

BYZANTIUM ON THE ADRIATIC FROM 550 TILL 800

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Byzantine Adriatic was between 550 and 800 an ethnically heterogeneous marginal area with a specific economy and cultural variety. This period differ from the earlier and later periods of Byzantine presence on the Adriatic, and especially on the eastern Adriatic coast. Population in this area felt threatened by the aggressive hinterland Lombards and Slavs, the Croats and Serbs. Their adherence to the idea of the Empire made it impossible to impose any other policy or rule.

The theme of this paper, although its title in principle suggests it belongs to the study of Byzantium, is inseparable from the study of Western history as a whole, and the mediæval history of the South Slav peoples and of northern Italy. This is because as the unified Roman domains in the Mediterranean disintegrated (because of barbarian invasions in the 4th and 5th centuries, the coming of the Slavs to the Balkans and Lombards to Italy, and the iconoclastic crisis in the East), the Adriatic was split between Byzantine and Western spheres of influence.

Since Byzantine ideology claimed universal power in the former Roman Empire, both over the territory and over the aquatory, the Adriatic cannot be viewed separately from the general unfolding of Byzantine history and Byzantine systems of thought. On the other hand, the essence of Byzantine presence on the Adriatic was very different from what it was in Constantinople or in the central regions of the Empire. On the Adriatic, Byzantium was a specific "Byzantium outside Byzantium".

Many scholars investigated only the history of the eastern Adriatic, or only the history of some parts of the Italian coast (Venice, Ravenna, Pentapol, southern Italy, etc.). Each of these regions has a very specific history. One might ask, therefore, whether we attached unmerited significance to this integral approach in our wish to emphasize the importance of this paper and generally the existence of an integral Adriatic policy as part of overall Byzantine policy and civilization? People generally consider that links between the two Adriatic shores and among points under Byzantine rule grew increasingly weaker in late Antiquity and in the first centuries of the Middle Ages, which includes the period from 550 to 800, and that these shores did not in principle share a common destiny. Scholars adopted this attitude because of a lack of sources, especially written sources, but in recent decades and years there has been a steady increase of archaeological finds. Some structures and works of art from that age have been preserved, which enables comparative and interdisciplinary research¹. This makes the overall view I have adopted in this paper possi-

ble, what is more, necessary. However, it still does not answer the question: can the Byzantine Adriatic be viewed as a whole? I think that there is simply no alternative to an affirmative reply². The Adriatic is an integral geographic entity and Byzantine presence there, regardless of possible regional particularities, deserves to be treated integrally. What is more, the Adriatic is climatically integral — all of it has the semi-arid Mediterranean climate, and olives and grapes, plants so rich in symbolic meaning, grow everywhere³. Here this integrity is primarily emphasized as a symbol of the Roman Empire and the Roman civilization which were in eternal contrast to the barbarian newcomers. One can therefore conclude that between 550 and 800 Byzantine presence on the eastern and on the western Adriatic coast had many similarities in various aspects of social and cultural life.

The second half of the 6th, and the 7th and 8th centuries differ from the earlier and later periods of Byzantine presence on the Adriatic, and especially on the eastern Adriatic coast. This was a time of inactivity, of crisis, bounded by two great Byzantine military campaigns on the Adriatic coasts — the first under Justinian I in the 6th century⁴, the second under Nicephor I at the beginning of the 9th century⁵. However, the difference between a time of war and peace was not the only one, although they were the most pronounced examples of activity and inactivity. Much deeper social processes were also at work: Byzantium reached the Adriatic in the 6th century on the wings of Justinian's renewal, and in the 9th century, after emerging from the iconoclastic crisis and isolation from the West, it again moved towards the Adriatic as a result of the Macedonian renaissance and a generally increased interest in events in the West.

All through the Adriatic Justinian's rule was marked by his defeat of the Ostrogoths, and intense construction of churches and other buildings. Byzantine influence in art came to expression in the construction of the Basilica of Euphrasius in Poreč in the mid-6th century⁶, in the construction of the church of San Vitale in Ravenna, and in the

repair of late-Antique walls in Salona⁷. These, and some other structure, show similarities with the same kind of structures in central parts of the Empire. Maximianus, Bishop of Ravenna, shown on the famous mosaic standing next to Emperor Justinian, symbolizes these integrative processes on the Adriatic. He was born in a village near Rovinj in Istria and during his term as the bishop built many churches in Ravenna, but also St Maria Formosa in Pula (Istria).

An example of Byzantine presence on the eastern Adriatic coast, which has to date been mentioned relatively little, is the coastal line or the maritime limes. This is undoubtedly the most complex feat of construction and as a whole the most immense and expensive part of "Byzantium on the Adriatic". It was a series of about a hundred fortifications, maybe more. The system, probably started in the 4th and 5th centuries and completed in the reign of Justinian I, successfully secured the Byzantine thalassokratia for many centuries⁸.

On the northern Adriatic coast the thalassokratia was secured by a specific way of traveling through the lagunas, because only very skillful sailors were able to negotiate these areas successfully. According to Procopius, "in that place (in the region of Ravenna and mouth of the river Po) a very wonderful thing takes place every day. For early in the morning the sea forms a kind of river and comes up over the land for the distance of a day's journey for an unencumbered traveler and becomes navigable in the midst of the mainland, and then in the late afternoon it turns back again, causing the inlet to disappear, and gathers the stream to itself. All those, therefore, who have to convey provisions into the city or carry them out from there for trade or for any other reason, place their cargoes in boats, and drawing them down to the place where the inlet is regularly formed, they await the inflow of the water. And when this comes, the boats are lifted little by little from the ground and float, and the sailors on them set to work and from that time on are seafaring men. And this is not the only place where this happens, but it is the regular occurrence along the whole coast in this region as far as the city of Aquileia..."⁹ Barbarian newcomers were obviously unable to take advantage of these opportunities so Byzantine territories in this area were quite secure from attack, despite the fact that their enemies lived quite close to them. This was not only characteristic at the time of Lombard invasion, but also during the invasions of Huns, Visigoths and some other Germanic peoples in the 5th century. Cassiodorus described the life of refugees in the laguna area almost idyllically¹⁰.

It seems that this Byzantine thalassokratia did not disappear, at least in some parts of the eastern Adriatic, until the 10th century. Constantinus Porphyrogenitus wrote that some islands in Dalmatia were uninhabited and had upon them deserted cities (i. e. earlier fortresses of the "limes maritimus") — he mentioned nine of them, "and very many others of which the names are not intelligible"¹¹.

