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AN OUTLINE OF BYZANTINE DIPLOMACY IN THE EASTERN ADRIATIC REGION (C. 867-1000)

Апстракт: Статијата има за цел да прикаже опит преглед на византиската дипломатија во источниот Јадрански регион од средината на IX до почетокот на XI век. Дипломатијата било најважното средство со кое василевсот од Константинопол го распространувал своето политичко влијание и воспоставувал хегемонија како низ регионите кои претходно во минатото биле под влијание на Византиската Империја, така и вон овие граници. Во обид да ги остварат зацртаните политички цели, Византијците примениле голем број на различни средства: од употребата на парите и титулите, скапоцените подароци, историските факти, како и религијата, се до империската престолнина, Константинопол. Од постоечките извори и нивната сеопфатна анализа, може да се прикаже една општа слика за византиската дипломатска активност во источниот Јадрански регион. Политичките цели на империската власт, наметнување на политичката хегемонија на Словенските кнежевства и нивно придобивање за сојузници, биле во најголем дел успешни, но краткотрајни. Сепак, мора да се потенцира дека тоа не било поради некаква грешка од Византијците, туку поради самата природа на средновековната дипломатија која, за жал, ги присилувала повторно да преговараат не само со новиот владетел, туку понекогаш дури и со старите сојузници како резултат на некоја нова политичка констелација во регионот или директно странско мешање. И покрај неколкуте ситни неуспеси забележани во изворите, сепак, во целина, византиската дипломатија во источниот Јадрански регион од средината на IX до почетокот на XI век успеала, без разлика колку краткорочно тоа да било, да ги оствари своите политички цели: да ја наметне византиската хегемонија, да придобие сојузници и да создаде штит од лимитрофни – погранични клиент држави во источниот Јадрански регион.

Клучни зборови: Византиска империја, византиска дипломатија, словенски кнежевства, Хрватска, Србија, средновековен Балкан

Around middle of the 9th century a period of change began in Byzantine foreign policy. Political events beyond Empire's borders, its internal demographic and economic recovery that become visible after long decades of struggle for survival, allowed the Byzantines to change from a completely defensive to a more offensive military stance. It is in this period that sources testify of a much stronger presence of the Byzantine government in the Adriatic and of an attempt to re-establish its influence and political supremacy throughout this region. This political process had its apogee in the first decades of the 11th century when on the throne in Constantinople was the most prominent ruler of the Macedonian dynasty, Basil II, whose reign is considered to be the *Belle Époque* of the Byzantine Empire. During this prolonged process of re-establishment of imperial hegemony in the Eastern Adriatic region the sources suggest that in order to accomplish this end the Byzantines relied on political means which fall into the domain of diplomacy, putting almost totally aside the use of their military assets. In that context, focus of this paper will be on this political aspect, that is, on the Byzantine diplomacy in Eastern Adriatic region between middle of the 9th and beginning of the 11th century and will include its general survey, analysis and systematization.

Political situation in Eastern Adriatic region around middle of the 9th century was not inclined towards the Byzantine policy of re-establishment of imperial influence and hegemony. Byzantine presence in these parts of the Balkans was almost symbolic. What remained of imperial possessions in this region after the catastrophic events in the 7th century were islands in the Adriatic Sea and a number of urban enclaves scattered along the coast, which in the 9th century firstly became a part of newly formed *archontate*, and then of *thema* Dalmatia.¹ Unlike the coastal region, interior of the Balkans was far from the reach of the imperial government. *De administrando imperio* reports that since the time of Heraclius this territory was inhabited by Slavic tribes who, due to inability of the Byzantine Empire to intervene militarily, ma-

¹ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. Gyula Moravcsik and trans. Rommily J. H. Jenkins (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 1967), 29.49-63. For the Byzantine rule in Dalmatia see Јадран Ферлуга, *Византиска управа у Далмацији* (Београд: САН, 1957), 46-86; Божић Ферјанчић, "Василије I и обнова византијске власти у IX веку", *Зборник Радова Византолошког Института* 36, Београд (1997): 17-18. About *thema* Dalmatia see Tibor Živković, "Uspenski's Taktikon and the Theme of Dalmatia", *Byzantina Symmeikta* 17, Athens (2005): 73-85. After the reign of Michael II Amorian (820-829), according to Mladen Ančić, "The Waning of the Empire: The Disintegration of Byzantine rule on the Eastern Adriatic in the 9th century", *Hortus artium medievalium* Vol.4, Zagreb (1998): 15-19; Neven Budak, "Croatia and Byzantium in the Tenth century. A Latin Member of the Byzantine Commonwealth", *Center, Province and Periphery in the Age of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, From De Ceremoniis to De Administrando Imperio*, ed. Niels Gaul, Volker Menze and Csanád Bálint, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co.KG, 2018), 221, *thema* Dalmatia was cut off from Constantinople until the time of Basil I, but this direct Byzantine presence did not last long and at the beginning of the 10th century the connection with Constantinople was preserved only symbolic thru local dignitaries.

naged to form their own principalities. The westernmost principality on the Adriatic coast was Croatia.² On the East were the Serb principalities, known as Serbia, Dio-cleia, Terbouinia, Zachlunia, as well as Paganian.³

Sources report that more intensified Byzantine diplomatic activity in the Eastern Adriatic region began around middle of the 9th century following the naval campaign of *patrikios* Nicetas Ooryphas against the Arabs.⁴ According to them, main reason was Christianisation, which was on initiative of both the local rulers and the imperial government. Author of *DAI* points out that Slavs in this region demanded not only to be baptized, but to become once again subjects of the Byzantine Empire, for which an envoy was specially sent.⁵ This same event, but somewhat more extensively, is reported by Theophanes Continuatus. According to him, the Byzantine Emperor, after hearing the appeal from the Slavic tribes that they prefer to find themselves under good authority, immediately sent some priests with the diplomatic envoy.⁶

Although it is indicated that the reason behind Byzantine involvement in the region was about ecclesiastical matters, propagation of Christianity and baptism of nonbelievers on their own request, this mission is, actually, only one of many that the imperial government conducted on order of the *basileus*, and their agenda was purely political.⁷ Actually, in Croatia the populace was baptized by 852 at the latest, although sources indicate that Christianity had already penetrated its ruling elite in 795,⁸ or

² *DAI*, 30.90-94.

³ According to *DAI*, 29.56-58, 63-68, their rulers, who had a title of *zhupan*, didn't recognize the supremacy of the *basileus* and were independent of him. For location of the Serbian principalities see *DAI*, 30.95-119. Author of *DAI*, 29.57, 32.151, also mentions Kanalites and the territory of Bosona, i.e. Bosnia. In Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Cerimoniis Aulae Byzantinae*, ed. I. I. Reiskii (Bonnae, 1829), 691.11, Moravia is also mentioned. About the political situation in Dalmatia and the Balkans during first half of the 9th century, see Тибор Живковић, *Јужни Словени под византиском влашћу 600-1025* (Београд: Чигоја Штампа, 2007), 231-243; Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier, A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 26-29; Florin Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500-1250* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 134-139.

⁴ *DAI*, 29.88-101. Cf. Constantino Porfirogenito, *De thematibus*, ed. A. Pertusi (Citta del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1952), 97. Cf. *Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonnae 1838), 291.1-292.13.

⁵ *DAI*, 29.70-75.

⁶ *Theophanes Continuatus*, 291.1-292.6.

