same in his dealings with Michael VIII Palaiologos in 1260. Bruce G. Lippard, *The Mongols and Byzantium, 1243-1341* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1984), 233-234. In his 1987 study of the Mongol mobilisation of human as well as financial resources, Thomas T. Allsen proposed that the imperial mechanism was effective and capable of integrating resources from the regions it conquered. Thomas T. Allsen, *Mongol imperialism: the policies of the Grand Qan Möngke in China, Russia, and the Islamic lands, 1251-1259* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987). Patrick Wing points out the different levels of economic and fiscal impact of the Mongol expansion in Iran, Azerbaijan, and Anatolia, with cooperating local elites governing the provinces. Patrick Wing, 2008, Review of *Le Fārs sous la domination mongole politique et fiscalité, XIIIe-XIVe s.*, by Denise Aigle, *Mamluk Studies Review* 12 (1): 208-210. Relying mostly on historical narratives, Alexis G. C. Savvides in *Byzantium in the Near East: its relations with the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum in Asia Minor, the Armenians of Cilicia and the Mongols A.D. c.1192-1237*, discusses the political realignments in Anatolia during different phases of the thirteenth century. Although he provides a general overview of thirteenth-century Anatolia, including the Seljuk Sultanate in Ikonion as a centre of economic development and political interactions before the Mongol expansion, his work does not reveal much about the economic conditions in Anatolia. Alexis G. C. Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East: its relations with the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum in Asia Minor, the Armenians of Cilicia and the Mongols, A.D. c.1192-1237* (Thessaloniki: Kentron Byzantinon Ereunon, 1981).

evidence almost from the start. If one views the period between the Battle of Köse Dağ (1243) and the disintegration of the Ilkhanate (1335) as the default Mongol domination period, there seems no sustained and consistent evidentiary basis to assess the economic impact of its expansion into Asia Minor. Apart from sporadic literary mentions of military and diplomatic encounters between the Mongols and the various political entities in the thirteenth century, it is yet to be established the state of the Mongol governance or Mongol suzerainty over eastern and central Asia Minor. Fragmentation of political landscape precludes any attempt to locate economic activities occurring mainly or solely in any centrally controlled territories. Precisely because of this political fragmentation, any attempt to approach the economic development has to be based on other types of evidence, less comprehensive when it comes to geographical coverage yet feasible enough to draw a provisional conclusion regarding various aspects of the economic development.

In order to highlight the methodological issues of literary sources in documenting economic activities, three examples are cited below: correspondence between Hugh I and Kaykaus I, William of Rubruck's account of his travel, and a document concerning the Marseillais trade in the Levant.

In a correspondence from Hugh I of Cyprus in 1214 to Kaykaus I of Seljukid, merchant activities in territories of both sides were discussed and were to be allowed to take place unhindered for six years.

....., and let those merchants come and all ships [sail] into my realm unhindered and with liberty, just as ours [may sail] again into the realm of your power, not obstructed or altogether hindered by anyone, and let those come and leave everyday and everyone expecting business finish [it] and all other obligations,²

In this exchange, Hugh I pointed out the reciprocal nature regarding the treatment of the merchants travelling in their respective territories. There are two notable things in this letter. The first is the realm of the Sultanate as a definitive demarcation of geographical space in which the merchants could engage in trade. The boundaries of such a realm, however, are not clear. It may indicate that the mercantile activities mainly took place on the coast, and/or

² “....., και ἄς ἔρχονται οἱ πραγματευταὶ καὶ τὰ πλευστικά πάντα εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν χώραν ἀκολύτως καὶ ἀνευδοιάστως μετὰ πάσης χαρᾶς καὶ ἀπλότητος, ὥσπερ καὶ τὰ ἡμέτερα πάλιν εἰς τὰς χώρας τῆς ἐξουσίας σου, μὴ παράτινος ἐμποδιζόμενοι ἢ τὸ σύνολον κωλυόμενοι, καὶ ἄς εἰσέρχονται καὶ ἐξέρχονται καθ’ ἐκάστην, καὶ τὴν δοκοῦσαν ἕκαστος πραγματεῖαν ἐκτελείτω καὶ ἄλλην πᾶσαν ἣν χρῆζει δουλείαν,” Alexander Beihammer, ed., *Griechische Briefe und Urkunden aus dem Zypern der Kreuzfahrerzeit: Die Formularsammlung eines Königlichen Sekretärs im Vaticanus Palatinus Graecus 367* (Nicosia: Zuprisches Forschungszentrum, 2007), 170.

along the routes leading to Tabriz, or that perhaps the inland region of Lycaonia was also a geographical space where mercantile activities took place. The second is the frequency or intensity of mercantile activities, either already occurring or being projected to be occurring and in need of such reciprocal treatments.