After the euphoria at the time of Justinian's reconquest came a period of facing hard reality. The Emperor's death in 565 really represents a turning point in the policies towards the dominions in the West. By and large, there was no more conquest, only merciless and permanent loss of territories which the Empire considered hers. The formation of the Exarchat of Ravenna, although inspired and organised from Constantinople, had the goal of making those distant western regions as independent as possible from

the central government. Local peasants were made responsible for defending their own region in the place of mercenaries from central parts of the Empire¹². The difference between Italy and central parts of the Empire was that in Italy landowners were becoming soldiers, while in the East soldiers were becoming landowners.

The Byzantine Adriatic shared the fate of the other western areas of the Empire. As the Lombards occupied more and more of Italy, the Exarchate of Ravenna became smaller, and Byzantine power narrowed to a relatively thin coastal strip and islands. The period around the year 600 was the time of "a great movement of people and interests moving towards the newly-established communications and new division of roles"¹³. In Dalmatia and in Istria more or less the same thing happened because the Slavs (mostly Croats) came at the beginning of the 7th century: "only the township on the coast held out against the Slavs, and continued to be in the hands of Romans, because they obtained their livelihood from the sea"¹⁴. The picture of catastrophe painted by older historians about events at the turn from the 6th to the 7th century has recently changed and we get an impression of the peaceable arrival of the Slavs and relatively harmonious co-existence¹⁵.

When the Lombards came new centres were created on the end boundaries of the lagunas and Byzantine power in them was firmly maintained. On the contrary, on the eastern coast most of the towns of Antiquity continued to exist into the first centuries of the Middle Ages. No large new urban centre was formed on the islands of what are today Hrvatsko primorje and Dalmatia although they were better protected from attacks from the interior, and even the towns that already existed on them did not grow a lot.

Because of the general crisis in the state the Empire had increasingly less ability to act on the Adriatic. Because of this impotence and the waning of real interest it grew less and less involved. However, it should also be borne in mind that Byzantium did not have any real reason to act on the Adriatic for over 200 years: it had no adversaries because neither the Lombards nor the Slavs had much naval power.

In Italy, on the western Adriatic coast, the slow disappearance of the direct influence of central Byzantine provinces from the end of the 6th century can be followed in quite great detail. This was even happening during the reign of Justinian, when the church hierarchy in the north Adriatic refused to support Justinian's condemnation of the document *Tria capitula*, adopted at the Fifth Oecumenical Church Council in Constantinople, for suspicion of Nestorian tendencies. In the 7th and 8th centuries, Byzantine historians and chroniclers showed a drastic loss of interest in events in the West and on the Adriatic. Their books reflect the interests of their readers as much as their own. Scarce information is given mostly by Western chroniclers. These trends were increased by the general process of growing civilizational and other differences between East and West: monophysitic disputes in the 5th and 6th centuries, and the Graecization of the Empire in the 7th century, played an important role in this. The Exarch of Ravenna, although named by the Emperor, was becoming more and more independent. However, even this was not enough for some exarchs and they rebelled: the first to rebel was Eleuterius, about twenty years later Olympius, and this second revolt ended with Olympius' death in 651. The militias of Ravenna and Pentapol did not want to bring the Pope to the Sixth General Council in Constantinople in 680-1, but stood in his defense. Justinian II was very angry by the hos-

tile attitude the citizens of Ravenna took against him during his first rule (685-695). Thus, when he re-assumed the throne (705-711), he sent a punitive expedition force against the city — Ravenna was sacked, the bishop's eyes were gouged out, and the most prominent citizens were brought to Constantinople in chains and executed there. These horrible acts of violence were ominous signs of the future iconoclastic dispute, the harbinger of fresh differences between East and West.

The birth of iconoclasm and the iconoclastic crisis led to a definite collapse of connections between Constantinople and Byzantium, and the Adriatic¹⁶. The Empire could protect neither the Pope nor the territory under his rule from the increasingly aggressive Lombards. At the same time, the Empire accepted the agony of the Exarchate relatively calmly, and the first and then the second, decisive, fall of Ravenna. Iconoclasm could not have had any partisan on Adriatic shores, which were even a safe haven for its opponents.¹⁷

Byzantium had a crucial impact on religion, because after 732 the Byzantine Church once again assumed control over Illyricum, Dalmatia and some western areas of the Empire¹⁸. Dalmatian bishops participated at the Sixth Oecumenical Council in 754 although they could certainly not condone its rigid iconoclastic stands¹⁹. They also took part in the Seventh Oecumenical Council in 787 in Nicaea. Bishop John of Solin, Bishop Urso of Rab, Bishop Laurentius of Osor, and Bishop John of Kotor attended²⁰, which was an essential precondition for the Byzantine Church to participate, in various ways and on several occasions, in the conversion to Christianity of "Sclavinia" in the hinterland of the eastern Adriatic coast²¹.

Military success against the Arabs in the east under Constantine V (741-775), and the ebbing of the iconoclastic movement at the end of the 8th century, paved the way for the greater Byzantine engagement in the west (and in the Adriatic), which happened at the turn of the century. Then, partly spurred by Frankish encroachment in the Adriatic interior, Byzantium moved to maritime action.

Looked at from the perspective of society as a whole, political presence was the most important, it was the basis of any other influence: despite all ideological and political breakdowns, loss of interest and the reduced ability to control the Adriatic aquatory from the central parts of the Empire or from Constantinople itself, we can still continue to talk about "Byzantium on the Adriatic", about a population still attached to the idea of the Empire. This was a specific region, "Byzantium outside Byzantium", characterised by its strong regional and independent development, different from central parts of the Empire²². Everybody was accustomed to Roman virtues — they are what made them citizens of the Roman Empire, that is, Byzantium as its natural and legitimate successor. Common to all were respect for "res publica" and "pium imperium" and in Byzantium the terms were adapted in the Greek-speaking territory "douleia" — the principle of legitimacy and loyalty to the Emperor, and "oikeiosis" — the spirit of unity. These were born and developed in many areas of the Empire, including Byzantine Italy, in the 6th and even in the 10th and 11th centuries²³. An important reason why Byzantium was preserved on the eastern Adriatic coast at that time was because the population felt threatened by the aggressive hinterland Lombards and Slavs, the Croats and Serbs. Adherence to the idea of the Empire made it impossible to impose any other policy or rule.