⁷ For ecclesiastical missions with "political agenda" sent by the *basileus* see Драган Ѓалевски, "Дипломатските аспекти на византиското мисионерство", *Византиската мисионерска дејност и европското наследство, Зборник на трудови од Четвртиот меѓународен симпозиум „Денови на Јустинијан I“, Скопје, 11-12 ноември, 2016*, уред. Митко Б. Панов (Скопје: Евро-Балкан, 2017), 72-80.

⁸ Alexis P. Vlasto, *The Entry of Slavs in to Christendom. An introduction to the Medieval History of the Slavs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 189; Живковић, *Јужни Словени*, 232; Curta, *Southeastern Europe*, 139.

even earlier.⁹ For the Serbian principalities process of Christianisation had, probably same as in Croatia, begun much earlier than *DAI* and Theophanes Continuatus suggest, even before the reign of Michael II.¹⁰ The political situation in the Eastern Adriatic during middle of the 9th century also suggests that the Byzantine activity was not only ecclesiastical. Croatia recognized the supreme authority of the Frankish emperor,¹¹ but slowly switched its political allegiance towards Constantinople,¹² after the second campaign of *patrikios* Nicetas Ooryphas in the Adriatic.¹³ Concerning the Serbs, there were some attempt of intensified influence of the Roman papacy throughout their region in this period,¹⁴ but it was short-lived.¹⁵ In 870, before the Byzantine military

⁹ Tibor Živković, *De Conversione Croatorum et Serborum. A lost Source* (Belgrade: Institute of History, 2012), 56-66, 201. See also Daniel Dzino, *Becoming Slav, becoming Croat. Identity Transformations in Post-Roman and Early Medieval Dalmatia* (Leiden: Brill NV, 2010), 201-208.

¹⁰ Živković, *De Conversione Croatorum et Serborum*, 163-166, 179-180, 201.; Предрад Коматина, *Црквена политика Византије од краја иконоборства до смрти цара Василија I* (Београд: САНУ, 2014), 264-266, 277-285. According to Тибор Живковић, *Портрети владара раног средњег века. Од Властимира до Борућа* (Београд: Завод за уџбенике, 2006), 30, in the time of Vlastimir, Christianity was already established.

¹¹ *Византиски извори за историју народа Југославије Том II*, уред. Георгије Острогорски (Београд: САН, 1958), 16, n.26. On acceptance of Frankish hegemony see Dzino, *Becoming Slav, becoming Croat*, 177; Јадран Ферлуга, „Византиско царство и јужнословенски државе IX-X века“, *Зборник радова византолошког института* 13, Београд (1971): 77; Steven Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and his reign* (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1995), 207. More on 9th century Croatia see Ivan Mužić, *Hrvatska povijest devetoga Stoljeća* (Split: Matica Hrvatska, 2007), 121-188.; Dzino, *Becoming Slav, becoming Croat*, 175-210; Neven Budak, „Croats between Franks and Byzantium“, *Hortus artium medievalium* Vol. 3, Zagreb (1997): 15-18.

¹² The acceptance of Byzantine political supremacy in Croatia occurred in 878. For more details about the political turmoil in Croatia during this period see Neven Budak, *Prva Stoljeća Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 1994), 25-26.; Mužić, *Hrvatska povijest devetoga Stoljeća*, 193; Ферлуга, „Византиско царство и јужнословенски државе“, 77, 80; Живковић, *Јужни Словени*, 244, 249-250; Curta, *Southeastern Europe*, 139-140. The Narentani of Paganian also recognised Byzantine hegemony, but was, like in the case of Croatia, only for a short period. See Живковић, *Јужни Словени*, 251; Runciman, *Emperor Romanus Lecapenus*, 212.

¹³ Mužić, *Hrvatska povijest devetoga Stoljeća*, 190-191; Budak, *Prva Stoljeća Hrvatske*, 23; Vlasto, *The Entry of Slavs*, 193; Tibor Živković, „On the Baptism of the Serbs and Croats in the time of Basil I (867-886)“, *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana*, 2013, №.1, Sankt Petersburg (2013): 42.

¹⁴ Predrag Komatina, „The Church of Serbia at the Time of Cyrilo-Methodian Mission in Moravia“, *Cyriel and Methodius: Byzantium and the World of Slavs* (Thessaloniki: Thessprint A.E., 2015), 711-718; Srđan Pirivatrić, „The Serbs and the Overlapping Circles of Rome and Constantinople (7th to 16th Century)“, *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies: Plenary Papers, Belgrade, 22-27 August 2016*, ed. Smilja Marjanović-Dušanić (Belgrade: The Serbian National Committee of AIEB, 2017), 225-226.

¹⁵ Živković, „On the Baptism of the Serbs and Croats“: 45-46, 48, argues, in my opinion, rightfully that Basil I had an ecclesiastical policy towards the Serbian principalities, i.e. that he organized a Church of Serbia and Dioclea under the spiritual guidance of Constantinople.

campaign against the Arabs in Bari, where warriors from Slavic principalities participated, a mission was sent to Mutimir of Serbia, led by Neophytos and Nikolaos.¹⁶ Thus, if we exclude the statement of *DAI* and Theophanes Continuatus about Christianisation of the Serbs and Croats, and we add the clear and present Arab danger in South Adriatic Sea in this period, as well as the political and ecclesiastical influence of other centres of power in the Eastern Adriatic region, it can be assumed that the Byzantine activity was not aimed at achieving only the ends stated in these sources, but it had a multifaceted background. It was firstly secular, political and military, and then ecclesiastical.

That it was, actually, more about implementation of political interests and expansion of Byzantine influence, rather than baptism of nonbelievers or returning to the fold of those who had disavowed the Church,¹⁷ is indicated, except from the statement of Theophanes Continuatus and the current military and political situation in the region, by other facts presented in the sources. Emphasizing that the mission among Slavic principalities were led by imperial officials, while priests were perceived only as part of their escort, leads to the conclusion that secular politics had a priority. If purpose of the mission was just baptism and acceptance of Christianity then, like in other such cases, the missionaries would have been sent under the order of the Patriarch of Constantinople, not the *basileus*.¹⁸ Furthermore, bestowal and use of the title *archon* for Slavic potentates by the imperial government, instead of the local autochthonous *zhupan* or *ban*, suggests that, according to the Byzantine doctrine of “hierarchy of states”¹⁹ or “family of kinship”,²⁰ some political relations were established between the two parties.²¹ The term *κέλευσις*²² with which the author of *DAI* explains par-

¹⁶ Mission's end was probably about acquiring military assistance in the forthcoming campaign against the Arabs in Bari. See Ivan Dujčev, “Une ambassade byzantine auprès des Serbes au IX^e siècle”, *Recueil de Travaux de l'Institut d'Etudes Byzantines* 7, Belgrade (1961), 56-57, and Живковић, *Портрети владара*, 40.

¹⁷ Živković, “On the Baptism of the Serbs and Croats”: 35-36.

¹⁸ Ѓалевски, “Дипломатските аспекти на византиското мисионерство”, 72-73.

¹⁹ George Ostrogorsky, “The Byzantine Emperor and the Hierarchical World Order”, *The Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 35, No. 84, (1956): 1-14; André Grabar, “God and the ‘Family of Princes’ Presided Over by the Byzantine Emperor”, *The Expansion of Orthodox Europe: Byzantium, The Balkans and Russia*, ed. Jonathan Shepard (London: Routledge, 2016), 117-123.

²⁰ According to Evangelos Chrysos, “Byzantine diplomacy A.D. 300-800: means and ends”, *Byzantine diplomacy: Papers from the Twenty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990*, ed. Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1992), 36-37, there is no evidence in the sources that family of kinship ever existed. However, Stelios Lampakis et al., *Byzantine diplomacy: A seminar*, tr. Norman Russell (Athens: National Printing House, 2007), 40-46, correctly argues that it was founded not on relations by blood but on imperial aulic titles.