From this letter, it is also not clear what types of mercantile activities were covered: merely travelling through the realm of the Sultanate, buying and selling while travelling, or engaging in local production.

In the same letter, Hugh I addressed the Sultan as reigning over ‘land and sea’ (..... τῆς ὑπὸ τῶν Τούρκων χώρας, γῆς τὲ καὶ θαλάσσης,). Although the present extant five letters between the King of Cyprus and the Seljuk Sultan are dated between 1214 and 1218,³ before the Mongol expansion, they provide a glimpse into the nature of the relations between Cyprus and the Seljuk Sultanate and the mercantile activities taking place in those regions.

On what the merchants could engage in, William of Rubruck recounted a relevant encounter with merchants at the court of the Seljuk Sultan in Ikonion. He was on the way back from Hyrcania, south of the Caspian Sea, and reaching Tripoli (in Lebanon) in 1255.

In Yconium I came across several Franks and a Genoese trader from Acre, Nicholas de Santo Siro, who together with his partner, a Venetian called Boniface de Molendino, exports all the alum from Turkia, with the result that the sultan may not sell it to anyone other than these two, and they have put up the prices so high that what used to fetch fifteenth bezants is sold nowadays for fifty.⁴

In this particular encounter, there are three notable things indicating the geographical reach of mercantile activities. First, the involvement of two merchants from Acre, a regional trade centre, indicates a possibly integrated regional trade network. The partnership of two merchants indicates the nature of joint venture in exporting alum, but it may also indicate the regional dynamics in forming a partnership. Although Claude Cahen points out the geographical origins of these two merchants, the Genoese from Acre and the Venetian from Cyprus,⁵ he does not further examine the implications of merchants from these two places for the economic conditions and trade activities on a regional scale. Second, the mercantile

³ Alexander Beihammer, *Griechische Briefe und Urkunden aus dem Zypern der Kreuzfahrerzeit: Die Formularsammlung eines Königlichen Sekretärs im Vaticanus Palatinus Graecus 367*, 170- 173, 183-184, 212-213.

⁴ William of Rubruck, *The mission of Friar William of Rubruck: his journey to the court of the Great Khan Möngke 1253-1255*, trans. Peter Jackson (London: Hakluyt Society, 1990), 273.

⁵ Claude Cahen, “Le commerce anatolien au début du XIIIe siècle,” in *Mélanges d’histoire du moyen âge dédiés à la mémoire de Louis Halphen* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951), 99.

activities at the court of the Seljuk Sultan indicate that the Sultanate was one of the major political centres for regional trade arrangements, even though the Seljuk Sultan was unable to bypass them in exporting alum. William of Rubruck was on his way back from the Great Khan in Karakorum, with the Ilkhanate not yet established but the Mongol presence taking root in Iran. Further examination of the operation of this or other similar partnerships may provide a basis for a possible alternative assessment of the Mongol expansion and its economic impact. Third, the effects of such an exporting activity on the local economic conditions are still to be determined. Evaluating such effects requires a further understanding of the local economic conditions. Understanding local economic conditions necessitates a study of the place and mode of production.

From the brief encounter by William of Rubruck, one can see the significance of trade and its potential effects on the local economy. This passage is not without problems if taken at face value: what is the boundary of *Turkia*? Was the Sultan's inability to sell alum through other merchants an indication of monopoly or simply an exaggeration on the part of the merchants? Regardless of the above questions, the commercial partnership may be an important aspect of interactions between the local (possibly inland) economy and the regional trade.⁶

The route along which alum was exported also indicates the regional integration of trade networks. Based on a later merchants' manual, N. Coureas points out that Cyprus imported many products, including alum, from Konya.⁷ He also notes some merchants travelling from Cyprus to Lajazzo (Ayas) in Cilicia.⁸ This does not mean that all the alum from the realm of the Seljuk Sultanate was exported to Cyprus. What is certain is that there was a trade network encompassing Lycaonia and Cyprus for alum. Locations in Cilicia, which covers the coastal regions of southeastern Asia Minor, might have been venues of travelling merchants. Although it is not certain whether there are other products that may reveal the extent of the trade network or the level of integration of local economy in central Anatolia with the Eastern Mediterranean trade network, this aspect of analysis has hitherto been unexplored.