The seal of Paulus, Exarch of Ravenna (723-6), which was found in Solin but was subsequently lost²⁴, could also have attested direct Byzantine influence on events in the Dalmatian-Croatian region in the 7th and 8th centuries, for which there are almost no sources. It is not known whether Dalmatia depended on the Exarch of Ravenna and that exarchy, or was completely independent²⁵. That some links existed between Dalmatia and Ravenna is shown by the case of Archbishop Damianus of Ravenna (692-708), who was Dalmatian by birth²⁶. The earliest of the seals which can be attributed with more certainty date from the beginning of the 9th century — the first mentions George, "imperial spatharios and archon of Dermatia" (sic!), what is undoubtedly "Dalmatia", and it is dated to the early 9th century. The other seal has the inscription "N., spatharios and archon of Dalmatia" and it is dated to the 8th-9th century²⁷. However, much more important than some data that show links between the two shores is the fact that the imperial subjects on the eastern and western shore depended on each other by the laws of geography — for the inhabitants of the western shore sailing along the eastern shore was an outlet into the world (in the 830s Venetian merchants sailed home from Benevento along the eastern shore), and the few inhabitants of the eastern shore had to rely on the larger and stronger cities on the western shore.

The Byzantine Adriatic was burdened by crisis and threatened by newcomers from the hinterland, but it nevertheless continued to nurture something of great value that did not yet exist in the Lombard and Slav (Croatian) interior, the town. Symbolically and actually, the town preserved the continuity of those regions with the civilization of late Antiquity, and could be best protected by supreme Byzantine power. Historiography offers very different definitions of the early medieval town²⁸. The Byzantine towns on the coast were much better organised and had far more urban characteristics than Lombard settlements and Slavic villages in the hinterland: their ramparts were not only a symbol and the main urban characteristic, but a real advantage. The location of towns was very carefully planned, "so that their ramparts could resist any aggressor", as a 6th century military treatise suggests²⁹. Some Byzantine towns were still important as centres of commerce. Some of them had continuity from late Antiquity which usually made them diocesan seats.

Byzantium held strategic points along the Adriatic shore important for preserving the thalassokratia and controlling communications. This meant that it was not necessary to defend the entire coastline, and rivals and potential enemies could be given an outlet to the sea in some places: on the eastern Adriatic this was the case of Salona and Nin³⁰. In north Italy the Lombards reached the sea in several places, but they did not threaten maritime traffic anywhere.

Much of the traffic on the Byzantine Adriatic was of local or narrow regional character, people travelled only from place to place, from mainland to island, and the like. In the Rižanski placit from 804 the inhabitants of Istria said that they do not travel further than "Venice, Ravenna and Dalmatia", but this was only after they came under Frankish rule at the end of the 8th century. While they were under Byzantium they did not undertake such long journeys³¹.

The epithet "Byzantine" should obviously not be given only to what came from Constantinople or the central parts of the Empire, because whatever was created and happened on Byzantine territories was also "Byzantine", for example in Italy (for the earlier period in Ravenna and

Rome), and in Byzantine Dalmatia and Istria. Viewed strictly from the historical and legal aspect it could not have been otherwise — the ruling ideology of the Byzantine Empire considered all Christian lands their own, and all Christians who lived in them the Emperor's subjects, regardless of the vernacular language. Specifically, this is what Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus said in his description of conditions on the eastern Adriatic coast³².

Nevertheless, it seems to me that the Byzantine attitude towards the Adriatic in this period is discussed in the categories: "this is significant for Byzantium" and "this is insignificant" (though occasionally I could not avoid making this mistake myself). For example, Šišić thought that the Empire's interest in Dalmatia increased after 751, because it became the centre of Byzantine oecumene in the Adriatic³³. Despite the fact that this statement can generally be accepted, the argumentation can also be reversed — Dalmatia lost a lot of its significance because the Empire lost Ravenna, its most important foothold on the Adriatic. Furthermore, J. Ferluga claims that the Dalmatian islands played "une rôle de premier ordre au VIIe siècle"³⁴. In contrast to these opinions, it would be more appropriate to define not "significance", a most undefinable category on the basis of rare and poor sources, but to examine whether Byzantium had the power to directly influence or even control events on the faraway Adriatic. Perhaps we should discuss only the assessments and estimates of the Byzantines themselves: could they, with a certain amount of money and a certain number of ships and soldiers, favourably influence events? If they estimated that they could not (and this was the case for almost two centuries), they did not get involved in adventures. It would be even more important to determine what possibilities were at the disposal of the coastal domains in relation to inland areas.

When did the great change take place in the Byzantine possessions on the Adriatic, the transformation from late Antiquity to the Middle Ages so characteristic for other regions? This moment is difficult to find. It does not exist even in the at first glance catastrophic changes in the 6th and the 7th centuries, or in the "eventful time" at the beginning of the 9th century. Even if the interior did go through deep and long-lasting changes, Byzantine rule on the Adriatic coast was not more immediately threatened, it was not even interrupted. Links between Adriatic ports and ports in the central parts of the Empire were not broken even in those "dark ages"³⁵. Life died out in some places, but in others it became even stronger — and this is how it continued, although it necessarily had to adapt.

The Adriatic did not feel Arab incursion more directly right until the 9th century. The arrival of the Lombards and Slavs in the Adriatic hinterland did not upset the Byzantine thalassokratia or the functioning of maritime traffic to any great degree. Archaeological research, for example, shows that the break in ceramic imports from North Africa to the Adriatic happened in the second half of the 7th century. It should, therefore, not be linked with anything that happened in the hinterland, not even directly with loss of interest in the West, but with the closing of the Mediterranean and the interruption of Mediterranean trade caused by Arab attacks on Constantinople and the conquest of some African provinces in the second half of the 7th century³⁶. This to a degree confirms, for the Adriatic, Henri Pirenne's thesis that medieval decadence, and the beginning of the Middle Ages, did not start when the barbarians invaded the territory of the Empire in the 4th and 5th cen-

turies leading to the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476, but after the spread of Islam and the creation of a caliphate from Damascus to Cordoba in the 7th and 8th centuries, and the concurrent extinction of Mediterranean trade³⁷. Because of its appeal, and the undoubted importance of such conclusions, Pirenne's thesis has been the subject of discussion for decades³⁸. In the meantime other researchers presented theses that did not get such wide publicity. For example, the American historian of Czech origin Francis Dvornik considered that the entirety of Antique Europe, and especially the possibility of direct land communication between the European East and West, were lost in the 7th century when the Slavs arrived on the Balkan peninsula and occupied all the land routes³⁹. There is also a thesis that the Vandals prevented direct contact between the western and eastern Mediterranean in the mid-5th century, when they created a strong maritime state in north Africa (today's Tunisia), on Sardinia and Corsica⁴⁰.