²¹ *De Cerimoniis*, 679, gives whole list of titles that were intended exclusively for foreign rulers. One of these titles that indicated the political link between foreign potentates and *basileus* was the title of *archon*.

icipation of warriors from Slavic principalities in Byzantine campaigns against the Arabs in Southern Italy during the reign of Basil I,²³ and the list of addresses for foreign rulers and potentates in *De Cerimoniis* were the same terminology is used,²⁴ is an additional confirmation and evidence that the process of establishing diplomatic relations actually occurred, as well the end result from it.

The Byzantine Empire increased its interest for this part of the Balkans by the end of the 9th century when hostilities with Bulgaria were renewed. In an attempt to acquire as much political and strategic advantage in this military conflict, the Byzantines began a wider diplomatic activity among the Serbian principalities, mostly with Serbia, a neighbour of Bulgaria and in greatest danger from its expansionist policy. According to *DAI*, contact was made through Leo Rhabduchus, *strategos* of *thema* Dyrrachium.²⁵ Byzantine diplomatic activity was renewed in 913 when a new war with Bulgaria began, again through the same *strategos*.²⁶ Although in this case author of *DAI* made a merger of two different Byzantine missions sent to the Serbs,²⁷ yet it is a statement not only for the diplomatic activities conducted by the Byzantine envoys, but also for the political constellation in this part of the Balkans. The very contents of the sentence, as well as the words *δουλείας και ύποθέσεως* written in it, a term which indicates that established relations with the Byzantine Empire were not on a parity

²² *DAI*, 29.111. This is actually an official term which indicates an imperial order, a command, used only to those who were considered as client states, i.e. were obliged to give some kind of service. See Dean A. Miller, *Studies in Byzantine diplomacy: Sixth to Tenth centuries* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1963), 157.

²³ *DAI*, 29.109-112. Cf. *Theophanes Continuatus*, 293.9-16. It seems these same Slavs, mentioned by *Theophanes Continuatus*, 306.3, and also John Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History 811-1057*, trans. John Wortley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 151, were part of a military expedition that succeeded in 880 to bring back under Byzantine control a large number of towns and fortresses in Southern Italy previously conquered by the Arabs.

²⁴ According to *De Cerimoniis*, 691.8-11, the Byzantine Emperor sent commands, i.e. orders, (*κέλευσις*) to the *archons* of Croatia and Serbian principalities, not letters (*γράμματα*), like in the case of the Patzinaks, Rhos and the Turks (Hungarians). According to Ферјанчић, "Василије I": 26-28, this list was initially composed, probably, at the time of Leo VI (886-912) or in the last years of Basil I.

²⁵ *DAI*, 32.77-79.

²⁶ The Byzantine ambassador, *DAI*, 32.82-86, "...arrived in Paganía, which was at that time under the control of the *archon* of Serbia, in order to advice and confer with this same *archon* Peter upon some service and affair."

²⁷ As assumed by Живковић, *Јужни Словени*, 271-273, п.1397, it is unlikely that Leo Rhabduchus was *strategos* of *thema* Dyrrachium for 37 years. His mention in the letters of Leo Choerosphactes from 910 as a *magistros* and *logothete of the Drome* suggests that his mission in Serbia was probably between 894 and 896. *DAI*, 32.90-91, reports that this was "...when the battle of Achelo had taken place between the Romans and the Bulgarians."

basis, i.e. some level of political submission existed, suggests Serbia was seen as a client state by the imperial government.²⁸

Byzantine diplomacy intensified again in the second decade of the 10th century. Although sources do not go into details, however, they report that the Byzantines were actively involved and intervened in the internal power struggles in Serbia, as a result of Bulgarian military and diplomatic involvement. In that process they managed to win over the Serbian rulers who in this period of turmoil were hostile to the *basileus*, accepting thereto Byzantine political supremacy.²⁹ This is confirmed through a statement that Zacharias often sent envoys to Constantinople, as the *archons* who ruled before him.³⁰ Regarding Croatia, there is no direct indication for Byzantine diplomatic activity in this period, or that the Croats were openly supporting in any way the Byzantine cause in their conflict with Bulgaria. However, events in the sources suggest that some cooperation, probably, existed between them.³¹

Once situation in the Balkans had calmed down and a peace treaty was signed with the new Bulgarian ruler Peter, the Slavic principalities were no longer politically important to the Byzantine Empire as before. However, sources indicate that Zachlunia and Serbia in time of Michael and Tzeeslav/Chaslav accepted imperial supremacy and were beneficial to Byzantine foreign policy. For Michael, evidence of Byzantine diplomatic activity is his imperial title of *anthyptos* and *patrikios*, while reason for his usefulness was Arab military activity in the Adriatic.³² Regarding Chaslav,³³ it's the

²⁸ This is confirmed in *DAI*, 32.86-90, which reports that because of jealousy, Michael, *archon* of Zahlumia, informed Simeon that "...the emperor of the Romans was bribing *archon* Peter to take the Turks [Hungarians] with him and go upon Bulgaria." In fact, this is in some way a simplified explanation of the conclusions that arose from the meeting of the Byzantine envoy with the Serbian ruler, and also on the obligations that under the terms of the concluded agreement with the *basileus* Peter was obliged to provide them as an ally. The money previously mentioned by Michael which were given to Peter presented a diplomatic means that was needed to cover his military expenditure. This was normal Byzantine policy.

²⁹ *DAI*, 32, 100-111. Zaharias, according to *DAI*, 32.111-114, send to Constantinople heads of the Generals from the defeated Bulgarian army. This suggests that Serbia was Byzantine ally, probably a client state. For dating of these events, see Тибор Живковић, *Словени и Ромеји. Славизација на простору Србије од VI до XI века* (Београд: САНУ, 2000), 103.

³⁰ *DAI*, 32.115-116.

³¹ Budak, "Croatia and Byzantium in the Tenth Century", 217, 221. Giving a shelter to Serbian refugees who were Byzantine allies at that time, waging a war against Simeon of Bulgaria, both events attested in *DAI*, 32.119-120, 125, and peaceful cohabitation with the Byzantines in Dalmatia in this period leads to one such assumption.

³² For Michael's reign see Aleksandar Uzelac, "Prince Michael of Zahumlje – a Serbian Ally of tsar Simeon", *Emperor Symeon's of Bulgaria in the History of Europe's South-East: 100 Years from the Battle of Achelous*, ed. Angel Nikolov & Nikolay Kanev (Sofia: St Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2018), 236-245. He, according to Живковић, *Портрети владара*, 81, succeeded in 927 as a Byzantine ally to seize from the Arabs the town of Sipont in Southern Italy.

fact that his reign started with Byzantine political assistance which included a large financial subsidy,³⁴ and theory that he was fighting the Hungarians not only on his behalf, but also on that of the *basileus*.³⁵ In Croatia, we are informed that after the time of Držislav (around second half of the 10th century) their rulers “...were called kings of Croatia and Dalmatia...” and received royal insignia “...from Constantinople and were styled their eparchs and patricians”³⁶, which, in my opinion, is a clear evidence that some diplomatic activity existed.³⁷ Bestowment of a more influential title of *patrikios* instead of general title of *archon* for potentates in the Eastern Adriatic region suggests not only elevation in significance within the “family of kinship” and existing Byzantine aulic hierarchy,³⁸ but also a shift in Byzantine foreign policy and the already established political relations with the Empire, which in case of Zachlunia and Croatia became much closer.