⁶ Cahen analyses the alum trade only in context of the Eastern Mediterranean trade and political interactions. Claude Cahen, "L'alun avant Phocée," *Revue d'Histoire Economique et Sociale* 41 (1963): 433-447.

⁷ N. Coureas, "Provençal Trade with Cyprus in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *Επετηρίδα του Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών* 22 (1996): 70-71. Hans Eberhard Mayer, *Marseilles Levantehandel und ein akkonensisches Fälscheratelier des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1972), 193-196. "....., e se il apportent aucune marchandise de la terre del soltan del Come o d'autre part deça mer," Although it subsequently mentions monetary units related to the products, it does not specify the regions or locations on the routes.

⁸ N. Coureas, "Provençal Trade with Cyprus in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," 75.

If such literary allusions hint at a “mercantile corridor” between Cyprus and Ikonion affecting the economic activities inland, they do not provide any information specifying exact routes along which commercial activities took place. In other words, the sources provide enough information for speculation, but not enough for its substantiation.

Quoting Mustafa Akdağ, Erdal Eser asserts that Ayas (Yumurtalık) was one of the three major ports, the other two being Alanya and Antalya, connecting the Mediterranean trade and the Seljuk territories.⁹ Understanding trade activities at these three major ports and their implications for inland economic activities will be instrumental in reconstructing the economic conditions both in the coastal regions and further inland.

This approach not only examines systematically the economic interactions between inland and the coastal regions, but also may have the potential to bridge a gap in the current understanding of the Eastern Mediterranean economy. While discussing the economy of Constantinople and Crusader Acre, David Jacoby points out that the overemphasis on the connection between the Eastern Mediterranean and the West obscures economic interactions between different cities in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰ Filling the gap resulting from the absence of “intra-regional perspective”, my research will seek to build up reasonable understandings of such intra-regional economic interactions.

In the course of my research on the mercantile activities taking place in these regions, the article by C. Desimoni on the seventy-nine Genoese notarial documents of 1271, 1274, and 1279 came to my attention.¹¹ Although Robert S. Lopez and Irving W. Raymond have used two notarial documents from those seventy-nine, they did so in the context of a general mercantile history. These two were used to illustrate types of commercial operations: loan with guarantee¹² and commercial activities on the coast of Armenia and Syria.¹³ The significance of these notarial documents from Cilicia has not been systematically explored to further elucidate the trade network linking Cilicia with the surrounding regions. In the same book, Robert S. Lopez and Irving W. Raymond noted a record from Venice instructing its

⁹ Erdal Eser, “From the Roman Settlement of Aigai to Ayas,” *Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu* XLII (2009): 423. Mustafa Akdağ, *Türkiye'nin İktisadi ve İçtimai Tarihi*, I, (1243–1453) (Istanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1995), 29. Before the submission of this paper, I did not have access to Akdağ's book.

¹⁰ David Jacoby, “The economy of Latin Constantinople, 1204-1261,” in *Urbs capta: the Fourth Crusade and its consequences*, ed. Angeliki Laiou (Paris: Lethielleux, 2005), 202. David Jacoby, “Society, culture and the arts in crusader Acre,” in *France and the Holy land: Frankish culture at the end of the crusades*, ed. Daniel H. Weiss and Lisa Mahoney (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 104.

¹¹ C. Desimoni, “Actes passes en 1271, 1274 et 1279 a l'Aias (Petite Armenie) et a Beyrouth par-devant des notaires genois,” *Archives de l'Orient Latin* 1 (1881): 434-534. For other collections of notarial documents, please see the primary source list in the select bibliography.

¹² Robert S. Lopez and Irving W. Raymond, trans., *Medieval trade in the Mediterranean world: illustrative documents* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 171-172.