Concerning the Adriatic, Pirenne was partly right, but in part he must also be denied: if the question of Byzantine presence is reduced to a problem of "continuity" then we can claim that the world of Antiquity lived on to a large extent in these areas⁴¹. Moreover, this world was preserved in the areas under the Lombards, probably to a great extent owing to Byzantium⁴². However, Byzantine rule in the narrow sense of administration was waning. Economic and cultural influence from the central parts of the Empire was weakening, more because of the general crisis of the Empire than because of possible new problems in Adriatic navigation. Byzantium ruled the Adriatic masterfully, as it did the whole of the Mediterranean before the Arab intrusion around 650⁴³. Relatively lively communication took place under the Empire's protection — the Slavs moved into the area of the Exarchate and went to war for the Empire in Italy. Some vitality was felt, new impulses of the power of life were brought to these areas by the barbaric newcomers.

The 7th and 8th centuries were a time of stagnation. All social structures were at a standstill and changes were either nonexistent or were so slow that even the relatively numerous and rich sources in the Exarchate of Ravenna barely registered them. Artistic production only imitated older models, and in considerably smaller quantities⁴⁴. Even Ravenna, the city of extraordinary monuments from late Antiquity, went through a period of decadence at this time. It was the time of a microparasitic and macroparasitic economic and demographic crisis, a time in which the "life of an individual was short, and the life of the collective slow"⁴⁵.

The fall of Ravenna in 751 AD meant only a temporary suppression of the desire to control the sea route that penetrated deepest into the European land mass and ensured direct contact with an ever stronger France, that is with western and central Europe where "Europe was being born"⁴⁶. When these long-term interests corresponded with real opportunities action was initiated. This happened around 800 AD but not even then was there any drastic break that would manifest the new era. Nevertheless, the Middle Ages reached the Adriatic. Christianity started to take root in the hinterland of the eastern Adriatic, the Frankish Empire came to the Italian hinterland: the phenomena most characteristic of the barbaric Middle Ages. The medieval merchant city-state "par excellence", Venice, started to appear from the sands of the laugunas under Byzantine rule. Speaking in terms of art history, the Pre-

Romanesque Era was born, Hellenised medieval Byzantium appeared on the scene bringing the mid-Byzantine governmental system — *themes*⁴⁷. However, all these phenomena that appeared in the 9th century were directly connected with the past, partially mirroring Antiquity and attempting to imitate relations which were then in power. Antiquity continued to be the unattainable model that nobody wanted to renounce, but could not attain.

The continuity of the Orthodox dogma (different from Orthodox Christianity after 1054) confronted with Lombard Arianism and Slav paganism, together with continuous contacts with the East and the West, enabled a relatively painless passage from one epoch to the other and transformed dramatic breaks into long-lasting processes of adaptation to new circumstances. Byzantium and its civilizational presence played a crucial role at this time.

When one talks about “civilizational presence”, a question arises: what did the presence of Byzantium bring to the lands and peoples of the Adriatic from 550 to 800? This problem comes to light even better in a comparison between Byzantium and the Lombard and Slavic newcomers to the Adriatic hinterland.

At that time the Adriatic was an ethnically heterogeneous marginal area with a specific economy and cultural variety. If one tries to explain this situation using the categories of “civilization” and “barbarism”, the period of our research is the interval in which, at one point, two worlds were being created on the Adriatic coast: one “civilized” — Byzantine and Roman, and the other “barbaric” — Slavic and Lombard. It seems to us that this unique situation on the Adriatic (this dualism between coast and hinterland had never existed before, and it can only with difficulty be compared with anything in the recent past) lasted, congruent with regional characteristics, for about 100 years (in the case of the Lombards in Italy) and perhaps for as much as 300 years (in the case of the Slavs in the eastern Adriatic hinterland), when these two worlds started to melt into an area of a united civilization.

The military success against the Arabs on the eastern frontier of the Empire in the time of Constantine V (741-775), the slow disappearance of the iconoclastic movement and, above all, Frankish penetration into Italy and the hinterland of the eastern Adriatic, motivated and accelerated Byzantine action on the Adriatic. Frankish attempts to occupy the Byzantine Adriatic failed — in the Treaty of Aachen in 812 the Franks confirmed only the possession of Istria.

Military campaigns undertaken by the Byzantines at the beginning of the 9th century were just the first step in this complex operation. With the Aachen Peace Treaty in 812 Byzantium came out of the Byzantine-Frankish conflict as the winner, without a real prolonged war (as medieval wars usually were, as was the Byzantine experience with the Persians, the Arabs and, finally, the Turks). In the next few decades the peace treaty was followed by the translation of relics of saints (St. Mark to Venice, St. Donat to Zadar, St. Triphon to Kotor), an important role in the conversion to Christianity of the peoples on the eastern Adriatic, engagement in commerce and culture, and the foundation of Byzantine administrative units (*themes*). These actions helped melt the differences between the Byzantine coastal domain and the hinterland of the eastern Adriatic. In the 9th century Byzantine domains on the Adriatic began to reflect the new Empire which sailed into a very active medieval period after the inertia of late Antiquity. In fact, the true Mid-

dle Ages started in the 9th century, on the Adriatic. At that time independent states were being founded under the aegis of the Empire’s supreme power, such as Venice.