Last example of Byzantine diplomacy in the Eastern Adriatic region during this period is with the Serbian principalities. A charter in the Monastery of Great Lavra of St. Athanasius on Mount Athos mentions that in the last decade of the 10th century, more precisely in 992/993, the Byzantine emperor was visited in his military camp by unnamed Serbian envoys.³⁹ That these ambassadors were actually a response to some

³³ *DAI*, 32.128-145.

³⁴ According to Miroslaw J. Leszka, “On the Reliability of Constantine Porphyrogenitus’ Account of the “Flight” of Prince Časlav from Bulgaria”, *Studia Ceranea* 6 (2016): 129-138, Časlav also recognized Bulgarian hegemony.

³⁵ Because Hungarians were calmed with rich gifts and a peace agreement with them was not concluded after their military incursion in Thrace during 934, the probability that they would attack the imperial territory again was high. But their next campaign in the Balkans according to *Theophanes Continuatus*, 422.20-423.7, and *Skylitzes*, 220-221, was nine years later, in 943. *Љетопис попа Дукљанина*, прев. Славко Мијушковић (Београд: Просвета, 1988), 118, reports about Časlav’s war in Srem against the Hungarians and the death he found in one of the battles. According to Живковић, *Портрети владара*, 68-71, and Живковић, *Јужни Словени*, 280, the reason for Hungarian passivity in the Balkans between 934 and 943 should be sought in Časlav’s military activities.

³⁶ Archdeacon Thomas of Split, *History of the Bishops of Salona and Split*, Eds. Damir Karbić et al. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 61. This according to Budak, “Croatia and Byzantium in the Tenth Century”, 218, happened, most probably, before 976. See also Ančić, “The Waning of the Empire”: 20.

³⁷ For the political ends of the Byzantines see Budak, “Croatia and Byzantium in the Tenth Century”, 218-219.

³⁸ Lampakis et al., *Byzantine diplomacy*, 40-41, 45. For the position of *patrikios* in the Byzantine aulic hierarchy see John B. Bury, *The Imperial Administrative System in the Ninth Century: With a Revised Text of the Kletorologion of Philotheos* (London: Oxford University Press, 1911), 27-28.

³⁹ For the Serbian envoys sent in 992 to emperor Basil II see Георгије Острогорски, “Српско посланство цару Василију II”, *Византија и Словени* (Београд: Просвета, 1970), 147-158. Also Paul Stephenson, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 17. It is not known from where these envoys came. But because *Skylitzes*, 335, mentions that Vladimir, ruler of Dio-

previous diplomatic initiative of Basil II (976-1025) indication are the events that followed after their capture from Arabs near island of Lemnos. The way in which Basil reacted upon learning about the capture of these Serbian envoys and speed by which they were released (for this purpose a special official was sent),⁴⁰ as well as their direct departure to Basil's camp afterwards and not in Constantinople to wait there for his return,⁴¹ who was at that time in the vicinity of Thessalonika, indicates that he probably not only expected the arrival of these ambassadors but it appears that he also knew the purpose of their journey.⁴²

What is obvious is that there is an ample evidence of a continuous diplomatic activity of the Byzantine Empire in Eastern Adriatic region during this period. Nonetheless, for a more comprehensive analysis of the Byzantine diplomacy several questions need to be asked first. How did the Byzantines saw this region in relation to their own political interests? When diplomatic relations were established, or negotiations conducted, what was the position of the Byzantine government in correlation to the Slavic principalities? How were the diplomatic negotiations conducted? What political goals the Byzantine Empire wanted to achieve? What means were used during the diplomatic process, etc. All of these aspects, in fact, represent segments of a foreign policy that one state has. Regarding the Byzantine Empire, it had different foreign policy depending on a region, that is, it made a distinction between the Pontic Steppes, Caucasus, the Islamic World and Christian Europe.⁴³ But, it should be pointed out that the imperial government in this period also made distinction between mi-

cleia, who was "...a man of integrity, piece and virtue...", and in this period ruled with "...Tribalia and the nearer parts of Serbia...", it is most likely that the Serbian envoys were sent by him. This political supremacy of the prince of Diocleia is confirmed in *Љетопис попа Дукљанина*, 122-123, 125.

⁴⁰ Острогорски, "Српско посланство", 148.

⁴¹ If it was not expected for this envoy to arrive and be seen by the *basileus*, or didn't had a permit to enter the Byzantine Empire, they would wait long time, be confined, or even imprisoned. The Byzantines tried to protect their border as best as they could thru a network of control posts. See Krijnie N. Ciggaar, *Western travellers to Constantinople, The West and Byzantium, 962-1204: Cultural and Political Relations* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 37-38. For examples of imprisonment of unexpected foreign potentates see *Совети и Раскази од Кекавмен*, прев. Ј. Белчовски (Скопје: Македоница, 2015), 269, 271. According to Nike Koutrakou, "Diplomacy and Espionage: their role in Byzantine Foreign Relations, 8th-10th Centuries", *Byzantine Warfare*, ed. John F. Haldon (London: Routledge, 2007), 534-536, 546, unexpected foreigners in Imperial lands were often seen by the Byzantine government as spies.

⁴² That envoys in the Middle Ages were mainly sent when some service was needed or asked of it, or one party was client of another party, see al Nu'man, tr. S. M. Stern, "An Embassy of the Byzantine emperor to the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz", *Byzantion* 20, Bruxelles (1950): 247-248.

⁴³ Alexandar Kazhdan, "The Notion of Byzantine diplomacy", *Byzantine diplomacy: Papers from the Twenty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990*, ed. Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1992), 3-4; Jonathan Shepard, "Information, disinformation and delay in Byzantine diplomacy", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 10, Amsterdam (1985): 234.

cro-regions that were part of these larger territories, like Syria, Southern Italy and, in this case, the Eastern Adriatic, as well as amongst states or tribes that were located or lived in those same micro-regions.

As a result of the common Roman heritage, religion, and cultural background, Christian Europe, once part of ancient *orbis Romanus*, was perceived by the Byzantine government as *pars occidentalis* of its Empire, temporarily separated from its rule by unfortunate circumstances, making this region an integral part of the Byzantine sphere of interest, with its own specifics.⁴⁴ Knowing it had only limited resources, intention of the Byzantine government was not reconquest, like in the time of Justinian I (527-565), but that of a achieving political supremacy founded on legal grounds that the state was an uninterrupted continuation of the ancient Roman Empire, which *de facto* it was.⁴⁵ The goal of Byzantine foreign policy was maintaining ideological and political prestige of the *basileus* as direct heir to the Roman emperors and first sovereign amongst Europe's Christian rulers.⁴⁶ The same political interests were applicable for the Eastern Adriatic region, which was part of Christian Europe and thus of *orbis Romanus*.⁴⁷ However, Byzantine foreign policy towards this region differed. What the sources suggest is that here it was focused towards imposing direct political supremacy on the Slavic principalities and establishing closer kinship-type connection with a greater level of political disparity. The reason for this slight shift in Byzantine diplomacy was not only the size and might of the political entities in this region (they were not the Frankish Empire of other European kingdoms), but also the presence of imperial territories on their borders and the necessity to provide them with better security against foreign intrusions, be they Arabic, Frankish, Bulgar or Slavic.⁴⁸ The only way

⁴⁴ Donald M. Nicol, "The Byzantine Views of Western Europe", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* Vol. VIII, No 4 (1967): 319.

