

**DAKAM'S
INTERNATIONAL
HISTORY STUDIES MEETING
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**

OTTOMAN STUDIES '17 / International Conference on Ottoman Empire
and Ottoman Studies

BYZANTINE STUDIES '17 / International Conference on Byzantine
Empire and Byzantine Studies

Özgür Öztürk DAKAM YAYINLARI
April 2017, İstanbul.

www.dakam.org
Firuzağa Mah. Boğazkesen Cad., No:76/8, 34425, Beyoğlu, İstanbul

DAKAM'S INTERNATIONAL HISTOY STUDIES MEETING CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS
OTTOMAN STUDIES '17 / International Conference on Ottoman Empire and Ottoman Studies
BYZANTINE STUDIES '17 / International Conference on Byzantine Empire and Byzantine Studies

Designed by: Berfu Ayhan
Cover Design: D/GD (DAKAM Graphic Design)
Print: Metin Copy Plus, Mollafenari Mah., Türkocağı Cad. 3/1, Mahmutpaşa/İstanbul, Turkey
ISBN: 978-605-9207-74-4

THE FUNCTIONING OF THE SEALS OF KOMMERKIARIOI IN 7-8TH CENTURIES

ANDRII DOMANOVSKYI

ABSTRACT

Special comprehensive studies of the functioning of the seals of kommerkiarioi as a means of state control and supervision of trade have not been taken yet, that allow to come to a special halt here.

We can try to reconstruct the generalized scheme of the application and operation of the seals of kommerkiarioi in the Byzantine Empire in the 7-9th centuries. It must be emphasized that we are talking only about the activities of the officials associated with the general control and supervision of trade, mainly foreign, import and export of goods. It can be argued that kommerkiarioi oversaw maritime trade of raw silk and silk products, bread, wine, olive oil, salt, weapons, iron, construction materials, primarily wood for the construction of ships and other strategic goods. Kommerkiarioi controlled ships arriving in Byzantium, and foreign merchant ships and vessels going outside the empire. In addition to general trade control officials obviously suppressed export to outside the empire of strategic raw materials and goods. These were the so-called «forbidden» products, which export from the state was strictly limited and regulated, or even banned. Among them there was salt, grain, iron, weapons and materials to make them, grindstones, wine, sauce, olive oil, wool, gold bullions, glassware and coins made of precious metals.

The seals of kommerkiarioi obviously served as one of the most important means of control, and were similar to modern seals of state organs. Without the seal of the responsible official on the product packaging or on the accompanying documents cargo transportation within the empire, and especially its export across the border were impossible: either an authorized official, not having found appropriate seals, could arrest the goods for further investigation, to remove it from the merchant or else simply confiscate the cargo in the favor of the state. Once obtained respective accompanying documents and seals, the goods were passing number of «checkpoints» between the departure and the destination points, in which showing documents, fastened with seals or sealed bales were necessary to obtain the permission of travelling and transportation of goods. The number of control points was the more the more important was the direction of the empire trade, with their highest density being in Constantinople and specific «economic zone of the capital».

It is also possible to select several stages of functioning seals of kommerkiarioi as a means to control the trade:

1. The stage of obtaining permits to transport the goods, its import or export beyond the empire. At this stage kommerkiarioi acts, imposing his seal on the packaging of cargo and its accompanying documents.
2. Stage of verification and confirmation of permissions on all control points through which goods should go through. At this stage, both local kommerkiarioi and other officials authorized to oversee the trade could act. Note also that kommerkiarioi at this stage could verify and confirm the permission, sealed by other authorized officials.
3. Stage of the goods arrival at the destination within the Byzantine State, or at the last outpost within the imperial territories, which did apply the rule of Byzantium. Here seals were reconciled for the last time and, in the case of cargo export beyond the empire, went beyond the state border with the consignment.

Keywords: Byzantium, trade, control, kommerkiarioi, seals