The development of Venice was made possible by Byzantine supremacy as well as by the fact that Venice remained in close contact with the Byzantine world⁴⁸. The region of Venice with Istria was one province under the administration of the Exarch of Ravenna. In 639 the centre of Byzantine administration was situated in Cittanova-Heraciana. After a period of successful centralist rule from Ravenna, in the 740s, towards the end of the exarchy, the Venetians could no longer expect effective aid from Ravenna. Thus they elected their own imperial administrator — a “*dux*”⁴⁹. This was the beginning of aspirations for autonomy, which were still far from aspirations for full independence. Besides its political importance, Venice’s economic importance also grew with the disappearance of the exarchy and the partial renewal of East-West links at the end of the 8th century. Local loyalties fuelled the fires of conflict among Venetians. Some were for and some were against maintaining their link with the Byzantine Empire, but the conflict among them was as much a matter of rivalry between families and between island communities. From the 6th century the religious and ecclesiastical center was located in Grado, on the very eastern edge of the area. In 775-776 the Bishopric of Olivolo was created to underline the importance of the neighbouring political centre in Venetian lagoon⁵⁰. Nevertheless, in the second half of 8th century the Franks recognized Byzantine sovereignty in that area⁵¹. Yet, in those times the Venetians retained a powerful sense of loyalty to Byzantium⁵². The position of Venice was threatened by the new Frankish Empire, and Venetian-Byzantine relations were closely connected with relations between the two Empires.

At the beginning of the 9th century a pro-Frankish party took power in Venetia, led by Doge Obelerio and his brother Beat. Nevertheless, when the Byzantine fleet came to the lagoon, sympathies for Byzantium suddenly reappeared: the Byzantine commander Nicetas was confirmed in office as Doge and honoured with the Byzantine title of *spatharios*. So things settled down. It is, therefore, not surprising that 150 years later Constantinus Porphyrogenitus wrote, in the manner of self-praise, that the Venetians refused to subdue to the Franks by saying “we want to be servants of the Emperor of the Romans, and not of you”⁵³. Writing around 1000, the Venetian chronicler John Deacon described these events as it was normal for the Byzantine navy to regain control over the area⁵⁴. It seems that in those times Byzantine sovereignty was a perfect “umbrella” for the creation of the “Rialto, which would be more Venetia than any other Venetia”. That is how contemporaries understood events around the year 800, that is how later medieval historians described those events⁵⁵.

During the 9th century Venice already moved a considerable distance from supreme Byzantine rule, but this was not of crucial importance for the existence of the Empire on the Adriatic. In this way the dogma about the great, unique and eternal Empire, just a more or less empty ideological hypothesis in the 7th and 8th centuries, increasingly became reality in the following two centuries, up to the rule of Basil II (976-1025). At that time the Empire controlled relatively large territories both on the Adriatic and in the West in general.

¹ I. GOLDSTEIN, *Kontinuitet — diskontinuitet u hrvatskoj povijesti 6-9. stoljeća*, in: *Starohrvatska spomenička baština, Radanje prvog hrvatskog kulturnog pejzaža*, Zagreb 1996, 21-27.

² This question must also be asked because Byzantologists have to date not shown a lot of interest in studying the history of the seas that belonged to the Empire — outstanding among research of this kind is certainly the book by H. AHRWEILER, *Byzance et la mer*, Paris 1966. Texts referring to Byzantium and the Mediterranean are listed in Z. RUBIN, *The Mediterranean and the Dilemma of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity*, Mediterranean Historical Review, vol. 1, t. 1, Tel Aviv — London 1986, 15-26. The closest to my views about how this discussion should be written is the book by G. I. BRATIANU, *La Mer Noire, Des origines a la conquête ottomane*, München 1969. It presents, in a synthetic manner, social and economic life, changes of power and transcontinental routes.

³ A book that gives rather a lot of information from a wider perspective is A. PHILIPPSON, *Das Byzantinischen Reich als geographische Erscheinung*, Leiden 1939.

⁴ Procopius, *Bellum Gothicum*, I, 5 ff.; J. FERLUGA, *Vizantijska uprava u Dalmaciji*, Beograd 1957; J. FERLUGA, *L'amministrazione bizantina in Dalmazia*, Venezia 1978, 41 ff.; I. GOLDSTEIN, *Bizant na Jadranu od Justinijana I. do Bazilija I.*, Zagreb 1992, 17-29; I. GOLDSTEIN, *Byzantine Presence on the Eastern Adriatic Coast 6th — 12th Century*, Byzantinoslavica, Prag 1996/2, 257-264.

⁵ *Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829 qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi*, ed. Pertz — Kurze, Hannoverae 1895, 193-7; FERLUGA, *op. cit.* 100-102, 117; GOLDSTEIN, *Bizant na Jadranu*, *op. cit.* 152-6.

⁶ M. PRELOG, *Djela II*, Zagreb 1993, 107-136.

⁷ Procopius, *De bellis*, I, 16, 15.

⁸ GOLDSTEIN, *Bizant na Jadranu*, 34-58; GOLDSTEIN, *Byzantine Presence*, *op. cit.*; Z. GUNJAČA, *Gradina Žirje — kasnoantička utvrda*, Arheološki pregled 21, Beograd 1980, 133; M. DOMJAN, *Crkva sv. Andrije na Vrgadi nakon posljednjih istraživanja i konzervatorskih radova*, Starohrvatska prosvjeta 13, 3rd series, Split 1983, 136; Ž. TOMIČIĆ, *Tragovi ranobizantskog vojnog graditeljstva na sjevernom hrvatskom primorju*, in *Umjetnost na istočnoj obali Jadrana u kontekstu europske tradicije*, Rijeka 1993, 91-96; IDEM, *Arheološka svjedočanstva o ranobizantskom vojnom graditeljstvu na sjevernojadranskim otocima*, Prilozi Odjela za arheologiju 5-6, Zagreb 1989, 29-53; A. BADURINA, *Bizantska utvrda na otočiću Palacol*, Izdanja Hrvatskog arheološkog društva 7, Zagreb 1982, 173; W. DORIGO, *Venezia Origini*, Milano 1984, T. II, Tavola 2; G. SCHMIEDT, *Città scomparse e città de nuova formazione in Italia in relazione al sistema di comunicazione*, Settimane Spoleto 21, 1974; G. SCHMIEDT, *Porti italiani nell'alto medioevo*, Settimane Spoleto 25, 1978, 129-255.

⁹ Procopius, *De Bello Gothico*, I, 1, 19-23.

¹⁰ Cassiodori Variae, ed. Th. Mommsen, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Auctores antiquissimi 12, 1894.

¹¹ Gy. MORAVCSIK — R. J. H. JENKINS, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus De administrando imperio* (DAI), 29/289-291.