⁴⁵ Chrysos, "Byzantine diplomacy", 25; Hélène Ahrweiler, *L'ideologie politique de l'Empire Byzantin* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975), 16; Ostrogorsky, "The Byzantine Emperor and the Hierarchical World Order", 5; *The Complete works of Liudprand of Cremona*, tr. Paolo Squatriti (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 270, gives a testimonial that when it was needed the Byzantines emphasized in their diplomatic contacts the fact that their state was a legal political continuation of Rome.

⁴⁶ Lampsakis et al., *Byzantine diplomacy*, 42. Ahrweiler, *L'ideologie politique de l'Empire Byzantin*, 17; Ostrogorsky, "The Byzantine Emperor and the Hierarchical World Order", 5-7; Nicol, "The Byzantine Views", 316, 321. Invention and use of the title Emperor of Romans (βασιλεὺς τῶν Ῥωμαίων) from 812 is also an example of political disparity that the Byzantine Empire wanted to maintain with Western Europe.

⁴⁷ One indication is the statement of Porphyrogenitus in *DAI*, 29.14-16, 30.6-12, on situation in the Balkans where he points out and emphasize that before all the land from the Adriatic Sea to the Danube was under Roman rule.

⁴⁸ On the Byzantine politics in the Adriatic region see Jonathan Shepard, "Aspects of Byzantine attitudes and Policy towards the West in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries", *Byzantium and the West c850-*

for the Byzantines to achieve these political ends was thru extrusion of any other political and military influence in the region and impose their own hegemony.

Regarding the position that Byzantine envoys had when diplomatic contacts with Slavic principalities were in the process of establishment, or in the negotiations afterwards, it can be noticed that they were not conducted between equal parties. This was a result of practical and ideological factors. From a practical point of view the Byzantine Empire was an actual maritime, military and economic superpower, while from ideological the state was presented internationally by its government and *élite* as an uninterrupted continuation of the ancient Rome which allowed its ruler, the *basileus*, to impose its claim on the highest political place in Christendom and former *Orbis Romanus*, and thus on a superior position in the diplomatic contacts that he established and conducted with states and potentates from that region. These major factors, actually, allowed the imperial government to perceive the Slavic principalities as political entities that were not on an equal level as the Byzantine Empire and to start its diplomatic contacts and negotiations from position of superiority.

Major problem in studying Byzantine diplomacy is to determine how the process of negotiation was actually conducted and what factors shaped and influenced the end result. Although there are preserved reports of Byzantine envoys and ambassadors who carried out these diplomatic matters, both abroad and in Constantinople, except for the chapter "On Envoys"⁴⁹ no theoretical handbook has come to us. Even this source is extremely general and obscure regarding this type of information and is not helpful in creating a more detailed guideline of how to conduct a negotiation overall. Due to the fact that the available sources are silent about the course of the diplomatic talks with the Slavic principalities, i.e. methods,⁵⁰ techniques and means that were used during this process, it is not possible to present a plausible hypothesis that would explain how they were conducted, or what assets (methods, techniques and means) were applied and how they were implemented, in order to achieve the desired result. Creating a general image about conducting negotiations through a procedure of mirroring other missions is incorrect, because the negotiation process and the factors that influence it apply to that mission only. What can be at least

c.1200, *Proceedings of the XVIII Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Oxford 30th March – 1st April 1984*, ed. J. D. Howard-Johnston (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1988), 70-72.

⁴⁹ For a detailed analysis of the chapter *περί πρέσβεων* or "On Envoys" see Douglas Lee and Jonathan Shepard, "A Double Life: Placing the Peri Presbeon", *Byzantinoslavica* 52, Prague (1991), 15-29.

⁵⁰ For Byzantine version of carrot and a stick policy see Драган Ѓалевски, "Византиските дипломатски практики и пратениците од западните земји во X век", *Византија и наследството на Европа: поврзување на културите, Зборник на трудови од Третиот меѓународен научен симпозиум „Денови на Јустинијан I“, Скопје, 29-30 октомври, 2015*, уред. Митко Б. Панов (Скопје: Евро-Балкан, 2016), 31-38.

confirmed in this case is that the Byzantine ambassadors, probably, followed the general principles set forth in "On Envoys".

Byzantine diplomatic missions towards the Slavic principalities in Eastern Adriatic region can be divided into two categories: relational and extra-diplomatic.⁵¹ Although there is no evidence of any formal diplomacy used by the Byzantines,⁵² it probably existed. As relational diplomacy, missions sent in the time of Basil I can be pointed out, and as extra-diplomatic the ones of Leo Rhabduchus, although there is a high probability that this mission was at the same time relational, i.e. sent in order to remind the ruler of Serbia about his duties. What can be observed from the sources is that these relational missions were, probably, in the rank of full-size embassies, while the extra-diplomatic, for example the mission of *strategos* of Dyrrachium, were led by just one man. The relational and extra-diplomatic types of diplomatic activity were often overlapping,⁵³ an aspect that can be also noticed in case of the Serbian principalities. Once negotiations ended the Byzantines always regulated the established relations by concluding treaties.⁵⁴ The Slavic principalities probably did not present an exception to this principle, although this is not reported in the sources. Iberia, a state on the Byzantine eastern border, who had a similar rank in "family of kinship"⁵⁵, had a treaty signed.⁵⁶ Even negotiations with the Pechenegs ended with some kind of ratification.⁵⁷

Concerning the plausible content of the treaties or other agreements signed by the Slavic potentates, it can be assumed that they, at least for those concluded in time

⁵¹ Although Miller, *Studies in Byzantine diplomacy*, 64-65, suggest that the Byzantines send extra-diplomatic missions for "...either declaration, conduct, or continuation of war, or all the various measures taken to secure a cessation of arms once war has begun...", in my opinion this term can be, at least, applied to all other non-relational diplomatic activities that are part of the military sphere.

⁵² There is an evidence of formal diplomacy (diplomatic activity carried out on a yearly basis) in *DAI*, 32.115-116, but that applies to Serbian *archons* in the period between the two reigns of Zacharias.

⁵³ Miller, *Studies in Byzantine diplomacy*, 65.

⁵⁴ On the need to regulate relations with other states see Dean A. Miller, "Byzantine Treaties and Treaty-making: 500-1204", *Byzantinoslavica* 32, N°.1, Prague (1971): 56-76. For confirmation of this Byzantine policy, but also evidence that during diplomatic talks and negotiations the Byzantines referred, if needed, to past agreements and treaties, see Nicholas I Patriarch of Constantinople, *Letters*, ed. and trans. Leendert G. Westerink and Romilly J.H. Jenkins (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 1973), 4-7, 52-53. See also Jonathan Shepard, "Past and future in Middle Byzantine diplomacy: some preliminary observations", *Byzance et le monde extérieur, Contacts, relations, échanges: Actes de trois séances du XX^e Congrès international des Études byzantines, Paris, 19-25 août 2001*, direction de M. Balard, É. Malamut, J.-M. Spieser (Paris: Sorbonne, 2005), 180-181, 185-187.

⁵⁵ *De Cerimoniis*, 687.16-18, 691.8-13.

⁵⁶ *DAI*, 45.104-118. See also Ферлуга, „Византиско царство и јужнословенски државе“: 92.

