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3

FROM ONE SEA TO ANOTHER  
TRADING PLACES IN THE EUROPEAN  
AND MEDITERRANEAN EARLY MIDDLE AGES

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The numismatic evidence  
from the southern Adriatic (5<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries):  
some preliminary observations and thoughts

Instead of investigating evolutions and phenomena that took place from 'one sea to another', as the title of this publication suggests, this paper focuses on one sea, the Adriatic, and its two coasts, the Illyrian to the east and the Italian to the west, and then only on their southern parts. This geographic limitation and chronological frame is dictated by historical reasons, since only southern Italian territories were more or less continuously under Byzantine control between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. Thus, they offer a potential field of comparison with the southern Albanian territories lying across the Adriatic. Since the circulation of Byzantine coins in Italy has been the subject of several contributions in the recent past, I will focus on the less well-known coin circulation in present-day Albania<sup>1</sup>. Whenever

<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to cite here the numerous studies on this topic, many of which refer also to Northern Italy (cf. A. Rovelli's contribution in this volume). For an overview, see E.A. Arslan, «La circolazione monetaria (secoli v-viii)», in *La storia dell'alto medioevo italiano (vi-x secolo) alla luce dell'archeologia*, eds R. Francovich, G. Noyé, Firenze, 1994, p. 497-519; E.A. Arslan, «La circolazione monetaria in Italia (secoli vi-viii). Città e campagna», in *Histoire et culture dans l'Italie byzantine. Acquis et nouvelles recherches*, eds A. Jacob, J.-M. Martin, G. Noyé, Rome, 2006 (*Collection de l'École française de Rome* 363), p. 365-385; E.A. Arslan, «Cultura monetaria e circolazione tra v e viii secolo in Italia», in *Città e campagna nei secoli altomedievali*, Spoleto, 2009 (*Settimana del Centro italiano di studi sull'Alto Medioevo* LVI), p. 975-1005. On the circulation of Byzantine coins in Apulia and Calabria, see P. Arthur, «Economic Expansion in Byzantine Apulia», in *Histoire et culture dans l'Italie byzantine*, p. 389-405; J.-M. Martin, «Economia naturale ed economia monetaria nell'Italia meridionale longobarda e bizantina (secoli vi-xi)», in *Storia d'Italia, Annali 6: Economia naturale economia monetaria*, eds R. Romano, U. Tucci, Torino, 1983, p. 181-219; J.-M. Martin, *La Pouille du vi<sup>e</sup> au xii<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Rome, 1993 (*Collection de l'École française de Rome* 179), esp. p. 443-477; G. Guzzetta, «Lineamenti di circolazione monetaria nella Puglia settentrionale», *Rassegna di Studi del Civico Museo Archeologico e del Gabinetto Numismatico di Milano*, 29-30 (1982), p. 71-77; G. Guzzetta, «Per la Calabria bizantina: primo censimento dei dati numismatici», in *Calabria bizantina. Istituzioni civili e topografia storica*, Reggio, 1986, p. 251-280; G. Guzzetta, «Da Locri a Stilo: le testimonianze monetarie», in *Calabria bizantina. Civiltà*

possible, comparisons are drawn with the better studied regions of Byzantine Italy – mainly Apulia and Calabria, two regions in close proximity to the Illyrian coast. The purpose of this exercise is to trace the information provided by the numismatic evidence regarding contact and economic exchange in the two rims of the Adriatic.

Unlike Italy, which had a turbulent history during the Early Middle Ages, most parts of Albania remained under Byzantine control throughout this period. Until recently, however, little attention has been paid to the archaeology or history of this era. Italian fascism and post-war communism, both political movements with little or no interest in the Middle Ages, deeply influenced Albanian archaeology and consequently numismatics. Mussolini's plan to create a protectorate in the Albanian territory spurred archaeological and research activity in the country, which aimed to establish a connexion between contemporary fascist claims and past Roman and Venetian presence. A similar attitude, dictated by other interests, was adopted by Enver Hoxha's (1908-1985) isolationist regime after the Second World War. Only two historical periods were of interest to Albanian scholars: the civilisation of the Illyrians, considered to represent the autochthonous population of Albania before the Greek colonisation, and the civilisation of the Arbërs, the medieval ancestors of modern Albanians and supposed direct descendants of the Illyrians. In both cases, Byzantium and its civilisation offered no support for the official propaganda and were therefore ignored<sup>2</sup>.

It is thus not surprising that, besides sporadic references in excavation reports, only two studies concerning Byzantine coins in Albania have been

*bizantina nei territori di Gerace e Stilo*, Reggio, 1998, p. 25-30; E.A. Arslan, «Ancora sulla circolazione della moneta in rame nella Calabria di X-XII secolo», *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome – Moyen Âge*, 110 (1998), p. 359-378; B. Callegher, C. Morisson, «Milliarenii de follibus: la trouvaille de folles byzantins de Cannes (milieu du X<sup>e</sup> siècle)», in *Puer Apuliae. Mélanges offerts à Jean-Marie Martin*, eds E. Cuozzo, V. Déroche, A. Peter-Custot, V. Prigent, Paris, 2008 (*Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, Monographies* 30), p. 105-122; L. Travaini, *La monetazione nell'Italia normanna*, Roma, 1995. Indispensable to any study of coin circulation in the Italian peninsula during the High Middle Ages is E.A. Arslan, *Repertorio dei ritrovamenti di moneta altomedievale in Italia (489-1002)*, Spoleto, 2005 (*Testi, Studi, Strumenti del Centro italiano di studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 18), which includes Byzantine coin finds from Apulia and Calabria. Subsequent updates of the inventory are found on the author's website (<http://www.ermannoarlsan.eu/>); the present article is based on the latest available version (9/9/2009).

<sup>2</sup> P. Papadopoulou, «Albanian numismatics: a numismatist's experience», in *Coinage in the Balkans 40 years on. Papers in Honour of D.M. Metcalf*, eds E. Oberländer-Târnoveanu, J.R. Baker, Oxford, forthcoming with bibliography.

published. Our main source of information on Byzantine coin finds from the territory remains Hëna Spahiu's article from 1979/1980<sup>3</sup>. Despite its errors and anachronistic attributions, it provides a valuable catalogue of 529 Byzantine coins discovered in Albania. Her study was later supplemented by Afrim Hoti's and Halil Myrto's catalogue of 127 Byzantine coins found in Durrës (Byzantine *Dyrhacchion*)<sup>4</sup>. This extremely short list of publications, paralleled by an almost total absence of archival and historical sources, sharply contrasts with the situation in Byzantine Italy, where the scholar is overwhelmed by the abundance of numismatic publications and the richness of archival material<sup>5</sup>. The following commentary is based on the aforementioned Albanian publications, as well as on my own observations on the numismatic material studied during visits to Albania beginning in 2003<sup>6</sup>.

Geographically, the Illyrian coast forms a closed world, isolated from the rest of the Balkans by formidable mountains, with narrow valleys on the coasts that allow only limited agricultural production and few ports. Nevertheless, it was a region of commercial and strategic importance throughout the medieval period. The ports of *Dyrhacchion* (Durrës) and *Aulona* (Vlorë) were no doubt essential to its commercial and military significance. They functioned both as entrances to the eastern parts of the Empire for anyone coming from Italy by sea and as the endpoints of the Via Egnatia, the most important land route from Constantinople to the west<sup>7</sup>.

Administratively, the Albanian territory was divided into three provinces (Provincia Praevalis, Nova Epirus and Epirus Vetus) and later into two *the-*

<sup>3</sup> H. Spahiu, «Monedha bizantine të shekujve V-XIII, të zbuluara në territorin e Shqipërisë», *Iliria*, 9/10 (1979/1980), p. 353-422. The same article, without the detailed catalogue of coin finds, was later published in French: H. Spahiu, «Des monnaies byzantines du V<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, découvertes sur le territoire de l'Albanie», *XL Corso di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina* (1993), p. 625-634.

<sup>4</sup> A. Hoti, H. Myrto, «Monedha perandorake bizantine nga Durrësi (491-1025)», *Iliria*, 1-2 (1991), p. 91-122.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. n. 1.

<sup>6</sup> I am grateful to Richard Hodges, Director of the Butrint excavations, who entrusted me with the study of medieval coin finds from the site of Butrint. I would also like to thank the Butrint Foundation, the Packard Humanities Institute, and the International Centre for Albanian Archaeology (ICAA) for providing financial support. Finally, special thanks should be addressed to Afrim Hoti (Director of the Durrës Archaeological Museum), Kimberly Bowes, Adam Gutteridge, Sam Moorhead, Cécile Morrisson, Alessia Rovelli and Jean-Pierre Sodini.

<sup>7</sup> A. Ducellier, *La façade maritime d'Albanie au Moyen Âge. Durazzo et Valona du XI<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Thessaloniki, 1981, p. 3-8.