¹² Ch. DIEHL, *Etudes sur l'administration byzantine dans l'exarchat de Ravenne 568-751*, Paris 1888, 6-23; L. M. HARTMANN, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Byzantinischen Verwaltung im Italien 540-750*, Leipzig 1889, 9-10; G. OSTROGORSKY, *L'exarchat de Ravenne et l'origine des thèmes byzantins*, VII Corso di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina, Ravenna 1960, Fasc. I, 99-103.

¹³ L. BOSIO — G. ROSADA, *Le presenze insediative nell'arco dell'alto Adriatico dall'epoca romana alla nascita di Venezia. Dati e problemi topografici*, in: *Da Aquileia a Venezia*, Milano 1980, 556-7.

¹⁴ DAI 30/59-60.

¹⁵ F. RAČKI, *Hrvatska prije XII. vieka glede na zemljišni obseg i narod*, Rad JAZU 57, 1881, 102-129; I. STROHAL, *Pravna povijest dalmatinskih gradova I, Osnovke razvitku pravne povijesti dalmatinskih gradova*, Zagreb, 1913, 9, 50; F. BULIĆ, *Sull'anno della distruzione di Salona*, u F. BULIĆ, *Sabrana djela*, Split 1986, 291-332; F. ŠIŠIĆ, *Povijest Hrvata u doba narodnih vladara*, Zagreb 1925, II. izd. Zagreb 1990, 232; J. FERLUGA, *Vizantijska uprava u Dalmaciji*, Beograd 1957, 37; I. FERLUGA, *L'amministrazione bizantina in Dalmazia*, Venezia 1978, 81; G. OSTROGORSKY, *History of the Byzantine State*, Oxford 1968, 110; D. OBOLENSKY, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, London 1971, 93; N. JAKŠIĆ, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus as the Source for Destruction of Salona*, *Disputationes Salonitanae II* (VAHD 77.) Split 1984, 315-326; M. SUIĆ, *Nova post vetera — ponovni pad Salone*, *Mogućnosti 3-4*, Split 1988, 329-36; A. DABINOVIĆ, *Državnopravni odnos Hrvata prema istočnom carstvu*, Rad JAZU 270, 1941, 110 ff; E. DYGGVE, *History of Salonitan Christianity*, Oslo 1951; M. PRELOG, *Između antike i romanike*, *Peristil I*, Zagreb, 1954, 5; M. SUIĆ, *Ostaci limitacije naših primorskih gradova u ranom srednjem vijeku*, SHP, III. serija, 5, Split 1956, 7-19; M. SUIĆ, *Antički grad na istočnoj obali Jadrana*, Zagreb 1980, 253-262; Z. VINSKI, *Rani srednji vijek u Jugoslaviji od 400-800. godine*, *Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja*, Zagreb, 3. serija — sv. 5, 1971, 47-72; Ž. RAPANIĆ, *Prilog proučavanju kontinuiteta naseljenosti u salonitanskom ageru u ranom srednjem vijeku*, VAHD 74, Split 1980, 189-217; Ž. RAPANIĆ, *Predromaničko doba u Dalmaciji*, Split 1987; Z. GUNJAČA, *O kontinuitetu naseljavanja na području Šibenika i najuže okolice*, Šibenik — *Spomen-zbornik o 900. obljetnici*, Šibenik 1976, str. 9-25; I. FISKOVIĆ, *Srednjovjekovna preuredenja ranokršćanskih svetišta u dubrovačkome kraju*, Izdanja HAD 12, str. 189-208; N. JAKŠIĆ, *Topografija pravca "via Magna cesta vocata tendens per Lucam"*, SHP 14/1984, 325-346; N. JAKŠIĆ, *Prilozi urbanizmu srednjovjekovnog Knina*, Izdanja HAD 15, Zagreb 1992, 123-130; M. JURKOVIĆ, *Problem kontinuiteta između antike i romanike u umjetnosti istočnog Jadrana*, *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti 12-3*, Zagreb 1988-9, 41-8; M. VICELJA, *Ranosrednjovjekovna plastika u Istri — spona između antike i kasnog srednjega vijeka*, Masters thesis, unpublished, Zagreb 1990; Ž. RAPANIĆ, *Il patrimonio dell'Antichità nella poleogenesi dell'Adriatico orientale nell'alto medioevo*, *Hortus artium medievalium* (HAM) 1, 1995, 7-13; I. FISKOVIĆ, *Apport des reconstructions d'églises de l'antiquité tardive dans la formation du premier art roman sur le littoral croate*, HAM 1, 14-27; N. JAKŠIĆ, *La survivance des édifices paléochrétiens dans les terres de la principauté Croate*, in HAM 1, 36-45; A. MILOŠEVIĆ, *Die spätantike territoriale und kulturelle Kontinuität in der frühmittelalterlichen Cetinagegend*, HAM 1, 169-175.

¹⁶ DIEHL, *Etudes*, *op. cit.*; P. LAMMA, *Oriente e Occidente nell'alto Medioevo*, Padova 1968; GOLDSTEIN, *Bizant na Jadranu*, 112-126.

¹⁷ The Zagreb art historian Professor Josip Stošić claims that there was a monastic community on the island of Brač before the ninth century, but his results have not yet been published.

¹⁸ *Cambridge Medieval History*, IV/1, 71-2; ŠIŠIĆ, *Povijest*, *op. cit.* 289-90.

¹⁹ Michael the Syrian wrote about "Dalmatian bishops" but did not record the towns they came from — see, I. B. CHABOT, *La chronique de Michel le Syrien*, Paris 1901, t. 2, 520.

²⁰ J. D. MANSI, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, Firenze — Venezia 1759-98, t. 13, 139-42, 366-8, 373, 387-8, 723-4, 732; The data were analyzed by J. DARROUZES, *Listes épiscopales du concile de Nicée (787)*, *Revue des études byzantines* 33, 1975, 5-76; the analysis of R. KATIČIĆ cannot be passed over for the eastern Adriatic coast, *Imena dalmatinskih biskupija i njihovih biskupa u aktima ekumenskoga koncila u Niceji godine 787.*, in *Uz početke hrvatskih početaka*, Split 1993, 25-35; P. GOUBERT, in *Byzance avant l'Islam*, t. II, *Byzance et l'Occident*, II, Rome, *Byzance et Carthage*, Paris 1965, wrote most extensively on relations between Byzantium and the West.