⁵⁷ In their case, according to *DAI*, 8.17, the treaties were ratified with their oath "zakana".

of Basil I, probably had political and military clause.⁵⁸ It is not known how they were ratified, which represent a normal conclusion of negotiations, because the sources are silent concerning this issue.⁵⁹ What was exactly agreed regarding the political matter is unknown,⁶⁰ except that after negotiations were concluded the Slavic principalities accepted Byzantine political supremacy and became client states, but not full-fledged vassals.⁶¹ What can be noted regarding their position as client states is that they were allied to the Byzantines and established close relations with the *basileus* as result of political and military obligation agreed in a treaty, but retained their independence, similar, in my opinion, to the *limitrophe* allies that existed on Byzantine borders until the end of the 7th century.⁶² Reason for this assumption is that, according to sources, the principalities had total freedom to self-appoint its rulers while the Byzantine emperor only approved and acknowledged them as *archons*, and thus the self-governing of the state.⁶³ Additionally, it was expected from them to give service (*δουλεία*)⁶⁴, i.e. military assistance, when needed and to provide security for the imperial territories on their borders, for which they received subsidies (at least at the time of Basil I) from the Byzantine Empire. It was never arranged to give tribute, or an imperial bureaucrat to have access in their internal affairs, not like some Armenian principalities on the Byzantine eastern border.⁶⁵ Lastly, in the official diplomatic correspondence these Slavic principalities received orders/commands from the *basileus* (as a result of the military obligation at least) which indicates existence of a much closer ties, both political and military, between the two parties.

Furthermore, sources suggest that there was no Byzantine intervention in internal affairs of the Slavic principalities, only when a treaty was breached, or some foreign hostile power, like Bulgaria, interfered. Also, sending envoys to Constantinople (like the Serbs have done) on a yearly basis between the end of the 9th and beginning of the 10th century indicates that Slavic potentates accepted the official correspondence of the imperial government and the term *κέλευσις*, and thus their political

⁵⁸ Miller, "Byzantine Treaties", 66-71.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 71-74.

⁶⁰ For possible content of the political clauses Miller, *Studies in Byzantine diplomacy*, 96-98.

⁶¹ About different types of client states and vassals see Miller, *Studies in Byzantine diplomacy*, 157-161.

⁶² Otto F. Winter, "Klientelkonige im romischen und byzantinischen Reich", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 2, Wien (1952): 42-50; Kazhdan, "The Notion of Byzantine diplomacy", 11-13, 18.

⁶³ According to *DAI*, 29.75-78, Basil I "...appointed for them archons whom they themselves approved and chose, from the family which they themselves loved and favored." Cf. *Theophanes Continuatus*, 292.7-9.

⁶⁴ Military aid was asked also from states or tribes that were not under a *κέλευσις*, like the Rhos. See *Повијест Минулих Љета*, прев. Ненад Косовић, (Београд: ИКП "Никола Пашвић", 2003), 38.

⁶⁵ *DAI*, 44.45-46, 58-59, 63-64, 123-124.

subordination in relation to the Byzantine emperor. The assumption that these principalities only recognised some ideological, i.e. abstract, hegemony of the Byzantine Empire and not actual practicable supremacy shaped thru military and non-military means, as well as propaganda, is incorrect.⁶⁶ In fact, the whole political situation changed in favour of the Byzantine government when it made a “show of force” with its navy in the Adriatic. The negotiations that followed were conducted with the notion that the Slavic potentates had of actual Byzantine military and political, i.e. diplomatic, might. Moreover, Slavic principalities in the Eastern Adriatic region, same as the principalities in Southern Italy or in Transcaucasia, were within reach of the Byzantine army for another “show of force”, if it was required of course, and, in my opinion, they were fully aware of that possibility.

Unlike the political part of the treaty, there is a possibility to assume more accurately what were the military matters that were agreed. The sources suggest that the Byzantines achieved to acquire military service, i.e. alliance, from the Slavic principalities. The military aid could have been a strategic one, i.e. the ally acts independently of Byzantine expeditionary forces, and tactical, that is, in co-operation with the Byzantine army. In this context, several ways of direct military assistance that the Byzantine Empire received from their allies can be distinguished.⁶⁷ What is known from the sources is that military aid of a strategic type was probably requested by Chaslav and Peter, *archons* of Serbia, as well as from the unnamed envoys in 992, while tactical assistance was given to the Byzantine Empire from all Slavic principalities for a military campaign against the Arabs in Southern Italy in 870, and again in 880, where their troops operated as part of the Byzantine army.

What the Byzantines also requested from the Slavic principalities was to provide security for the imperial territories located on their borders. The money that, according to *DAI*, was given as a “payment” by the Dalmatian cities to Croatia and Serbian principalities during second half of the 9th century should be, most probably, observed in one such context, as a subsidy from the *basileus* to his *limitrophe* client state for providing a military service. Thus, cities from the northern part of Dalmatia paid, i.e. subsidised, Croatia 710 *nomismata* for this kind of service, while city of Ragusa paid, i.e. subsidised, 72 *nomismata* to Zachlunia and Terbounia, or 36 *nomismata*

⁶⁶ I don't agree with Ферлуга, „Византиско царство и јужнословенски државе“: 88-91, that the Slavic principalities recognized some vague ideological hegemony. Actually, once ideology is implemented on the field, in this case in international relations, and accepted by others, then it becomes the policy that is actually being practiced. Furthermore, if the Byzantine government had in written in its treaties the political relation with the other party, that, in fact, shifts it from the field of ideology and abstractness to that of Medieval political legality. It is entirely different matter whether one will respect the signed treaties and for how long. Breach of agreement was very common in the Medieval period.

⁶⁷ Miller, *Studies in Byzantine diplomacy*, 98, 104.

each. *DAI* reports that this matter was agreed thru a treaty (πάκτων).⁶⁸ The given sum is almost the same as the smallest annual (864) salary for a *strategos* of Western *themata*, and the difference in amount (82) is the actual pay that, according to the author of *DAI*, was granted to him by the Dalmatian cities afterwards.⁶⁹ Also, 72 *nomismata* is annual, or a half-year (36), pay for *komes*, a military commander of *bandon*, smallest unit in the Byzantine army of this period.

Byzantine envoys, as the source material indicates, aimed at achieving two types of political ends: general long-term and specific short-term objectives. The specific short-term objectives were acquiring the Slavic principalities as allies in a conflict that at one moment raged on or near the Balkans, a war in which the Empire was involved, or to provide security for imperial territories that were located on their borders. The general objective was more straightforward. It was aimed at increasing Byzantine political influence and imposing hegemony in the Eastern Adriatic region. Almost always, when the diplomatic negotiations were concluded, the short-term objectives were an integral part of the general long-term political end.⁷⁰

Sources gives scant information about the composition of Byzantine envoys sent to the Slavic principalities. Most of their names are not reported, except in the case of the embassy that was sent to Serbia in 870 and the *strategos* of *thema* Dyrrachium. Possibly the reason why most of the envoys are unknown is because, apparently, there was no written mission report in the imperial archives from where the chroniclers could extract any data.⁷¹ However, there is also a probability that there was no need for it due to the fact that the envoys were sent personally by the *basileus*, or by order of the council in charge of sending embassies abroad that was, it seems, led by the *logothete of the Drome* as a chief advisor,⁷² upon a prior approval from the Byzantine emperor. Thus, no report should have been written because, in my opinion,

⁶⁸ *DAI*, 30.123-142. Byzantines used this term, or probably just the author of *DAI*, instead of *σπόνδας* to indicate, in my opinion, a treaty when one or both sides agreed and obliged to give some kind of service/tribute.

⁶⁹ According to *De Cerimoniis*, 697.10-17, the *stratego*i from the Western provinces received salary from their own *themata*, not from Constantinople.

⁷⁰ One such example that shows how the short-term was part of a general long-term objective gives Nicholas I, *Letters*, 486-487, who sent to the ruler of Abasgia, a client state at that time, a letter where he asked of him that "...in accordance with the imperial requirement and declaration..., be steadfast in your readiness to fight with us [against Bulgaria] and, if need be, you will as a grateful friend certainly do what is asked of you."