*mata* (*Dyrbacchion* and Nikopolis/Kephallenia). The area from Durrës up to the lake of Shkodër formed the Provincia Praevalis, later part of the theme of *Dyrbacchion*. Three important fortified cities guarding the passage of Lake Shkodër and protecting *Dyrbacchion* were situated on its northern edge: Shkodër (*Scutari*), Lezhë (*Lissus*) and Krujë (*Kroia*). The combined numismatic evidence from these sites and stray finds from other parts of the area offer a circulation pattern similar to the one typically observed in most Byzantine sites: namely, after a great influx of coins during the 6<sup>th</sup> century, particularly under Justinian I (527-565), coin finds cease under Constans II (641-668), only to resume at a relatively late date under the reign of Leo VI (886-912)<sup>8</sup>.

Moving southwards we reach the Province of Nova Epirus, the middle Byzantine theme of *Dyrbacchion*. This is not only the most fertile area of Albania, with coastal valleys to the west and the Ohrid and Prespa lakes to the east, but also the most important area commercially and militarily because its boundaries coincide with the important port-cities of *Dyrbacchion* and *Aulona*, the two western termini of the medieval Via Egnatia<sup>9</sup>. The strategic significance and commercial role of these ports increased after the loss of Byzantine Italy, making the Illyrian coast the westernmost frontier of the Empire and allowing for the integration of these port-cities into the commercial network of the Italian maritime cities<sup>10</sup>. It is certainly not a coincidence that both ports were included in the treaties granting privileges to Venetian merchants active in the territories of the Empire since 1082<sup>11</sup>. The role of these port-cities in earlier periods is less clear and must have depended largely on the changing fate of the connected maritime and

<sup>8</sup> For bibliography and a more detailed analysis of coin circulation in northern Albania, see P. Papadopoulou, «Albanian numismatics». The characteristics of a 'typical' coin circulation for a Byzantine site – as well as the many diverging cases – are described in C. Morrisson, «Byzantine Money: Its Production and Circulation», in *The Economic History of Byzantium from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. A.E. Laiou, Washington D.C., 2002, vol. 3, p. 954-962.

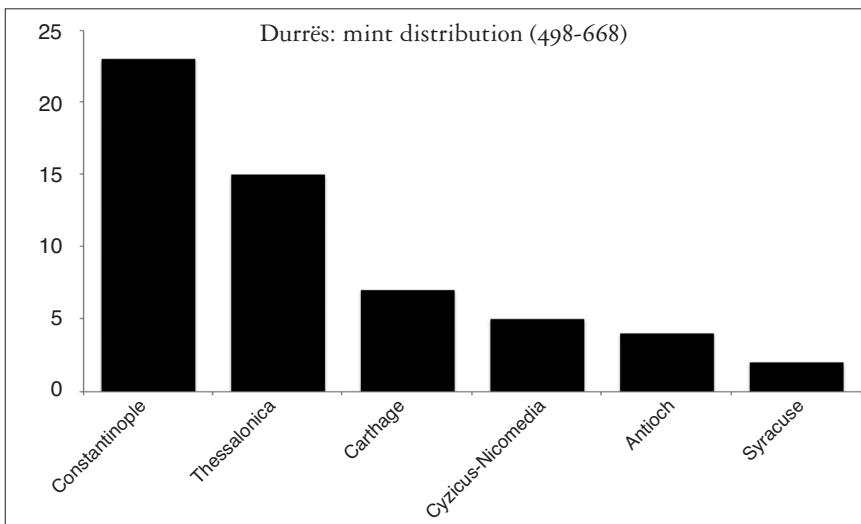
<sup>9</sup> A. Ducellier, *La façade maritime*, p. 76-77.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 28-31 (Durrës), 37-39 (Vlorë).

<sup>11</sup> Fr. Tafel, G.M. Thomas, *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig mit besonderer Beziehung auf Byzanz und die Levante vom neunten bis zum Ausgang des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Wien, 1856-1857, I, p. 52. See also, R.-J. Lilie, *Handel und Politik zwischen dem byzantinischen Reich und den italienischen Kommunen Venedig, Pisa und Genua in der Epoche der Komnenen und der Angeloi (1081-1204)*, Amsterdam, 1984, p. 184-187; A. Ducellier, «L'Albanie entre Orient et Occident aux XI<sup>e</sup> et XII<sup>e</sup> siècles. Aspects politiques et économiques», *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 19 (1976) (=A. Ducellier, *L'Albanie entre Byzance et Venise, X<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Variorum, London, 1987, n° XV), p. 6-7.

land routes<sup>12</sup>. In any case, *Dyrrhachion*, though later known as a major commercial centre, was more important on a regional level and as a stronghold during the Middle Byzantine period; it was the capital of the province and, beginning in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the capital of the homonymous theme<sup>13</sup>. Other medieval fortified sites in the area include *Pulcheriopolis* (Berat), Kaninë, *Apollonia*, Korçë and Pogradec.

In the case of Durrës, the modern city lying on top of Byzantine *Dyrrhachion*, excavations revealed a significant number of Byzantine coins. Besides a gold *solidus* of Constantine IV (668-685)<sup>14</sup>, all of the coins are copper. This could be attributed to the nature of the numismatic material, which comes from excavated sites for the most part, and furthermore to the nature of the sites<sup>15</sup>.



1. Graph showing the mint distribution at Dyrrachium, AD 498-668.

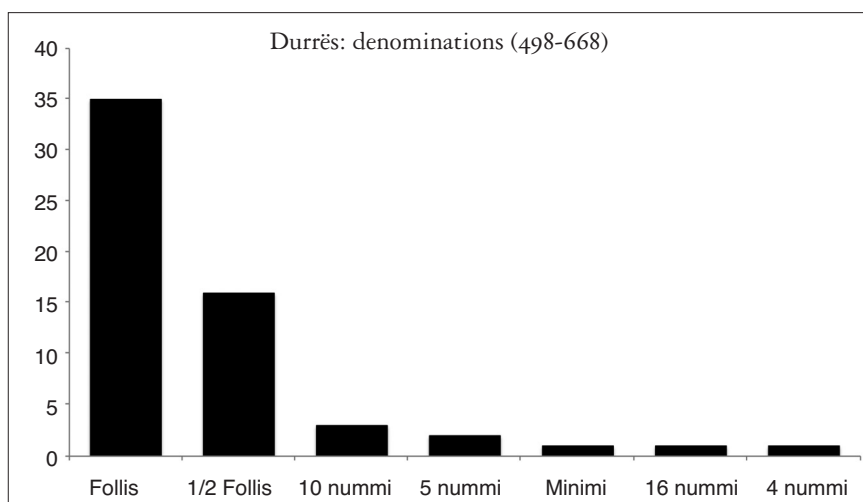
<sup>12</sup> On these changes, M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy. Communications and Commerce AD 300-900*, Cambridge-New York-Melbourne-Madrid-Cape Town, 2001, p. 68-73, 541-542, 559.

<sup>13</sup> T.E. Gregory, «Dyrrachium», in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A.P. Kazhdan, I, New York, 1991, p. 668. The defensive role of *Dyrrhachion* already in the Early Byzantine period is evidenced by the Anastasian and Justinianic defensive structures. A. Gutteridge, A. Hoti, H. Hurst, «The walled town of Dyrrachium (Durrës): settlement and dynamics», *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 14 (2001), p. 390-410; A. Gutteridge, A. Hoti, «The walled town of Dyrrachium (Durrës): new light on the early defences», *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 16 (2003), p. 367-379.

<sup>14</sup> *MIB III*, 1a: A. Hoti, H. Myrto, «Monedha», no. 59.

<sup>15</sup> The coins published by A. Hoti and H. Myrto come from three excavated sites within the modern city: the amphitheatre that at some point in the Byzantine period

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Anastasian coins made up 30% of the total coins in circulation, whereas the most numerous (44%) are again the coins of Justinian I. The important presence of Anastasius I's (491-518) coins is no doubt related to the fact that *Dyrrhacchion* was the emperor's birthplace. Significant building activity, including the late antique fortification and the hippodrome, was undertaken during his reign<sup>16</sup>. As far as mint distribution is concerned, there is a clear preponderance of the metropolitan mint, followed by Thessalonica, the capital of Illyricum (fig. 1). Carthage and Antioch are also represented, but counter to expectation, no Italian mints have been found, save for Syracuse. This numismatic phenomenon parallels trends in other sites, as discussed below.



2. Graph showing Dyrrachium denominations, AD 498-668.

According to the available data, there is a clear prevalence of the higher copper denominations, namely the *follis* and the half-*follis* (fig. 2). If this phenomenon is not due to the difficulty of recovering and identifying small

became a residential area, the Macellum in the Roman forum and the necropolis. *Ibidem*, p. 91 with bibliography. This material is supplemented by sporadic references in H. Spahiu, «Monedha bizantine», *passim* and by twenty-odd unpublished coins in the Durrës Archaeological Museum. P. Papadopoulou, «Tétartèra d'imitation du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: à propos du trésor de Durrës (Albanie)», *Revue Numismatique*, 161 (2005), p. 146, n. 7. It is clear that the nature of the evidence is too fragmentary to be considered as representative of the whole city of *Dyrrhacchion*.