¹³ Lopez and Raymond, *Medieval trade in the Mediterranean world: illustrative documents*, 224-225.

representative in Ayas to form a *societas* to exercise exclusive right of buying cotton.¹⁴ From these records, one may view Ayas as merely a trade spot of a vast trade network encompassing the Mediterranean. In relation to the local economic conditions in the regions of Cilicia, Pamphylia, and Lycaonia, however, these records may serve as a starting point for my research to reconstruct the categories of merchandise being traded at this particular location when the political control of the Mongols was consolidated in eastern and central Anatolia.¹⁵

In light of the emphasis on the economic interactions between the coastal and inland regions in southern Asia Minor, historiographical materials and letters will be used to provide the institutional framework and political environment for trade, not as a basis for screening potentially suitable localities for my research as planned in the original Project Summary.

Construction of the institutional framework(s) of trade is underpinned by the following assumptions: products from inland (potentially the region around Ikonion) were either abundant or easily purchased¹⁶; there were economic incentives to buy the above

¹⁴ Lopez and Raymond, *Medieval trade in the Mediterranean world: illustrative documents*, 129.

¹⁵ Whether it is viable to use the traded products as indicators of inland economic activities remains to be seen. As this approach tackles the economic implications of products, rather than the institutional framework for trade, David Abulafia's article may be relevant in solving this methodological issue. However, I have not obtained access to this article before I submitted this paper. David Abulafia, "Industrial Products: the Middle Ages," in *Prodotti e tecniche d'oltremare nelle economie europee secc. XIII-XVIII: atti della ventinovesima settimana di studi, 14-19 aprile 1997*, ed. Simonetta Cavaciocchi (Florence: Istituto internazionale di storia economica F. Datini, 1998), 333-358. Discussing the location of production sites and ceramic workshops in relation to the trade routes in Roman Africa, Victoria Leitch aims at showing 'why objects were distributed to particular markets', implicating the wider economic conditions in the region. Such a methodology may be relevant to my research question, but its applicability is still not known at this preliminary stage. Victoria Leitch, "Location, location, location: characterizing coastal and inland production and distribution of Roman African cooking wares," in *Maritime archaeology and ancient trade in the Mediterranean*, ed. Damian Robinson and Andrew Wilson (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Maritime Archaeology, 2011), 167-192.

¹⁶ In her thesis on history-writing about the Seljukid under the Mongols, Sara Nur Yildiz seeks to point out the factors explaining the factionalism as well as political narratives provided by Ibn Bibi, the primary source of the Seljukid in the thirteenth century. Although the economic activities in the Sultanate were discussed, it was only briefly examined in the context of the establishment of the Mongol authority over Anatolia. Sara Nur Yildiz, "Mongol Rule in Thirteenth-Century Seljuk Anatolia: The Politics of Conquest and History Writing 1243-1282" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2006). Discussing various territories of the Ilkhanate in 1340, Hamd-Allāh Mustawfī, an official working for the Ilkhanate, describes Ikonion thus:

..... The climate is temperate: the water is from the hills round; and to keep the water pure, at each city gate there is a great dome built (over a tank), and outside each dome there are some 300 spouts by which the water flows out. The crops here are plentiful and excellent, consisting of cotton, corn and other cereals. There are many gardens; those on the side of the city that is towards the plain, at the present day, lie waste; but those on the other side under the hill, on which stands the castle of Kūlah, are still in cultivation. Grapes and all kinds of fruit are grown here, and the yellow plums are especially sweet, and full of flavour

His observation serves as general information about the crops being grown in the environs of Ikonion. Although it does not touch on the questions where or by whom the crops are being traded, or whether these crops were traded within the regional trade network at all, it does attest to the amenities for any transient merchants. Hamd-Allāh Mustawfī of Qazwīn, *The geographical part of the Nuzhat-al-Qulūb*, trans. G. Le Strange (Leiden: E. J.

products and sell them either along the coast or in the Levant; the non-/regulatory environment encompassing in Cilicia facilitated such exchanges between inland economy and the coastal trade networks. Among them, the non-/regulatory environment encompassing in Cilicia is one of the crucial dimensions in understanding the institutional framework(s) within which economic interactions between the inland and the coastal regions took place.