⁷¹ Why some diplomatic missions were archived see Jonathan Shepard, "Imperial Information and Ignorance: a discrepancy", *Byzantinoslavica* 56, Prague (1995): 114-115.

⁷² Dean A. Miller, "The Logothete of the Drome in the Middle Byzantine Period", *Byzantion* 36, Bruxelles (1966): 461, 463-464, 467-468; Rodolphe Guiland, "Les Logothetes: Etudes sur l'histoire administrative de l'Empire Byzantine", *Revue des Etudes Byzantine* 29, Paris (1971): 33-38.

the outcome of the mission was then delivered orally before the Emperor or that same council. On the other hand, the reason why we know the name and the imperial title of *strategos* of *thema* Dyrrachium is because he had, possibly, received his order for a diplomatic mission among the Serbs in writing from Constantinople and sent the achieved result back to the City through letter that was latter archived and, it seems, available to the author of *DAI*.⁷³

What is also pointed out in the sources is that Byzantine embassies were led by both civilian and military officials. Although it is assumed otherwise, the same source material, however, points to existence of certain framework in this period which the imperial government followed in regard to what type of official for what kind of mission should be sent, a framework that can be noticed it has been used in relation to other states or nations.⁷⁴ According to this practice, military officials were sent regarding military affairs, such as signing a military alliance or when, probably, a joint military action was planned,⁷⁵ although members of the elite from border regions could also be appointed for that purpose.⁷⁶ Reason for this appears to be in their competence to successfully negotiate military details.⁷⁷ If it was mission of political nature, as they were during the diplomatic initiative of Basil I, the envoys were led by civil officials who, in turn, were much more skilled in concluding treaties of this kind. In the period between middle of the 9th and beginning of the 10th century a large part of these embassies was led by church officials, but in the case of the Slavic principalities sources testify otherwise.⁷⁸

Status and importance of these ambassadors in the Empire itself are not known to us, except in the case of Leo Rhabduchus, *strategos* of Dyrrachium, who also had a title of *prōtospatharios*.⁷⁹ As for the title, it was not one of the highest, but was one of

⁷³ Same as in the case of Leo Symbatike's mission, *protospatharios* and *archon* of Cyprus, which was recorded in *De Cerimoniis*, 657.7-12. For other similar situations see Shepard, "Imperial Information and Ignorance": 113-114.

⁷⁴ Драган Ѓалевски, „Црковните претставници во византиската дипломатија на Балканот во текот на X век“, *Гласник на Институтот за национална историја* 57, бр.1-2, Скопје (2013): 49-59.

⁷⁵ Such was the case with the mission of Leo Rhabduchus, or of John Bogas, *strategos* of Cherson, to the Patzinaks (Pechenegs). See *Theophanes Continuatus*, 387.2-7, and *Skylitzes*, 196.

⁷⁶ One example is the dispatch of Kalokyros to Spendoslav (Svyatoslav), ruler of the Rhos. See *The History of Leo the Deacon*, trans. Alice-Mary Talbot and Denis F. Sullivan (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 2005), IV.6. According to *Skylitzes*, 265, he was a son of the *proteuon* of Cherson.

⁷⁷ Ѓалевски, „Црковните претставници“: 57-58.

⁷⁸ Nikola Mystikos, the Patriarch of Constantinople, in his letters to Simeon points out on several occasions that a church clergy or monks were sent as official emissaries of the *basileus* to the ruler of Bulgaria. See Nicholas I, *Letters*, 127-129, 153, 193. The use of church officials as negotiators is also noted in the works of *Theophanes Continuatus*, 413.1-2, and *Skylitzes*, 215, 293.

⁷⁹ *DAI*, 32.82-83.

the most often awarded aulic titles in the imperial hierarchy of this period. However, we do not know whether sending an ambassador with a title of *prōtopatharios* was a normal state of affairs in relation to diplomatic missions, at least as far as the Slavic principalities are concerned, because sources report that as imperial envoys were also sent members of the imperial elite who were *magistros* and *patrikios* or had some other lower title.⁸⁰

Regarding the diplomatic means that were used, sources report that Byzantines relied mostly on two, which were pride of *Rhomaioi*: titles and money.⁸¹ Of these, only titles are explicitly confirmed that were used by the imperial government during its diplomatic activity. At first, the rulers of Slavic principalities were endowed with a general title of *archon*,⁸² but later they were given strictly designated titles from the Byzantine aulic hierarchy.⁸³ Indication of this change in the Byzantine diplomacy is when Michael, *archon* of Zachlunia, was bestowed with high imperial title of *anthy-patos* and *patrikios*. After middle of the 10th century kings of Croatia also received the title of *patrikios*.⁸⁴ But it must be noted that although this title points to a much closer political relation with the Byzantine emperor it did not have the same political ties, i.e. closeness, like the title of *kouropalatēs* that potentates from Transcaucasia held.⁸⁵ While foreign dignitaries who were bestowed with a title of *kouropalatēs* were, actually, seen as part of the imperial court, the inner circle of officials of the *basileus*, bearer of *patrikios* could be viewed more as a member of his so-called “political family”, a foreign colleague, but with lower political dignity.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Miller, *Studies in Byzantine diplomacy*, 47-63.

⁸¹ Михаил Псел, *Хроника*, уред. Војислав Д. Никчевић (Подгорица: ЦИД, 2000), VI.29, notes that only “... two things maintain the hegemony of the Romans. Our system of honorary titles and money.”

⁸² *De Cerimoniis*, 691.8-11.

⁸³ The political objective that the imperial government wanted to achieve by giving such titles to foreigners was multiple: to bring the individual or the nation (if the holder of the title was their ruler) in the “family of kinship” while tying it in a kind of political relationship of dependency and subordination to the emperor; to flatter his vanity through prestige that he would receive in eyes of other rulers or his subordinates because of the political connection and closeness with the Empire; to stop its aggressive intentions, if there were any, through political influence or financial compensation which was derived from the salary (*ρόγα*) that was paid to the holder of a title annually; to emphasize to others the position that the ruler and his people had in the “family of kinship”, and therefore the importance they had for the Byzantine Empire; and, to establish a political network of allies and client states around its borders which, in accordance with the needs of the Empire and the concluded agreements, would come, if necessary, to the aid of the Byzantine emperor.

⁸⁴ For the title of *patrikios* see Bury, *The Imperial Administrative System*, 28-29.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 33-35.

⁸⁶ About the policy of conferring foreign independent rulers with the title of *patrikios* see Lampakis et al., *Byzantine diplomacy*, 43, 45-46.

Unlike titles, money as a means of diplomacy is not directly mentioned in the sources. Often, they were conferred by the Byzantines to impress foreign rulers about the benevolence and generosity of the *basileus*. As it was already noted, money was given to the Slavic principalities for providing security in Dalmatia during the reign of Basil I and probably afterwards. It should be mentioned that the Byzantine Empire had a policy to pay off, or subsidize, the military expenses of its allies, be they client states or not.⁸⁷ Also, the indication in the sources that Chaslav, *archon* of Serbia, was endowed "...with rich gifts..."⁸⁸ leads to the assumption that, probably, some of those gifts was money.