<sup>16</sup> A. Ducellier, *La façade maritime*, p. 26, 32.



denominations, it reveals a differentiation in the circulation pattern of copper denominations between the provinces of Nova Epirus and Epirus Vetus; as will be shown, small denominations are plentiful in the latter region. It is also noteworthy that purely Thessalonican denominations, such as the *dekaexanoumion* and the *tetranoumion*, have also been recovered in *Dyrbacchion*<sup>17</sup>. In total, fourteen *dekaexanoumia* have been found in Albania, but none from the south. With the exception of four specimens found in Shkodër and Korçë, the rest come from Belsh in the Elbasan region, Lin, Pogradec and Durrës<sup>18</sup>. Based on the testimonies of 11<sup>th</sup>- and 12<sup>th</sup>-century Byzantine historians, Alain Ducellier suggested the existence of an alternate route leading from Macedonia to the Albanian coast with a course that differs in part from that of the ancient Via Egnatia<sup>19</sup>. Coincidentally the *dekaexanoumia* finds come from fortresses on or very near this other itinerary and possibly indicate that it was already in use as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Returning to coin circulation in *Dyrbacchion*, the relatively short duration of the *grande brèche* (that is, the discontinuity observed in the coin circulation of most Byzantine sites between c.668 and 820) is perhaps an indication of the city's military and commercial – albeit regional – importance in the Dark Ages. It seems to have lasted only from 741 to the reign of Theophilus (829-842)<sup>20</sup>. The late 7<sup>th</sup>-century gold *solidus* of Constantine IV reinforces this argument. The next period is marked by the strong presence of Leo VI's *folles*, which represent 77% of all coin finds, whereas the anony-

<sup>17</sup> During the reign of Justinian I, the mint of Thessalonica struck a series of undated copper coins with unusual denominations: *dekaexanoumia* (equal to sixteen *nummi*), *oktanoumia* (equal to eight *nummi*), *tetranoumia* (equal to four *nummi*) as well as two-*nummi* coins. Ph. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, London, 1982, p. 62-63. No satisfying explanation for this particularity has been offered yet. Cf. also D.M. Metcalf, *The Copper Coinage of Thessalonica under Justinian I*, Wien, 1976; D.M. Metcalf, «Mint-activity in Byzantine Thessaloniki», in *To nomisma sto makedoniko choro. Praktika B' Epistemonikes synanteses*, ed. P. Adam-Veleni, Thessaloniki, 2000 (*Obolos* 4), p. 175-176.

<sup>18</sup> H. Spahiu, «Monedha bizantine», nos 159-171; A. Hoti, H. Myrto, «Monedha», no. 20. From the descriptions, it can be deduced that nine belong to type MIB I, 169a, two to MIB I, 169c, and one to MIB I, 170a. Only one *tetranoumion* is known; it was recovered in Durrës. *Ibidem*, no 21 (MIB I, 176a).

<sup>19</sup> This alternative itinerary diverges from the route of the Via Egnatia west of the lake Ohrid and is directed to the south, along the northern shore of the river Devolli, through Deavolis and then northwards, through Petrelë and the Ezren valley to *Dyrbacchion*. A. Ducellier, *La façade maritime*, p. 76-79 and map on p. 684.

<sup>20</sup> The last coin is a *folles* of Leo III (717-741) (DOC III.1, 29). P. Papadopoulou, «Të-tartëra d'imitation», p. 146, n. 7. Coin circulation resumes with a *folles* of Theophilus (DOC III.1, 15-16). A. Hoti, H. Myrto, «Monedha», no. 60.



mous *folles* of Class A2 (976-1030/5) prevailed in the late 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries. Given the fragmentary nature of our documentation for the 11<sup>th</sup> century, it is difficult to make any secure observations regarding coin circulation. There are, however, indications that anonymous *folles* of Class I, dating from c.1075 to c.1080, were quite common. Their presence can be connected to Alexius Comnenus' campaigns against the Normans in 1081-1085<sup>21</sup>. Although these coins are not commonly found in Italy as single finds<sup>22</sup>, they often occur overstruck by *folliari* of Robert Guiscard (1059-1085), an indication of their earlier arrival in southern Italy<sup>23</sup>.

Another important site in this area is Byllis, an episcopal see and one of the eight most important cities of Nova Epirus<sup>24</sup>. It was refortified by Justinian I<sup>25</sup>, but did not survive the Slav attacks and was abandoned in the 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>26</sup>. Excavations yielded 461 Byzantine coins, belonging for the most part to Anastasius I, Justin I (518-527) and Justinian I. *Minimi* of Baduila (541-552) as well as Vandal coins were also found there. The majority of coins are small denominations, mainly *nummi* and *pentanoumia*, in stark contrast to the large denomination finds at *Dyrhacchion*. In this case too, Justinian's coins prevail, reflecting this emperor's concern for the de-

<sup>21</sup> Also see P. Papadopoulou, «The Middle and Late Byzantine, Medieval and Early Modern Coins», in *Butrint: Excavations at the Triconch Palace*, eds R. Hodges, W. Bowden, K. Lako, Oxford, forthcoming.

<sup>22</sup> Only seven specimens of Class I from Calabria and Apulia are attested in E.A. Arslan, *Repertorio*: nos 0970 (1), 0990 (1), 1020 (4), 5195 (1). A clear preponderance of Class I over the anonymous *folles* of the later classes can also be observed in Albania: P. Papadopoulou, «Middle and Late Byzantine coins».

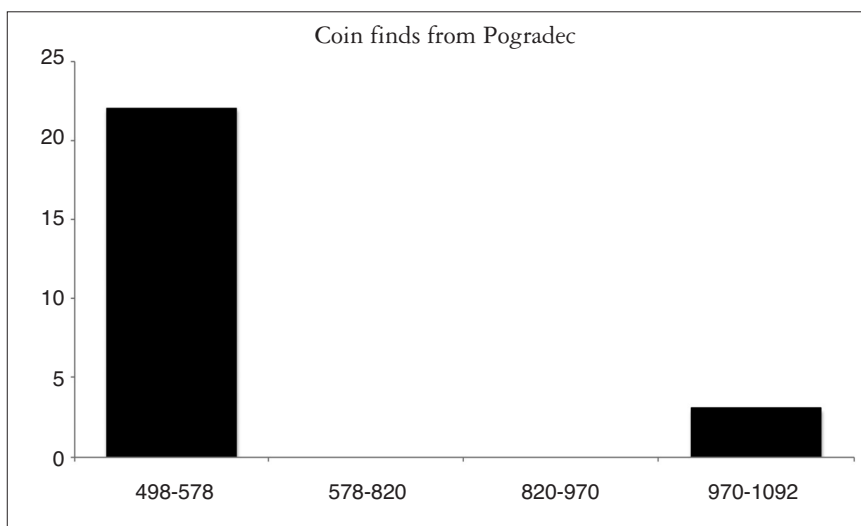
<sup>23</sup> L. Travaini, *La monetazione*, p. 35, 243 ff. (Types 32 and 34, Mint of Salerno); Ph. Grierson, L. Travaini, *Medieval European Coinage 14. Italy III (South Italy, Sicily, Sardinia)*, Cambridge, 1998, p. 61-62.

<sup>24</sup> The site has been excavated by the Albanian Archaeological Institute and a French mission. I thank Professor Jean-Pierre Sodini for allowing me to consult the forthcoming final publication. A preliminary report was published in N. Beaudry, P. Blanc, M. Bonifay, Y. Cerova, P. Chevalier, M. Haxhimihali, E. Hobdari, A. Islami, T. Koželj, S. Muçaj, E. Nallbani, M.-P. Raynaud, M. Savard, J.-P. Sodini, I. Tassignon, C. Vanderheyde, M. Wurch-Koželj, «Byllis (Albanie)», *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*, 126/2 (2002), p. 659-684, where some of the coin finds are also mentioned.

<sup>25</sup> Four inscriptions mention Viktorinos who was responsible for the construction of the city walls during the reign of Justinian I. S. Anamali, «Katër mbishkrime ndërtimi nga Bylisi», *Monumentet*, 1 (1987), 63-67; D. Feissel, «L'architecte Viktôrinos et les fortifications de Justinien dans les provinces balkaniques», *Bulletin de la société nationale des antiquaires de France*, (1988), p. 136-146; D. Feissel, «Les édifices de Justinien au témoignage de Procope et de l'épigraphie», *Antiquité Tardive*, 8 (2000), p. 81-104.

<sup>26</sup> A. Ducellier, *La façade maritime*, p. 24-25.

fensive system of the Albanian territory. Three hoards consisting mainly of Justinian's coins were found in the destruction layer of the cathedral; they can be connected with the Slav invasions<sup>27</sup>. At least one of the hoards, about which more information is available, closes with a *folles* of 547/548 and can thus be associated with the 548-551 invasion of the Sklavens<sup>28</sup>.