²¹ DAI, 31/31-35; Byzantium can be directly or at least indirectly credited with the coming of the pupils of Constantine and Methodius, who brought the vernacular language in liturgy and Slav script — I. GOLDSTEIN, *Hrvatski rani srednji vijek*, Zagreb 1995, 258-9; 279-80.

²² A. GUILLOU even in the title of his book underlined this "regionalism" and "independence" — A. GUILLOU, *Régionalisme et indépendance dans*

L'Empire byzantin au VIIe siècle, L'exemple de l'exarchat et de la Pentapole d'Italie, Rome 1969.

²³ A. GUILLOU, *L'Italia bizantina, douleia e oikeiosis*, *Bulletino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo* 78, 1967, 1-20.

²⁴ I. NIKOLAJEVIĆ-STOJKOVIĆ, *Solinski pečat egzarha Pavla (723-6)*, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta (ZRVI)* 7, Beograd 1961, 61-6.

²⁵ ŠIŠIĆ, *Povijest Hrvata u doba narodnih vladara*, Zagreb 1925, II. ed. Zagreb 1990, 183, 290; FERLUGA, *L'Amministrazione*, op.cit. 117 ff; GOLDSTEIN, *Bizant*, op.cit. 136 ff.

²⁶ ŠIŠIĆ, *Povijest*, op.cit., 284.

²⁷ *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals*, Vol I, ed. J. NESBITT and N. OIKONOMIDES, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington 1991, 47.

²⁸ J. LE GOFF, *Histoire de la France urbaine, La ville médiévale*, Paris 1980, 13; D. ZAKINTHINOS, *Die Byzantinische Stadt*, *Diskussionsbeiträge zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten — Kongress, München 1958*, 75; F. DÖLGER, *Die Frühbyzantinische und byzantinisch beeinflusste Stadt (V-VIII. Jhr.)*, in: *III. Congresso internazionale di studi sull'alto medioevo*, Spoleto 1959, 65-96; D. CLAUDE, *Die byzantinische Stadt im 6. Jahrhundert*, München 1969; G. OSTROGORSKY, *Byzantine Cities in the Early Middle Ages*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 13, 1959, 4-66; J. RUSSELL, *Transformations in Early Byzantine Urban Life: The Contribution and Limitations of Archaeological Evidence*, *The 17th International Byzantine Congress, Major papers*, Dumbarton Oaks 1986, 137-154; J. KODER, *The Urban Character of the Early Byzantine Empire: Some Reflections on a Settlement. Geographical Approach to the Topic*, idem, 155-187.

²⁹ *Three Byzantine Military Treatise*, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 25, Text, translation and notes G. T. DENNIS, Washington 1985, 28-30.

³⁰ GOLDSTEIN, *Bizant na Jadranu*, op. cit. 83-111.

³¹ A. PETRANOVIĆ — A. MARGETIĆ, *Il Placito del Risano*, *Atti di Centro delle ricerche storiche* 14, Rovigno 1983-4, 59.

³² This was shown very convincingly by I. ĐURIĆ, *Romejski govor i jezik Konstantina VII Porfirogenita*, *ZRVI*, 24-25, Beograd 1986, 109-138.

³³ ŠIŠIĆ, *Povijest*, op. cit. 295.

³⁴ J. FERLUGA, *Les îles dalmates dans l'Empire byzantin*, *Byzantinische Forschungen* 5, Amsterdam 1977, 35-71.

³⁵ J. FERLUGA, *Navigation et commerce dans l'Adriatique aux VIIe et VIIIe siècle*, *Byzantinische Forschungen* 12, Amsterdam 1987, 46.

³⁶ It was a break in the import of some kinds of ceramics, so-called *terra sigillata*, on the entire Adriatic, which meant that links with Africa, where the ceramics were probably produced, were broken — R. MAKJANIĆ, *Terra sigillata iz rimskih nekropola u Osoru i Bakru*, *Prilozi Odjela za arheologiju* 2, Zagreb 1985, 39-50 and lit.

³⁷ H. PIRENNE, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, Bruxelles, 1937, 2nd ed., 1970, this thesis already appeared in: H. PIRENNE, *Les Villes du Moyen Age*, Bruxelles, 1927.

³⁸ Literature on this subject has already grown immensely, so we will give only a narrower selection: A. RIISING: *The Fate of H. Pirenne's Thesis on the Consequences of the Islamic Invasions*, *Classica et Mediaevalia*, revue danoise de philologie et d'histoire 13, Copenhagen, 1952, 87-130; A. F. HAVINGHURST: *The Pirenne Thesis, Analysis, Criticism and Revision, Problems in European Civilization*, Boston, 1958.; P. E. HUBINGER (ed): *Bedeutung und Rolle des Islams beim Übergang vom Altertum zum Mittelalter*, *Wege der Forschung*, vol. 202, Darmstadt, 1968.; R. HODGES — D. WHITEHOUSE, *Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe*, London, 1983, 46-8, 52-3, consider that the real break of trade occurred in the second half of the 6th century, in the first place as the consequence of Justinian's destructive wars, but also the general state in the Byzantine Empire. See GOLDSTEIN, *Bizant na Jadranu*, op. cit., 67.

³⁹ F. DVORNIK, *Les Slaves, Histoire et civilisation*, Paris, 1970, 47-8 ff.

⁴⁰ Z. RUBIN, *The Mediterranean and the Dilemma of the Roman Empire in the Late Antiquity*, *Mediterranean Historical Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, 13-32, Tel Aviv — London, 1986, although we cannot agree with Rubin's opinion because it is obvious that Justinian's contemporaries in the mid-6th century made great efforts and had a degree of success in encouraging seafaring and trade through the Mediterranean (see: GOLDSTEIN, *Bizant*, pp. 17-67.), it is obvious that "Pirenne's thesis", i.e. the breakdown of trade and the life of late Antiquity on the Mediterranean, continues to be treated as a subject, and represents one of the central and most challenging problems of European medievalistics .

⁴¹ GOLDSTEIN, *Kontinuitet i diskontinuitet*, op. cit.

⁴² H. AUBIN, *Vom Altertum zum Mittelalter*, München 1949, 48; RAPANIĆ, *Doba*, op. cit. 11-12.

⁴³ AHRWEILER, *Mer*, 11-14; GOLDSTEIN, *Kontinuitet — diskontinuitet*, op. cit.

⁴⁴ For example, Ž. RAPANIĆ, *Predromaničko doba u Dalmaciji*, Split 1987.