For the components of this non-/regulatory environment, I propose to look at the following two aspects: institutional and economic.¹⁷ The institutional aspect includes trade agreements emanating from the Seljuks and the Armenians, and the notarial documents from Lajazzo. The former are to be analysed to provide an overview of the meta-institutional framework; the latter a well-positioned snapshot of workings of mercantile activities in a regional setting. Apart from the mode of operations, I plan to look into any correlation between the mode of operation and the types of products, like the commercial partnership exporting alum from the realm of the Sultan mentioned by William of Rubruck. If there exists any non-compliance penalty clause, particular attention will be paid to the mechanism of ensuring full compliance and potential dispute settlement. Understanding the mode of operation and the workings of dispute-settlement mechanisms may shed light on the workings of the trade agreement frameworks that have been often discussed at the Eastern Mediterranean scale. For the economic aspect, I plan to analyse the monetary units mentioned in the notarial deeds to understand the monetary system involved in the mercantile activities around Lajazzo. Whether the monetary unit was only a means of account or real medium of exchange will have to be established.¹⁸ Clarifying this issue will not be a substitute for the actual circulation of coins around Lajazzo in the thirteenth century, but it will provide a preliminary indication of the monetary mechanisms involved in the economic activities in the coastal region.¹⁹ Based on this, I will then seek to determine the degree of monetisation of the local economy around Lajazzo.

Brill, 1919), 91-101. Accessed 5 March 2014 the same translation hosted by Packard Humanities Institute: <http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D16301012%26ct%3D0>

¹⁷ I am grateful for the suggestions from Dr. Archie Dunn regarding the re-orientation of my research in July 2014: putting more emphasis on Cilicia as a region and starting from fortifications and settlements to tackle the issues implicated by my research. These two aspects are part of a larger tentative attempt to devise a working model, reconstructing the institutional environment as shown by various localities in Cilicia.

¹⁸ For this issue, Peter Spufford's work on the currency units used by the Italian merchants will be the point of departure for my efforts. Peter Spufford, *Money and its use in medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

¹⁹ Despite my preliminary efforts, I am not aware of any work dealing with this topic. The best starting point seems to be compiling a list of archaeological reports on fortifications and urban settlements in the region around Lajazzo.

By investigating the above two aspects of the merchant activities taking place in and around Lajazzo, my research aims at providing a basis for further investigating the urban settlement as a regional emporium and, potentially, its economic interactions with the surrounding rural areas. Defining the relationship between the overarching monetary mechanisms and the localities around Lajazzo as economic units will provide me with not only with ‘connecting the dots’ but also a more general but intra-regional picture of the economic interactions *within* the coastal regions.

To conclude, the expansion of the Mongols into Europe and Anatolia has attracted much discussion on its impact. Among different regions, the case of southern Asia Minor remains the least explored, compared with other regions such as the Black Sea.²⁰ Lippard’s attempt to assess the economic impact of the Mongol expansion, within the context of Byzantino-Mongol relations, obscures the less documented regions by default. This problem is compounded by the marginal nature of the regions in question for the Mongol administration centred in Tabriz. This irrelevance of economic conditions in central Anatolia is also highlighted when compared to the more documented trade and economic activities in notarial as well as literary records for the Black Sea trade network that included Constantinople, Trebizond, the Crimea, and Tabriz.²¹ This emphasis on particular regions, dependent upon numerically abundant sources emanating from certain localities, obscures the intra-regional dimension of the Eastern Mediterranean trade network. Even if a regional trade centre saw a lower level of economic activities than Constantinople, Crimea, or Tabriz, it is a regional trade centre nonetheless. Treating a regional trade centre in its own right leads to the hitherto unexplored question: the economic interactions between the centre and its hinterlands. Unlike Constantinople, the urban economic development and the nature and locations of hinterlands remain to be defined and explored in the case of Lajazzo. Understanding such issues in the case of Lajazzo may help devise a working model to attempt similar endeavours in the case of Alanya and Antalya, the two major ports situated to the west of Cilicia. This understanding will also illuminate the nature of the role of a commercial corridor, consisting of various emporia between the Seljuks and the Mediterranean, before, during, and after the Mongol expansion into Asia Minor.

²⁰ Virgil Ciocîltan, *The Mongols and the Black Sea Trade in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, trans. Samuel Willcocks (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

²¹ For example: George Ioan Brătianu, ed., *Actes des notaires génois de Péra et de Caffa de la fin du treizième siècle (1281-1290)* (Bucarest: Cultura Nationala, 1927).

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