3. Graph showing coin finds from Pogradec.

A more extended chronological sequence is available from the city of Pogradec on the Ohrid Lake<sup>29</sup>. Although it was not a town of great significance in the Byzantine period, it represents a non-coastal settlement and thus offers an interesting point of comparison. There is a strikingly long absence of numismatic finds during the Middle Byzantine period: coin finds cease under Justin II (565-578) and resume only at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century with two anonymous *folles* of Class A2 (fig. 3). Pogradec's geographical position in the interior of the Albanian territory justifies the long absence of coin finds, a common feature of all non-coastal Albanian sites.

<sup>27</sup> N. Beaudry *et al.*, «Byllis», p. 668-669.

<sup>28</sup> If this hypothesis is correct, then the Byllis hoard would be the easternmost trace of the invasion of the Sklavens. Cf. V. Ivanišević, «Les trésors balkaniques, témoins des invasions et de leurs routes», in C. Morrisson, V. Popović, V. Ivanišević et collaborateurs, *Les trésors monétaires byzantins des Balkans et d'Asie Mineure (491-713)*, Paris, 2006 (*Réalités byzantines* 13), p. 78.

<sup>29</sup> H. Spahiu, «Monedha bizantine», *passim*.

Besides the three small hoards of Byllis, another hoard was discovered in Gjegjovë in the Berat area. It consisted of 10 *folles* of Anastasius I, Justin I and Justinian I, all found in a bronze plate<sup>30</sup>. The hoard, closing with a 539/540 *folllis*, has been associated with the first Kutrigur incursion (539-540)<sup>31</sup>. Along with the hoards from Byllis, the Gjegjovë hoard extends into the Albanian territory, the 'routes des invasions', as they have been traced by Vujadin Ivanišević on the basis of Balkan hoards<sup>32</sup>.

In general, coin circulation in Nova Epirus is characterised by a more regular and continuous coin supply than northern Albania, thanks to its contacts with the capital and the rest of the Empire. This, however, does not hold true for the whole region: the sites in the interior, such as Pogradec and Korçë, present a picture analogous to that of Central and Northern Balkans, where the so-called Dark Ages lasted longer<sup>33</sup>.

The southernmost part of the Albanian territory is a mountainous area, and along with parts of Greek Epirus, it formed the Province of Epirus Vetus and later on the theme of Nikopolis. One of the best-documented sites of this area, in both the literary and archaeological evidence, is Butrint, Byzantine *Bouthrotos*. The numerous mentions of the site in written sources are supplemented by the archaeological evidence revealed in the course of excavations conducted there since the 1920's, first by Italian and then by Albanian archaeologists<sup>34</sup>. From 1994 onwards, excavations in several areas of the site (Triconch Palace, Vrina Plain, Western Defenses, Diaporit, Forum etc.) have been undertaken by a British-Albanian mission, revealing hundreds of medieval coins<sup>35</sup>. Dif-

<sup>30</sup> H. Spahiu, N. Çuni, «Monedha antike e byzantine nga Lugjima e Sipërme e Osunit (Rrethi i Skraparit)», *Iliria*, 1 (1988), p. 248-252; C. Morrisson *et al.*, «Les trésors monétaires», p. 290-291, no. 208a.

<sup>31</sup> V. Ivanišević, «Les trésors balkaniques», p. 77.

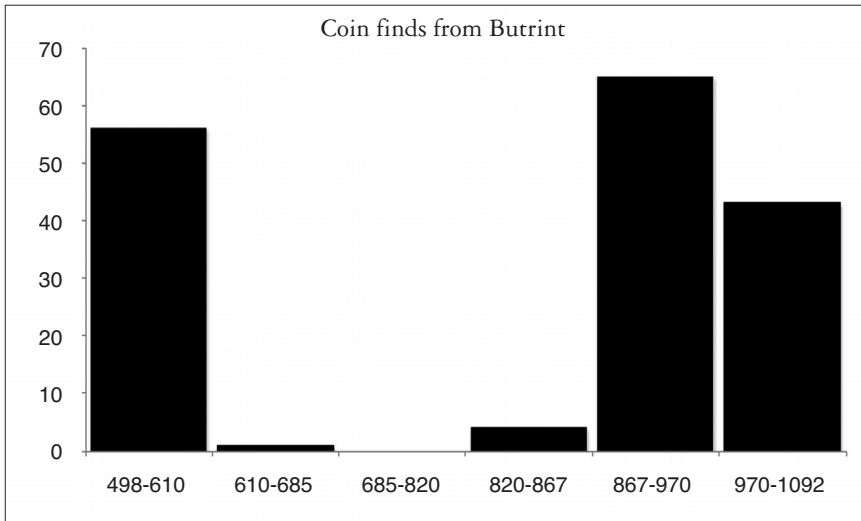
<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 75-93.

<sup>33</sup> As, for example, in Serbia, V. Radić, V. Ivanišević, *Byzantine Coins from the National Museum in Belgrade*, Belgrade, 2006, p. 61. See also, F. Curta, «Byzantium in Dark-Age Greece (the numismatic evidence in its Balkan context)», *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 29/2 (2005), p. 113-146.

<sup>34</sup> For mentions of *Bouthrotos* in the written sources, P. Soustal, «The historical sources for Butrint in the Middle Ages», in *Byzantine Butrint. Excavations and Survey 1994-1999*, eds R. Hodges, W. Bowden, K. Lako, Oxford, 2004, p. 20-26; P. Soustal, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini 3. Nikopolis und Kephallēnia*, Wien, 1981, p. 132-134 (*s.v.* Buthrōtos).

<sup>35</sup> On the site and its excavations, especially focused on the Byzantine period, see R. Hodges *et al.*, *Byzantine Butrint*; R. Hodges, *The Rise and Fall of Byzantine Butrint*, London-Tirana, 2008; W. Bowden, R. Hodges, «An 'Ice Age settling on the Roman Empire': post-Roman Butrint between strategy and serendipity», in *Urbes extinctae: Archaeologies of Abandoned Classical Sites*, ed. N. Christie, Aldershot, forthcoming.

ferent circulation patterns can be discerned in different parts of the site, but for the purposes of the present study the site will be considered as a whole (fig. 4)<sup>36</sup>.



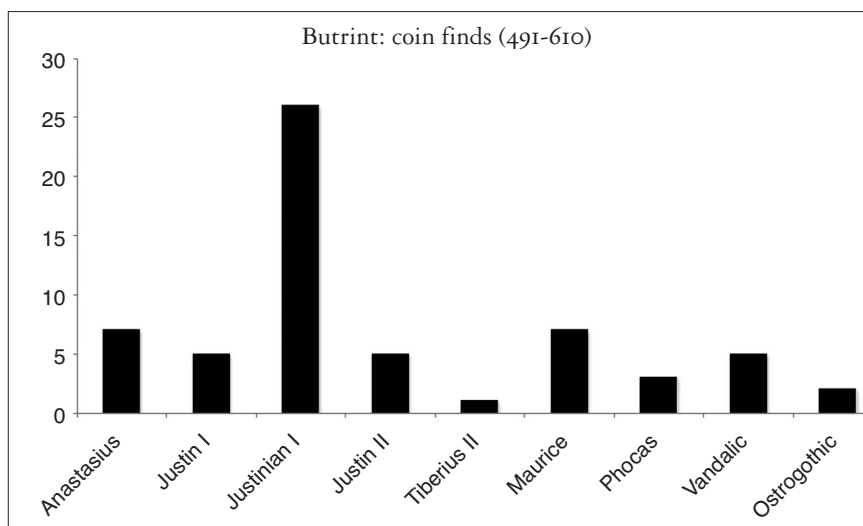
4. Graph showing coin finds from Butrint.

The 6<sup>th</sup>-century coin evidence presents a picture of relative economic prosperity. Coin finds stop with three *folles* of Phocas (602-610) – or possibly with a *follis* of Heraclius or Constans II<sup>37</sup> – and reappear as early as the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century with Syracusan *folles* of Michael II (820-829), Theophilus and Michael III (842-867). This early group is followed by a

<sup>36</sup> I have taken under consideration the Butrint coin finds published in H. Spahiu, «Monedha bizantine»; P. Guest, J. Mitchell, E. Nallbani, S. Gjonecaj, «The small finds and coins», in R. Hodges *et al.*, *Byzantine Butrint*, p. 301-304; D.M. Metcalf, *Coinage in South-Eastern Europe, 820-1386*, London, 1979, p. 22, 202, n.7; K. Lako, «Rezultatet e gërmimeve arkeologjike në Butrint në vitet 1975-1976», *Iliria*, 11/1 (1981), p. 125-129; T.S.N. Moorhead, «The Ancient and Early Mediaeval Coins from the Triconch Palace at Butrint, c. 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC-c. AD 600», *The Numismatic Chronicle*, 167 (2007), p. 287-304; P. Papadopoulou, «Middle and Late Byzantine coins». I have also included unpublished coins from the excavations carried out in the 1990s, currently kept at the Numismatic Cabinet in Tirana and the Butrint Archaeological Museum. A great part of the material considered here has been revealed during the British-Albanian excavations (1998-2007). The material is currently being prepared for publication by the author.