Just like money, other gifts that were bestowed by the *basileus* during ratification of an agreement, or afterwards, are not directly witnessed in the sources. However, these same sources indirectly report that the imperial government had them endowed, at least, to some rulers of the Slavic principalities, for example Michael of Zachlunia and the Croatian kings after the reign of Držislav, who held the title of *patrikios*. In their case, these other gifts were honorary garments. The reason for such an assumption is reflected in the fact that, along with some imperial titles, clothing was given that were made of specific textiles and had unique insignia, a kind of status symbol indicating to others what honorific title the wearer of the garment had.⁸⁹ Michael of Zachlunia and kings of Croatia were surely bestowed by the Byzantines with *scaramangion*, a tunic with embroidery made from a highly sought textile, as well as purple *sagion*, a honorific cloak intended for the bearer of this aulic title.⁹⁰

In order to achieve the planned military and political ends, or to emphasize their demands and to confirm them as legally legitimate, the Byzantine envoys knew during diplomatic talks or negotiations with other nations and states to use the events from the near or distant past, i.e. history and historical facts.⁹¹ As far as Slavic princi-

⁸⁷ The Rhos ruler Spendoslav (Svyatoslav) who according to *Leo the Deacon*, IV.6, received 15 *kentenaria* of gold as compensation for military aid in the war against Bulgaria. According to *DAI*, 43.115-118, *archons* in the area of Iberia and Armenia, who similarly accepted the Byzantine supremacy, and were under a *κέλευσις*, also received monetary endowments.

⁸⁸ *DAI*, 32.141.

⁸⁹ *Liudprand of Cremona*, 201. About the role of textile in Byzantine diplomacy see Franziska E. Shlosser, "Weaving a Precious Web: The Use of Textiles in Diplomacy", *Byzantinoslavica* 63, Prague (2005): 48-49; Anna Muthesius, "Silken diplomacy", *Byzantine diplomacy: Papers from the Twenty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990*, ed. Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1992), 237-248.

⁹⁰ *De Cerimoniis*, 251.1-2, 254.20. About the clothes of the *patrikios* see Elisabeth Piltz, "Middle Byzantine Court Costume", ed. Henry Maguire, *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 1997), 45; Jeniffer L. Ball, *Byzantine dress: representations of secular dress in eight to twelve centuries painting* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 43.

⁹¹ More details on the use of the past and historical events in Byzantine diplomacy in Shepard, "Past and future in Middle Byzantine diplomacy", 171-194; Jonathan Shepard, "The Uses of 'History' in Byzan-

palities are concerned, their use are, same as money, not explicitly attested in the sources. However, if we take into account the narration in *DAI* regarding the history of Dalmatia (the perception presented by the author is that the Byzantines saw this territory as an integral part of their state which was only temporarily out of their control) and usage of historical facts in the negotiations with Bulgaria, or with Liutprand of Cremona,⁹² it can be assumed that they were, actually, an important diplomatic means for the Byzantine government during this period.

Another diplomatic means that was used during negotiations with the Slavic principalities was imperial prestige.⁹³ First segment through which the imperial government publicly manifested its own supremacy was the perception of the symbolic value that Constantinople had in the eyes of ordinary medieval man, both Byzantine and other nations alike.⁹⁴ Byzantines were fully aware of the exceptionally strong impression that their Imperial city left on foreigners, as pointed out by the author of "On Envoys". Other aspect of this prestige were imperial ceremonies.⁹⁵ They seem to have directly affected only Zacharias, the son of the Serbian ruler Pribeslav, for whom the sources report that resided for a long time in Constantinople, probably was even born

tine Diplomacy: Observations and Comparisons", *Porphyrogenita. Essays on the History and Literature of Byzantium and the Latin East in Honour of Julian. Chrysostomides*, eds. C. Dendrinos et al., (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 91-115.

⁹² For uses of history during the Byzantine-Bulgarian conflict see Nicholas I, *Letters*, 33-35, 71. History was also obligatory in relations with the Western countries, as noted *Liudprand of Cremona*, 270, as well as during protocolary diplomatic missions sent to the Abbasid Caliphate and other Islamic states.

⁹³ Established as a result of several factors, it gave to the Byzantines a significant advantage in international relations, especially noticeable when trying to set their own position in relation to foreign rulers and other influential potentates with whom it came into contact. The imperial prestige was actually a result of the foreigners' perception of the abundance and splendor of the Empire in relation to its own state, and also to other nations from its closer and more distant surroundings. Liutprand of Cremona reports in *Liudprand of Cremona*, 50, that the Byzantines "...surpass all these [neighboring] peoples in wealth as they do also in wisdom."

⁹⁴ See Averill Cameron, *The Byzantines*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 65. For the Slavic tribes from the Balkans, the Bulgarians, as well as for the Russians, it was *Tzargrad*, while among the Scandinavian people it was known as *Miklagard*, *Mikligardr* or *Micklegarth*, the "great city" immensely admired in the sagas by the people. See Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 2009), 125.

⁹⁵ They represented a significant ideological and propaganda tool in the hands of the Byzantine Emperor, where through the visual presentation of his own political and military power tried to pacify the aggressiveness of his neighbors and more distant nations. That this was main purpose of the ceremonies indicates Porphyrogenitus in *De Cerimoniis*, 3.3-4.1, according to whom "...through praiseworthy ceremonial the imperial rule appears more beautiful and acquires more nobility and so is a cause of wonder to both foreigners and our own people."

there,⁹⁶ and it can with some certainty be assumed that during all those years living there he attended the ceremonies held in the Great Palace and throughout the city. That imperial prestige, as well as everything that came from it, had a strong influence on him⁹⁷ and on his policy to accept Byzantine supremacy is clearly indicated in *DAI*.⁹⁸ Therefore, it cannot be excluded that one of the reasons behind Zacharias political decision was, in fact, the influence that Constantinople and imperial ceremonies had on him,⁹⁹ as well as the knowledge of possible political and financial benefits if he maintained closer political ties with the *basileus*.¹⁰⁰

From all that was previously stated, a general picture of Byzantine diplomatic activity towards the Slavic principalities can be presented. Political objectives that were set, imposing political supremacy, acquiring them as allies and providing security for the imperial territories in the region were mostly successfully implemented but usually short-lived. However, it must be emphasized that this was not due to a failure by the Byzantines, but because of the very nature of medieval diplomacy that, unfortunately, forced them to renegotiate the political relations not only with a new ruler, but sometimes even with the old ally as a result of some new political constellation in the region or direct foreign involvement. During this process of negotiation and renegotiation the imperial government used all the means that it could and thought were necessary at the moment to realize its goals. Despite few minor setbacks, overall, the Byzantine diplomacy from middle of the 9th till beginning of the 11th century has succeeded, no matter how short-term it was, to achieve its political ends: to impose imperial hegemony, acquire allies and create a barrier of *limitrophe* client states in the Eastern Adriatic region.

⁹⁶ For Zacharias long-term stay in Constantinople see *DAI*, 32.100-104. According to Димитриј Оболенски, *Византијски Комонвелт* (Београд: Просвета, 1996), 138, Zacharias was educated there. More details about Zacharias in Живковић, *Портрети владара*, 58-60.

⁹⁷ This is also pointed out by Живковић, *Портрети владара*, 62-63.

⁹⁸ *DAI*, 32.108-111.

⁹⁹ Regarding imperial hospitality to foreign potentates who resided for a long time in Constantinople see Jonathan Shepard, "Manners maketh Romans? Young barbarians at the emperor's court", *Byzantine style, Religion and Civilization*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 135-152.

¹⁰⁰ See Jonathan Shepard, "Byzantine diplomacy, A.D. 800-1204: means and ends", *Byzantine diplomacy: Papers from the Twenty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990*, ed. J. Shepard and S. Franklin (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1992), 49-51, 54, 59.

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