**The Role of the Upper Class within Byzantine Empire**

The Byzantine Empire was one of the longest reign and highest prestige empire in history of mankind due to service in homeland, war, peace and prosperity and infrastructure, culture and many other domains. The jewel of this empire was Constantinople which was remarkable city made with towering walls, marble streets, crowded streets, dazzling churches, big houses and palaces which were simple reflection of great Byzantine empire. Constantinople economy was developed by the strong economic policies as well as elite classes who were experienced in business and want to expand them towards East and West due to their ideal geographical location. They soon made their critical role in Byzantine Empire because the empire see Constantinople economy as backbone for its prosperity and this jewel city flourished for centuries without any fear of being conquered by some outsider. However the inside story was really different, Elite class who were providing business to government in form to taxes and source of bread and butter for poor people by providing them jobs, have to handle a lot of things. Elite Class of Constantinople dominated the trade and wealth generated from city, but at the same time have to be contended with the imperial house as well as each other in order to gain political and social dominance.

The reign of Constantine (312-37) was one of remarkable period in the European history, due to his efforts to bring peace, stability after the civil war, and attention to rebuilt the Rome cities which were damaged in wars as well as consolidate its borders (Rautman, 2006). He ordered to built a new city which was named as Nova Roma Constantinopolitan: the New Rome, the city of Constantine. The city was paved, public monument were made, well secured, and latest fortification and on top of everything the geographical location was excellent showing his brilliant political and imperial mind to expand his empire both economically and geographically. This location also ensures that outside attacks can be well-prevented and no attacker can go toward Europe. Besides politically importance he made the city religiously important piece of artifact too, the city next strongest pillar were its business sector who were always busy brining new business and a lot of taxes to city making it stronger day by day. The city taxes were well consumed by making strong fortification and security providing which is why Constantinople was unbeatable for centuries. The elite class was not only in business but also in law making or government services, Churches, military, and civil bureaucracy. To hold these offices means to impact the imperial offices in a way they want to as well as keeping the wealth and authority under elite class as well (Rautman, 2006). Such measurements by elite class make them impact imperial house as well as counter between themselves to define their legacy and make more influence in city politics.

In government, the elite class impact imperial house politically with their own family members in Elite Imperial guards who were very influential in imperial level. They were followed by series of provincial field armies, commanded by generals, who report to emperor. This whole cycle of events shows that elite class was strongly involved in government policies especially in military to provide security to their business as well as protect their interest from any possible attack from outside. The noble class business was spreading both east and west directions and all over the world Constantinople is considered as a mark of trust for doing business in silk, gold and blue embroidery (). For such reasons the big amount of gold business was for city and this make elite classes to politically influence the imperial house as well as compete with their competitors in the business and politics. Each family was ensuring that they have enough influence in government sector to make sure that their voice is being heard and their concern is being addressed. The one more influential and probably the most powerful way was through Church to influence the policies of government as they have to be approved by Church at any cost. So the church was the centre of decision making as well and was well acquainted with the emperor. The powerful families also have family members or serious bonding with church members too who can politically influence the imperial household (Laiou and Angeliki E, 1980).

The Elite society was one whose presence was easily detectable due to their social status on street, because rich people move on chariots and horses or buggies for ladies while poor people use footpaths. Their housing was obvious trademark that they belong to upper class, their social status is different, as they built grand houses, throughout the city, the bakeries, shops and well connected streets showed that these are owned by rich people. They pay large sum of taxes because this can eb understood from different facts that Constantinople was unconquerable for centuries due to its fortification and best security building, as well as it was well protected and cleaned which was all maintained by the taxes given by people including the rich people (Kruse, 2019). The people were influential as well as reserved to protect their city because it was not the politically important city but also a religious important monarch which was loved by whole Europe, who always willing to protect their beloved city and many times sent their financial and personal aid to protect the city from outsider attacks (Holo, 2009).

The upper class of Constantinople was also spending lavish living style who manage to have parties and lavish time spending rather than spending on social purposes. The people who were middle and lower class have another level of association with the Constantinople which was religiously connected in order to provide services to the Church and many other things which made them religiously connected with services. The psychology of rich people of that time was similar to that of today who believe the riches they are earning is their hard work and they were very limited to pay for social services except to pay for religiously rights or charity through church (Papagianni, 2002). The economic pushback from upper class start when Constantinople was towards its declining centuries and many attacks were made by invaders and people were not willing to spend their riches on their own protection and this way causing serious harm to imperial family (Papagianni, 2002).

There was a clear dialect and style difference between elite class and middle class of Constantinople which can be seen through their speaking. People with higher class speak with more sophisticated and complex dialect style which was known by than writers and historians to show their nobility (Rautman, 2006). However many times physicians, biologist and other engineers and doctors were seeing apologizing for their lack of language use due to less attention towards dialect and intellectual usage of words. These differences were easily seen through upper class and towards the imperial family. These were simple and common way to show off the nobility and riches to other people and distinguish from them easily. The imperial code of conduct and language was seeped through upper class and never transmitted to lower classes which is another prove that upper class always wanted to maintain a distance from other classes and they want to maintain their distinguished appearance (Rautman, 2006).

To conclude we can say that byzantine period was really ideal to grow and flourish the Constantinople but at the same time it was world culture centre and ideal location for invaders to invade and get its riches. It is obvious that riches this city was generating from business was a target of invaders but the city was invincible due to strong fortification of that time. However, the internal policies and politics of elite class slowly impacted the imperial hold on the empire and they fully functionally acted to participate in government affairs through Church, government officials and other powerful positions which can get their objective fulfilled without being noticed much by competitors as well as imperial hold. The rich families of Constantinople were always influential on whole Europe due to their well connections and religiously belonging to Constantinople.

Bibliography

Holo, Joshua. *Byzantine Jewry in the Mediterranean economy*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Papagianni, Eleutheria. "Byzantine legislation on economic activity relative to social class." *EHB. Washington, DC* (2002): 1083-1093.

Rautman, Marcus Louis. *Daily life in the Byzantine Empire*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006.

Laiou-Thomadakis, Angeliki E. "The Byzantine Economy in the Mediterranean Trade System; Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 34 (1980): 177-222.

Kruse, Thomas. "The Branches of Roman and Byzantine Government and the Role of Cities, the Church, and Elite Groups." *A Companion to Greco‐Roman and Late Antique Egypt* (2019): 119-138.