<sup>37</sup> A *follis* of possible 7<sup>th</sup>-century date was found in a tower at the Western Defenses site, but its pre-conservation attribution to Heraclius or Constans II remains speculative.

large number of Constantinopolitan *folles* dating from the reigns of Basil I (867-886) to Basil II (976-1025), as well as silver *miliaresia* and a gold *tetarteron*. This prosperity carries on in the 11<sup>th</sup> century with significant numbers of anonymous *folles* found in every part of the site. The described evolution is largely in accordance with the archaeological evidence that brought to light the fluctuating destiny of *Bouthrotos*<sup>38</sup>.



5. Graph showing coin finds from Butrint, AD 491-610.

Since the numismatic material from Butrint is known in some detail, it is possible to make several interesting observations. During the 6<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 5), a clear preponderance of the coins of Justinian I is again observed; unlike *Dyrbacchion* or *Byllis*, however, it is not accompanied by a comparably high level of coins of Anastasius I, since the latter represent less than 12% of this century's coin finds. Although there is no written evidence regarding building activity in *Bouthrotos* under Anastasius I, the excavators attribute the construction of the early Byzantine fortifications, dated roughly to the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, to his reign<sup>39</sup>. Although it cannot be excluded, the limited presence of Anastasius' coinage casts doubts on this hypothesis, especially given the strong presence of this emperor's coinage in areas where such activity under his reign is at-

<sup>38</sup> For an overview of the archaeology of Butrint with emphasis on the Middle Ages, see W. Bowden, R. Hodges, «An 'Ice Age settling on the Roman Empire'» with bibliography.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*.

tested in both the literary and archaeological records. In general, the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century sees a large investment in Christian building, reaching its apogee in the second quarter of the century with the construction of a large basilica and a baptistery. Yet, this picture of urban vitality is moderated by the abandonment of the monumental Triconch palace, its use for small-scale domestic occupation and processing of shellfish, and the fact that it was apparently stripped for building materials. The situation has correctly been interpreted to suggest that “the presence of major Christian buildings cannot be used as an indicator of wider urban vitality, but at the same time that post-built structures and secondary occupation of monumental buildings cannot be seen as indicative of more general urban decline”<sup>40</sup>. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the numismatic material. Along with the new coin supply reaching *Bouthrotos*, stratigraphic analysis of coin finds reveals that part of the 6<sup>th</sup>-century circulating medium was provided by earlier coins, mainly *nummi*. The reasons behind this phenomenon are still unclear, and the suggestion that it reflects the familiarity and adhesion of the local society in the ‘*nummus* economy’ provides only part of the answer<sup>41</sup>. As for the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, archaeological and numismatic evidence are fully in accordance. Along with the dwindling coin finds, change is evident in both the developed environment of the town and its outlying settlements, which was also accompanied by a radical retraction of imported fineware and amphorae – and presumably perishable food imports. This process continued and even accelerated at the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, after which, the absence of coin finds parallels the absence of new construction, with the material culture of the settlement reaching a vanishing point around the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century<sup>42</sup>.

Another interesting feature of this early period is the denominational pattern, which is distinctly different from the one observed for *Dyrhacchion*<sup>43</sup>. There is a strong concentration of higher value copper coins – *folles* and half-*folles* – and of the smallest denomination, the *nummi*, with the intermediate values being practically absent (fig. 6). Earlier specimens of *nummi* still in circulation should also be added to these 6<sup>th</sup>-century *nummi*, as has already been mentioned. This clearly suggests that *Bouthrotos* was, throughout the 6<sup>th</sup> century, part of the *nummus* circulation area which cov-

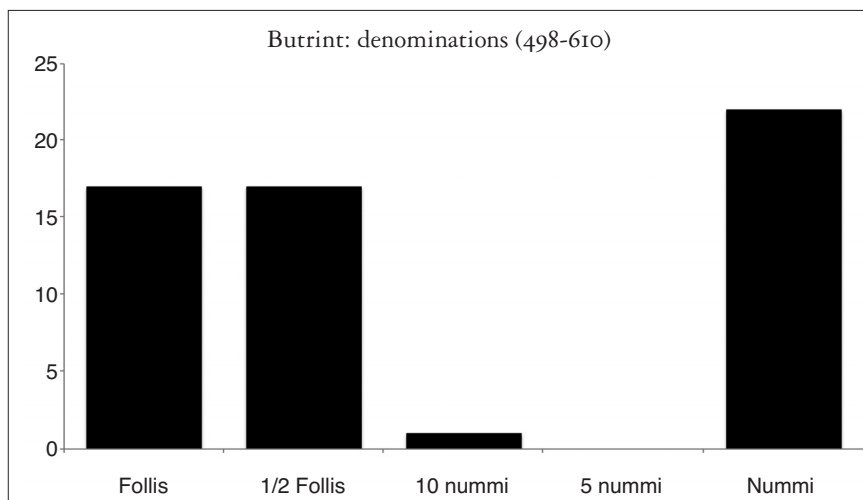
<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>41</sup> T.S.N. Moorhead, «The Ancient and Early Mediaeval Coins», p. 298. See also below.

<sup>42</sup> W. Bowden, R. Hodges, «An ‘Ice Age settling on the Roman Empire’».

<sup>43</sup> Small denominations are difficult to identify and are thus likely to be excluded from publications. Until a revaluation of the numismatic material from *Dyrhacchion* is available, any conclusions on this matter must be regarded as provisional.





6. Graph showing denominations from Butrint, AD 498-610.

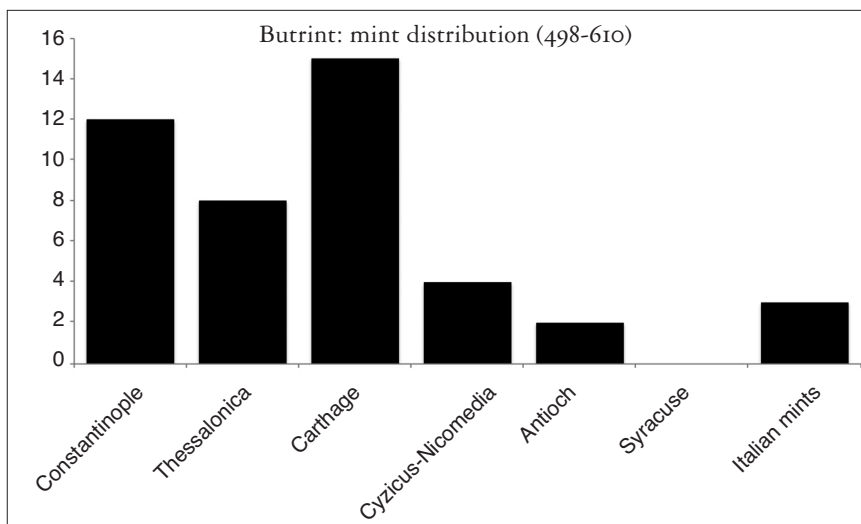
ered several parts of the Eastern Mediterranean, a fact that should probably be attributed to its proximity to North Africa and Italy, where this denomination was produced and circulated<sup>44</sup>. Indeed, *folles* are by far the prevailing denomination in Southern Italy, but the evidence from hoards, such as Massafra and Lucera in Apulia or from single finds, such as those from Saint Michael's sanctuary in Monte S. Angelo, show that the *nummi* were also widely used<sup>45</sup>.

As far as mints are concerned, *Bouthrotos* again diverges from *Dyrbacchion* with a prevalence of coins from Carthage (fig. 7). These are mostly, but not exclusively, *nummi* of the Vandal ruler Thrasamund (496-523) and of Justinian I. In her study of the diffusion of the coins of Carthage outside the administrative boundaries of Africa, Cécile Morrisson has associated the intensification of this phenomenon with Justinian's reconquest of Africa. The almost absolute preponderance of coin finds dating from the twelfth

<sup>44</sup> T.S.N. Moorhead, «The Ancient and Early Mediaeval Coins», p. 297-298.