⁴⁵ J. LE GOFF, *Pour un autre Moyen Age*, Paris 1977, 131. Le Goff uses the terms "vie individuelle" and "vie collective".

⁴⁶ This is a paraphrase of the basic thesis of R. LOPEZ, *Naissance de l'Europe, IVe - XIVe siècle*, Paris 1962.

⁴⁷ FERLUGA, *L'Amministrazione*, op. cit.; GOLDSTEIN, *Bizant*, op. cit.

⁴⁸ On Venice, F. C. LANE, *Venice, a Maritime Republic*, 1973, 4-6; R. CESSI, *Storia di Venezia*, Venezia 1957, A. CARILE — G. FEDALTO, *Le origini di Venezia*, Bologna 1983; A. CARILE, *La presenza bizantina nell'alto Adriatico fra VII e IX secolo*, *Byz. Forschungen* 12, 1987, 5-37; D. M. NICOL, *Byzantium and Venice*, Cambridge 1995.

⁴⁹ G. ORTALLI, *I cronisti e la determinazione di Venezia città*, in: *Storia di Venezia II (L'Età del Comune)*, 1995, 769; G. ORTALLI, *Tra Oriente e Occidente. Motivi e momenti di storia veneziana*, in: *Musica e liturgia nella cultura mediterranea*, Firenze 1988, 4-5; G. RAVEGNANI, *Dignità bizantine dei dogi di Venezia*, in: *Studi Veneti, offerti a Gaetano Cozzi*, Venezia 1992, 19-29.

⁵⁰ A. NIERO, *La sistemazione ecclesiastica del ducato di Venezia*, in: *Le origini della Chiesa di Venezia, a cura di F. Tonon*, Venezia 1987, 101-121.

⁵¹ On Byzantine — Frankish relations: F. DÖLGER, *Europas Gestaltung im Spiegel der Fränkisch-byzantinischen Auseinandersetzung des 9. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt*, Ettal 1953, 282-369; W. OHNSORGE, *Das Zweikaiserproblem im früheren Mittelalter*, Hildesheim 1947; W. OHNSORGE, *Abendland und Byzanz*, Darmstadt 1958; R. JENKINS, *Byzantium. The Imperial Centuries, AD 610-1071*, London 1966; OSTROGORSKY, *History*, op. cit., 182-6; NICOL, *Byzantium and Venice*, op. cit. 14-15.

⁵² NICOL, *Byzantium and Venice*, op. cit. 11-12.

⁵³ *DAI* 28/36-37.

⁵⁴ Giovanni Diacono, *Cronaca Veneziana*, ed. G. Monticolo, *Cronache veneziane antichissime, I, Fonti per la Storia d'Italia. Scrittori, secoli X-XI*, Roma 1890, 103-104.

⁵⁵ About the "determination of the town of Venice", ORTALLI, *I cronisti*, op. cit., 778-780; S. GASPARI, *Venezia fra i secoli VIII e IX. Una riflessione sulle fonti*, in: *Studi Veneti, offerti a Gaetano Cozzi*, Venezia 1992, 3-18.

Mnogi su se istraživači bavili različitim vidovima bizantske povijesti na istočnojadranskoj obali, ali ih se vrlo malo, a ta nekolicina tek periferno, zapitala: što to uistinu predstavlja Bizant na tom području? Što je to što dokazuje prisutnost Bizanta? Na to pitanje, ako ga se promatra na razini političkih događaja, prilično je lako odgovoriti, jer se odgovor sužava na slijedeće: da li je postojala neposredna bizantska vlast, odnosno kontrola nad zbivanjima iz Carigrada na istočnojadranskoj obali ili nije. Ako jest, Bizant je tu, ako takve vlasti ili kontrole nema, nema ni Bizanta. No, istočnojadransku je stvarnost uglavnom vrlo teško promatrati u tim kategorijama — stoga je potrebno u analizu uključiti i druge pojmove.

Bilo je vrlo malo neposrednih akcija središnje vlasti na Jadranu: vojnih akcija bilo je tek nekolicina, prenošene su relikvije, bizantski utjecaji očituju se u umjetnosti. Iz Bizanta je stizao novac. No, između 550. i 800. godine svega toga još je manje.

Bizantski su se utjecaji na hrvatsko društvo ostvarivali na razne načine i često ih je teško razlikovati od kasnoantičke baštine na hrvatskom tlu. Očigledan je bizantski utjecaj na stvaranje hrvatskog prava, u materijalnoj kulturi vjerojatno su najbolji primjer takvog utjecaja nalazi tzv. "staro-hrvatskih" naušnica. Mnogo je nalaza bizantskog novca.

Ipak je politička prisutnost bila najvažnija, bila je temelj svakog drugog utjecaja — stoga se bizantska prisutnost ponajviše oslikava u činjenici da svi znaju i svi bespogovorno prihvaćaju da je priobalni dio Dalmacije zemlja pod vrhovništvom bizantskog cara. To je najtrajniji osjećaj, on se čak sačuvao i od kraja 6. do početka 9. stoljeća, kada je carstvo bilo prisiljeno na obranu Carigrada i okolice i nije imalo snage baviti se udaljenim zapadnim područjima. Očuvanje Bizanta na istočnom Jadranu u to je vrijeme velikim dijelom i rezultat osjećaja ugroženosti ovdašnjih stanovnika od strane agresivnih Slavena iz zaleđa, odnosno Hrvata i Srba. Veživanje uz ideju Carstva onemogućavalo je nametanje bilo kakve druge politike ili vlasti. Slično se događalo i u priobalnim krajevima Italije koje su u isto vrijeme iz zaleđa ugrožavali Langobardi.

Očigledno jest da epitet "bizantski" ne bi trebalo pripisivati samo onome što je dolazilo iz Carigrada i središnjih dijelova Carstva, nego je "bizantsko" i sve ono što se stvara i događa na bizantskim teritorijima, kako recimo, u Italiji (za ranije razdoblje u Raveni i Rimu), tako i u bizantskoj Dalmaciji i Istri. Gledajući u strogo povijesno-pravnim kategorijama, i ne bi moglo biti drugačije — vladalačka ideologija Bizantskog Carstva smatrala je svojim vlasništvom sve zemlje kršćanskoga svijeta, a carevim podanicima sve kršćane koji su ih nastanjivali, bez obzira na govorni jezik.