<sup>45</sup> E.A. Arslan, *Repertorio*: nos 5220 (Lucera), 5230 (Massafra), 5250 (Monte S. Angelo, Santuario S. Michele). See also, E.A. Arslan, «Goti, Bizantini e Vandali: a proposito di ripostigli enei di VI secolo in Italia centrale», *Quaderni ticinesi di numismatica e antichità classiche*, 12 (1983), p. 213-228. It should be noted, however, that *minimi* and *nummi* are also frequently found in southern Greece, especially in Attica and the Peloponnese. C. Morrisson, «La monnaie sur les routes fluviales et maritimes des échanges dans le monde méditerranéen (VI<sup>e</sup>-IX<sup>e</sup> siècle)», *L'acqua nei secoli altomedievali*, Spoleto, 2008 (*Settimana del Centro italiano di studi sull'Alto Medioevo LV*), p. 654.

and thirteenth year of his reign (538/9-539/40) confirms this view<sup>46</sup>. The picture in Butrint and Albania more generally, however, is slightly different. Although the sample is not large, it is characteristic that out of 24 datable coins found in the country, 12 predate Justinian's reform (538/9). It



7. Graph showing mint distribution at Butrint, AD 498-610.

is also interesting that these earlier coins prevail in the south, whereas coins postdating the reform become more common in the north (Table 1).

	Before 538	After 538
Butrint	2 + 6 <i>nummi</i> + 2 (?) <i>nummi</i>	1 + 3 <i>nummi</i> + 1 (?) <i>nummus</i>
Gjegjovë	1	1
Byllis	Vandal coins + <i>nummi</i> (unspecified)	
Durrës	1	3
Shkodër	0	1

<sup>46</sup> C. Morriison, «La diffusion de la monnaie de Carthage hors d'Afrique», in *Afrique du Nord antique et médiévale. Numismatique, langues, écritures et arts du livre, spécificité des arts figurés (Actes du VIIe Colloque international sur l'Afrique du Nord)*, ed. S. Lancel, Paris, 1999, p. 112-114; C. Morriison, «L'atelier de Carthage et la diffusion de la monnaie frappée dans l'Afrique vandale et byzantine», *Antiquité Tardive*, 11 (2003), p. 82.

<sup>47</sup> Butrint: T.S.N. Moorhead, «The Ancient and Early Mediaeval Coins», p. 303-304;

The same is observed for the Vandal coins that are mainly found in the south – Byllis included. Although it cannot be excluded that all coins arrived in Albania after the reconquest, their geographical distribution suggests an earlier penetration of Carthage coinage in the south and a later one in the north. The latter observation brings these territories closer to the Central Balkans, where African coins are exclusively of a post-538 date<sup>48</sup>. In the particular case of Butrint, the numismatic evidence coincides with that of ceramics, since a rise in Tunisian imports is observed in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century; after 550, both African pottery and coins become scarce<sup>49</sup>. It must be stressed though that a *nummus* of Maurice (582-602) was found in Butrint, four *folles* and a half-*folles* of Constans II were recovered in Durrës and a half-*folles* of Heraclius was recorded from an unspecified location in southern Albania, all from the mint of Carthage<sup>50</sup>. The continued presence of the mint of Carthage throughout the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries suggests that the circulation pattern of the Illyrian coast was closer to that observed in the western parts of the Empire, especially those of eastern Sicily and Ravenna<sup>51</sup>.

Another point worth noting is the relatively early reappearance of coins in *Bouthrotos* after the *grande brèche* and their exclusively Sicilian provenance. On the basis of historical and hagiographical sources, as well as monetary finds, Michael McCormick has shown that people and goods were circulating between Sicily and Constantinople, Asia Minor and even Jerusalem in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. A testimony for the use of this maritime route is the *vita* of Gregorius Decapolites. This Isaurian saint left Corinth in 831

Gjegjovë: H. Spahiu, N. Çuni, «Monedha antike e bizantine» (from a hoard); Byllis: unpublished; Durrës: A. Hoti, H. Myrto, «Monedha», nos 28-31; Shkodër: H. Spahiu, «Monedha bizantine», no. 154.

<sup>48</sup> This fact has been attributed to troop movements. C. Morrisson, «La diffusion de la monnaie de Carthage», p. 112-113 with examples and bibliography.

<sup>49</sup> P. Reynolds, «The Roman pottery from the Triconch Palace», in R. Hodges *et al.*, *Byzantine Butrint*, p. 239, 241; W. Bowden, R. Hodges, «An 'Ice Age' settling on the Roman Empire». For a parallelism between coin finds from the mint of Carthage and African pottery in other sites, C. Morrisson, «La diffusion de la monnaie de Carthage», p. 116; C. Morrisson, «L'atelier de Carthage», p. 83-84.

<sup>50</sup> Butrint: T.S.N. Moorhead, «The Ancient and Early Mediaeval Coins», 303; Durrës: A. Hoti, H. Myrto, «Monedha», nos 54-57; Unspecified location in southern Albania: S.L. Cesano, «Monetazione e circolazione sul suolo dell'antica Albania», *Atti e Memorie (Istituto italiano di numismatica)*, 7 (1932), p. 74, nos 11-12.

<sup>51</sup> C. Morrisson, «La diffusion de la monnaie de Carthage», p. 114-115; C. Morrisson, «L'atelier de Carthage», p. 82.

for Rome via Reggio, stayed for a while in Syracuse and then sailed again to Otranto; from there he headed to Thessalonica (834) and Constantinople where he died in 838<sup>52</sup>. The *vita* is contemporary with the Sicilian *folles* from Butrint, dating from 820 to 867 and providing the first coins in the site after a total absence of monetary finds for more than a century<sup>53</sup>. They are of particular interest, since they offer the missing link between Sicily and the Peloponnese, where Syracusan coin finds have already been recorded<sup>54</sup>. Moreover, they differentiate southern Albania from the rest of the Balkan façade of the Adriatic rim, where the coin evidence suggests a shift away from Byzantine Italy already in 775<sup>55</sup>. However, it must be stressed that the Sicilian coins do not necessarily indicate direct contact between the island and *Bouthrotos*, but contact between the latter and the south Italian coast. Monetary finds from Calabria and Apulia show an exclusivity of Sicilian coinage from the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> to approximately the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century; only Otranto presents an exception to this pattern, perhaps due to the Lombard presence there or, more likely, to the particular nature of the excavated site<sup>56</sup>.

In the Vrina plain, the same part of Butrint where the Sicilian *folles* were found, excavations also revealed 46 copper *folles* from the mint of Constantinople dating from the reign of Basil I to the 11<sup>th</sup> century – of which an anonymous *folles* Class B (1030/5-1042) is the latest<sup>57</sup>. More than 70% of these *folles* belong to the reign of Leo VI, with several among them in almost mint condition; along with the recovery of a silver *miliaresion* of Leo VI, these *folles* indicate an intensive and direct influx of coinage into

<sup>52</sup> M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, p. 198-203; C. Morrisson, «La Sicile byzantine: une lueur dans les siècles obscurs», *Quaderni ticinesi di numismatica e antichità classiche*, 27 (1998), p. 315-316 with similar hagiographic evidence from slightly earlier periods.

<sup>53</sup> As already mentioned, coin circulation resumes in the 9<sup>th</sup> century with four *folles* of Michael II (1), Theophilus (1) and Michael III (2) from the mint of Syracuse. They were found in the Vrina plain, where the center of activity seems to have moved during the 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>54</sup> C. Morrisson, «La Sicile byzantine», p. 321. For this maritime route, M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, p. 502-508 and 542-543.

<sup>55</sup> M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, p. 367-369.

<sup>56</sup> C. Morrisson, «La Sicile byzantine», p. 313, 322-326. Since this publication, the catalogue of the Byzantine coins kept in the Museum of Catanzaro (Calabria) has appeared: E.A. Arslan, *Catalogo delle monete bizantine del Museo Provinciale di Catanzaro*, Catanzaro, 2000.

<sup>57</sup> A list and commentary on the coin finds from the Vrina plain by the author will be included in the final publication of the site currently under preparation.

*Bouthrotos* during that period<sup>58</sup>. The numismatic evidence and the exceptional nature of the other finds from this area led the excavators to interpret the Vrina plain as a significant middle Byzantine regional administrative centre<sup>59</sup>. Crucial for this identification was the recovery of five Byzantine lead seals dating from the late 9<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> century<sup>60</sup>. One seal is of particular interest, since it indicates links between *Bouthrotos* and southern Italy. The seal dates from the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century and belongs to John, *patrikios*, imperial *protospatharios* and *strategos* of Sicily. Although the seal identifies Sicily as John's seat, he must have been based in Calabria, where the *strategoi* of Sicily resided after the fall of Taormina (902)<sup>61</sup>. It thus allows us to prolong the connexion between *Bouthrotos* and southern Italy into the 10<sup>th</sup> century, as suggested by the early 9<sup>th</sup>-century Sicilian coins.

The literary evidence confirms this hypothesis. According to the *Life* of the Sicilian saint, Elias the Younger, written in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, but referring to events that took place in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the saint and his disciple Daniel travelled from Sparta in the Peloponnese to *Bouthrotos* around 880-884. Upon their arrival in the town, Elias and Daniel were accused of being *Agarenoi* (Muslims) and spies, and were subsequently imprisoned. Their pleas towards the *archon* himself did not help. The story ends, of course, with the triumphal liberation of the two companions thanks to divine intervention. In 904, the relics of Saint Elias who had died in Thessalonica, were brought to *Bouthrotos* via Thessaly, Hellas and Thesprotia in order to be taken to Calabria – first to Rossano and then through Bisignono into the Saline region, where the saint had spent a large part of his life<sup>62</sup>. The combination of the numismatic evidence, referring to the period 820-867, the documentary evidence dating from the late 9<sup>th</sup> century and the sigillographic evidence covering the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, point to a direct, albeit sporadic, connection between

<sup>58</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that no *folles* of Basil I or Leo VI found in the site of Butrint belong to the types attributed to the mint of Reggio. D. Castrizio, «I ripostigli di Via Giulia (RC) e del Kastron di Calanna e la zecca bizantina di Reggio sotto Basilio I e Leone VI», *Revue Numismatique*, 155 (2000), p. 209-219.

<sup>59</sup> W. Bowden, R. Hodges, «An 'Ice Age settling on the Roman Empire'».

<sup>60</sup> P. Papadopoulou, «Five lead seals from Byzantine Butrint (Albania)», *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography*, 11 (forthcoming). A brief description of the seals is also included in W. Bowden, R. Hodges, «An 'Ice Age settling on the Roman Empire'».

<sup>61</sup> J. Nesbitt, N. Oikonomides, *Catalogue of Byzantine seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art, Vol. 1: Italy, North of the Balkans, North of the Black Sea*, Washington D.C., 1991, p. 22.

<sup>62</sup> G. Rossi-Taibbi, *Vite dei Santi Siciliani III: Vita di Sant' Elia il Giovane*, Palermo, 1962, p. 42-44 (§ 28), 116 (§ 73).

Sicily, Calabria and *Bouthrotos* from the early 9<sup>th</sup> to the mid-10<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the next period, at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, another indication of contact between *Bouthrotos* and Italy appears. A *denaro* of Otto III (983-1002) from the mint of Pavia was found in the Triconch palace (CNI IV, p. 482, nos 12-13)<sup>63</sup>. The *ottolini*, as these coins are commonly known, circulated widely in Italy long after their issue and appear in the literary sources until the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>64</sup>. Apart from being broken, however, the Butrint coin seems to have barely circulated, dating its arrival in *Bouthrotos* shortly after its issue. It is probably during that period, the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, that the *ottolini* also first entered the southern Italian territory<sup>65</sup>. Whether this is an indication of closer contacts between the two regions is unclear, but the presence of *ottolini* on both sides of the Adriatic is a positive indication.

In that respect it is worth mentioning that three *denari* of a slightly earlier date – Otto I and Otto II (967-973) from the mints of Pavia (two specimens) and Lucca (one specimen) – along with a *Sachsenpfennig* of Otto I (936-973), possibly from the mint of Magdeburg, were found in the excavations of an early Christian basilica in Palaiopolis, 2 km south of the town of Kerkyra, on the east coast of the island of Corfu<sup>66</sup>. Unfortunately, our knowledge of the numismatic evidence from this island is almost non-existent, rendering the evaluation of these coins – as exceptional finds or as part of a larger circulation pattern – impossible. In any case, they are significant of the important role that the Corfu straits – with the homonymous island to the west and *Bouthrotos* to the east – played in maritime travel and commerce during that period<sup>67</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> P. Papadopoulou, «Middle and Late Byzantine coins». The precise chronology of this type is 996-1002. A. Saccocci, «Il ripostiglio dell'area 'Galli Tassi' di Lucca e la cronologia delle emissioni pavese e lucchese di X secolo», *Bollettino di Numismatica*, 36-39 (2001-2002), p. 174.

<sup>64</sup> A. Rovelli, «Il denaro di Pavia nell'alto medioevo (VIII-XI secolo)», *Bollettino della Società Pavese di Storia Patria*, (1995), p. 86-87. More generally, M. Matzke, «Vom Ottolinus zum Grossus: Münzprägung in der Toskana vom 10. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert», *Schweizerische Numismatische Rundschau*, 72 (1993), p. 135-192.

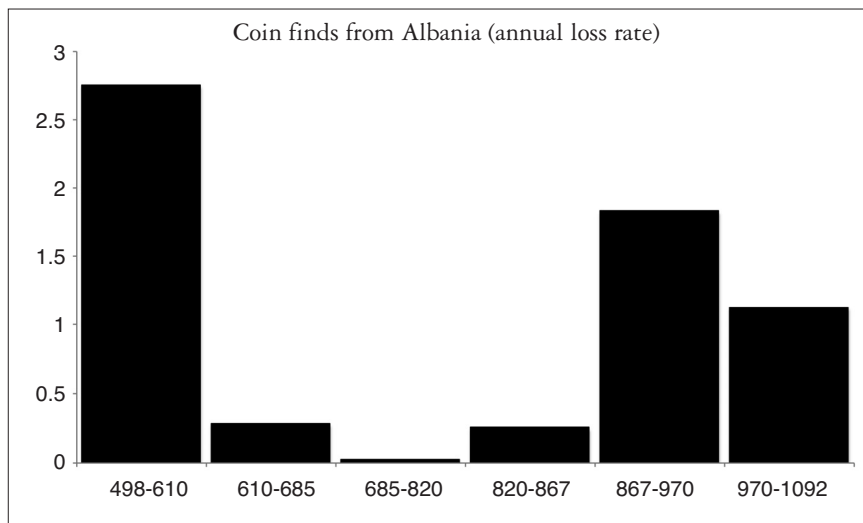
<sup>65</sup> E.A. Arslan, *Repertorio*: Calabria: nos 0940 (Santa Severina: 1), 0990 (Scribla: 1), 1020 (Staletti, Santa Maria del Mare: 2); Apulia: no 5250 (Monte S. Angelo, Santuario S. Michele: 1 or 2). It is, however, difficult to be certain of the date, given the long circulation of the *ottolini*, a fact attested by both literary and hoard evidence. A. Rovelli, «Il denaro di Pavia», p. 86-89.

<sup>66</sup> D. Papademetriou, «Coins from the excavations of the Early Christian Basilica of Iovianos in Palaiopolis, Corfu, 1998-2000», *Nomismatika Chronika*, 27 (2008-2009), p. 72-73 of the English translation, nos 929-931, 950.

<sup>67</sup> The extreme rarity of non-Byzantine coin finds in the territories of the Empire before the 12<sup>th</sup> century strengthens the argument.



In general, Butrint, an exceptionally well-studied Albanian site, is indicative of the potential for such studies towards a better understanding of the Illyrian coast, a territory on the boundaries between East and West.



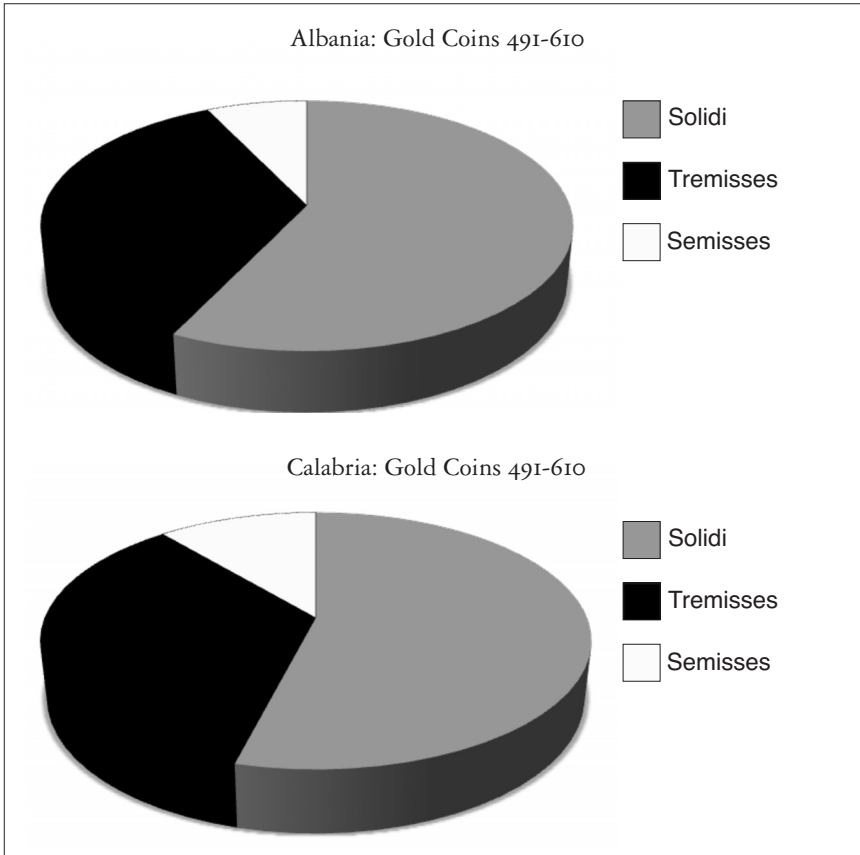
8. Graph showing coin finds from Albania (annual loss rate).

By combining the evidence mentioned above, we can obtain an overview of coin circulation in medieval Albania (fig. 8). Already under Anastasius I, the Albanian territory was characterised by an economic prosperity that continued throughout the 6<sup>th</sup> century, reaching its peak under Justinian I. During his reign, important building activity, including fortifications and basilicas, took place in the Illyrian coast. Beginning with Tiberius II (578-582), a decline in monetary finds is evident; although there are finds from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, their number and geographical diffusion is substantially reduced, mainly to coastal sites. Circulation slowly resumes under Theophilus and regularises towards the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. From this period onwards, numismatic finds become all the more plentiful and by the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century they even reach parts of Albania's interior.

As mentioned, it is impossible to compare this picture directly with the one obtained from southern Italy, given the different historical circumstances reigning in the latter<sup>68</sup>. Still, I would like to raise some points re-

<sup>68</sup> The administrative structure of the Byzantine empire, at least during the Early Byzantine period, was another factor of divergence in circulation patterns observed even in neighboring regions, as has been demonstrated by the study of early Byzantine coin hoards in relation to the provinces of the Empire. C. Morrisson, V. Ivanišević,

garding both regions and the contact between them as evidenced by the numismatic material. In this effort, I will focus on common features shared by both regions and the presence of the products of Italian mints on Albanian soil.



9. Pie-charts showing gold coins in Albania and Calabria, AD 491-610.

Regarding the latter, one must begin by clarifying that the presence of Byzantine coins minted in Italy is extremely restricted in Albania. This is not surprising though, given the small output of Italian mints<sup>69</sup>. Having said that, we can identify two different periods in the phenomenon. During the

«Les émissions des VI<sup>e</sup>-VII<sup>e</sup> siècles et leur circulation dans les Balkans», in C. Morrison *et al.*, «Les trésors monétaires», p. 57-63.

<sup>69</sup> On the mint of Ravenna and the circulation of its products, see B. Callegher, «La diffusione della moneta di Ravenna tra VI e metà VIII secolo», in *Ritrovamenti monetali nel mondo antico: problemi e metodi*, ed. G. Gorini, Padova, 2002, p. 247-271.

6<sup>th</sup> century, Italy is represented in Albania mainly by Ostrogothic issues of Baduila and to a lesser extent by Byzantine issues of the northern mints of Rome and Ravenna. Finds from these mints tend to be concentrated in central and southern Albania<sup>70</sup>. During the next chronological period we only have sporadic finds: four early 9<sup>th</sup>-century Sicilian *folles* and a late 10<sup>th</sup>-century *ottolino* that have already been noted. The evidence suggests irregular and limited contacts.

Some phenomena observed on both coasts of the Adriatic could also indicate contact. One of them, mentioned above, is the persistence in the circulation of coins minted in Carthage after the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century. Also from this period, a shared circulation pattern concerning the gold *solidus* and its fractions can be identified. Clearly, the Albanian territory is characterised by a preponderance of the *solidus* over its fractions and by a minimum presence of the half *solidus*, the *semissis* (fig. 9)<sup>71</sup>. Both facts are well attested from other regions too<sup>72</sup>. What is surprising though is the high percentage of the one-third *solidus*, the *tremissis*, representing 36% of all gold coins. A comparison with gold finds from Calabria – Byzantine gold coins from this period are absent from the numismatic record of Apulia – shows that the same phenomenon can be observed in that area (35%). In both cases, the percentage is about 10% higher than the calculated average of the *tremissis* production<sup>73</sup>. In the case of Italy, the significant role played by the *tremissis* is confirmed by both the continuation of its use and its continued production by the Byzantine imperial mints in Rome, Ravenna and Syracuse as well as the Ostrogothic and Lombard mints<sup>74</sup>. The significantly reduced role of the *tremissis* is attested in the Balkans, where it represents only 13% of the gold coins

<sup>70</sup> Ostrogothic coins: Byllis (unpublished), Butrint (T.S.N. Moorhead, «The Ancient and Early Mediaeval Coins», p. 304), unspecified location in southern Albania (S.L. Cesano, «Monetazione e circolazione», p. 74). The total absence of these coins from the list established by H. Spahiu, «Monedha bizantine», is likely due to the author's failure to identify these issues.

<sup>71</sup> Data for Graph 9 is provided in the case of Albania by H. Spahiu, «Monedha bizantine» (14 coins, presumably all isolated finds) and by E.A. Arslan, *Repertorio*, in the case of Italy (Calabria) (62 coins, all from the hoard of Crotona, Punta Scifo except for a *tremissis* of Maurice).

<sup>72</sup> C. Morrisson, V. Ivanišević, «Les émissions des VI<sup>e</sup>-VII<sup>e</sup> siècles», p. 45, 47.

<sup>73</sup> According to a 'rough estimate', the *tremisses* number about a quarter of the *solidi*. W. Hahn with the collaboration of M.A. Metlich, *Money of the Incipient Byzantine Empire (Anastasius I-Justinian I, 491-565)*, Wien, 2000, p. 12.

<sup>74</sup> Ostrogoths: Ph. Grierson, M. Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage I. The Early Middle Ages (5th-10th centuries)*, Cambridge, 1986, p. 33-39; Lombards: *ibidem*, p. 58-66.

found in hoards<sup>75</sup>. If this is not due to a preference of the population for *solidi* over its fractions for hoarding, then it presents an interesting subject for further investigation<sup>76</sup>. Is it just a coincidence or could there be a common supply pattern in the two coasts of the southern Adriatic?

The available numismatic evidence shows only sporadic, random contact between the two rims of the Adriatic. During the Early Byzantine period, when, thanks to mint-marks, the circulation and movement of coinage from one region to another is easily identified, the Illyrian coast seems to be steadily oriented towards the East. It nevertheless shares some common features with the southern Italian peninsula, such as the persistence of the *nummus* circulation – with the parallel use of new and older, Late Roman, coins<sup>77</sup> – the arrival of products from the mint of Carthage after Justinian's reign and the strong presence of the *tremissis*. What is the relative significance of these similarities when compared to the absence of Italian monetary products in Albania? As any argument *ex silentio*, the latter evidence has to be considered cautiously. The study of the diffusion of copper coins from the mint of Ravenna, for example, shows that their circulation outside the exarchate was limited in any case, with relevant coin finds coming mainly from Dalmatia and, to a much lesser extent, from southern Italy (Calabria)<sup>78</sup>. During the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, there is evidence of contact between the two rims once more – again, only movements from Italy towards the Illyrian coast are traceable. In this case too, it is sporadic and geographically restricted, but supported by sigillographic and literary evidence. This picture, however, is contrasted by the testimony of ceramics that show direct and intense contact between the Adriatic rims during certain periods<sup>79</sup>. It is therefore clear that if

<sup>75</sup> C. Morrisson, V. Ivanišević, «Les émissions des VI<sup>e</sup>-VII<sup>e</sup> siècles», p. 45-47.

<sup>76</sup> The margins of error concerning the comparison of single finds and hoard evidence seem to be less important in the case of gold coins. C. Morrisson, «Trouvailles isolées et trésors: reflets de la production monétaire à Byzance?», in *Ritrovamenti monetali nel mondo antico: problemi e metodi*, ed. G. Gorini, p. 236-239.

<sup>77</sup> It should be noted, however, that the same holds true for the western Peloponnese. Cf. the large *minimi* hoards found there, C. Morrisson et al., *Les trésors monétaires*, nos 169, 179, 185, 207.

<sup>78</sup> B. Callegher, «La diffusione della moneta di Ravenna», p. 253-254. In Calabria, out of 139 coins dating from Anastasius I to Heraclius, only 5 come from the mint of Ravenna (3,6%) and 18 (13%) from the mint of Rome. E.A. Arslan, *Catalogo del Museo di Catanzaro*, p. 18-19.

<sup>79</sup> It is characteristic that about 50% of the pottery recovered from the site where the Sicilian *folles* in Butrint were found is composed of amphorae of a distinctive Otranto type. W. Bowden, R. Hodges, «An 'Ice Age settling on the Roman Empire'». For further examples, see Joanita Vroom's contribution in this volume.

the analysis of numismatic material is used to determine the degree of contact between the two coasts of the Adriatic, the relationship would tend to be underestimated<sup>80</sup>. Despite the misleading conclusion to which this exercise led, it is still useful as a case study on the use of numismatics as evidence of inter-regional contact and provides a *caveat* for similar, future studies.

### *Abbreviations*

<i>MIB</i>	W. Hahn, <i>Moneta Imperii Byzantini</i> , I-III, Wien, 1973-1981.
<i>DOC III</i>	Ph. Grierson, <i>Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection, Volume Three, Leo III to Nicephorus III, 717-1081</i> , Parts 1-2, Washington D.C., 1973.
<i>CNI</i>	<i>Corpus Nummorum Italicorum</i> , vol. I-XX, Roma, 1910-1943, Accademia dei Lincei.



<sup>80</sup> Cf. similar observations in C. Morrisson, «La monnaie sur les routes fluviales et maritimes», p. 665-666.