Some Questions Concerning the Terminology used in Narrative Sources to Designate the Byzantine State

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SOME QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE TERMINOLOGY USED IN NARRATIVE SOURCES TO DESIGNATE THE BYZANTINE STATE

There are a considerable number of terms used by Byzantine writers to designate their empire, the nature of their state, its territorial extent and boundaries, the political regime of the empire and its name. In the study that follows, the terms in question are gathered mainly from narrative sources, and an attempt is made to follow and understand the evolution of each term’s connotations through the centuries.

As one might expect, the most proper and accurate term to designate the territorial extent of the Byzantine Empire throughout its thousand year existence is the term Ρωμαίων ἐπικράτεια, which bears the clearest and most constant meaning among the terms included in this investigation. The term ἐπικράτεια presupposes concrete boundaries, which though they may be respected or disputed by enemies, nevertheless exist.


2. E. g. PRISCUS, 585 and 586-7 (ed. DE BOOR); AGATHIAS, Proem., 24 and V. 11, 6 (ed. KEYDELL, p. 28 and 177); EVAGRIUS, III. 36, III. 37, IV. 9, V. 9 (ed. BIDEZ-PARMETIER, p. 135, 136, 160, 204,); GENESIUS, II. 5, III. 3, IV. 15 (ed. LESMUELLER-WERNER and THURN, p. 26, 37, 38, 68); THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, 112, 277, 288, 292, 293, 298, 299, 301, 302 (CSHB); SKYLITZES, 67, 145, 154 (ed. THURN);
The term Ρωμαίων (or φωμαϊκή) αρχή may be considered identical in meaning (though with some qualifications) with the term Ρωμαίων επικράτεια. Further, the term Ρωμαίων αρχή frequently denotes boundaries and is employed in this sense by Nicephorus and Theophanes—the sources of the so-called ‘Dark Ages’—to whom the term Ρωμαίων επικράτεια is unknown. Procopius of Caesarea, two centuries earlier, appears also to have been unfamiliar with this latter usage.

In the vast majority of cases, the term Ρωμαίων αρχή conveys also the old meaning of imperium, to which people, territories and power belong. Gradually, the term acquires the sense of a state limited in space, as can be observed from Procopius to Theophanes. The phenomenon becomes more than obvious, of course, in the last centuries of Byzantium, while the term

**CONSTANTINUS PORPHYROGENITUS, De Administrando Imperio (=DAI)**, 4.3-5, 43.4-6 (ed. MORAVSCIK-JENKINS, p. 50, 188); **LEON DIACONUS, II.11, X.3, 6, 7, 8 (CSHB, p. 6, 53, 165, 169, 170, 171); ATTALEIATES, 77 and 229 (CSHB); ACROPOLITES, 120, 233 (CSHB); and CANTACUZENUS, I, 179,188, 189, 204, 205, 323, 328 (CSHB): elc tìn Ῥωμαίων.

3. **PROCOPIUS, Aed., I 3.2, 8.5, II 8.11, III 1.1, 7. 10, V 8.2-3, VI 1.5, 7. 7. 7, 17, (ed. HAURY-WIRTH p. 20, 34, 70, 82, 100-101, 168, 172, 184, 185-186); AGATHIAS, Proem. 26, II, 18.7, 31. 2, (p. 8, 65, 81): δομαώδα δρα; EVAGRIVUS, IV. 20, V. 7 (p. 170, 203); NICEPHORUS, p. 3.8-11, 34.20-22, 37.8-10, 58.11-13 (DE BOOR); THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, 54; CONSTANTINUS PORPHYROGENITUS, De them., 62 and 97 (ed. PERTUSI); SKYLITZES, 31; LEON DIACONUS, II.1, II.11 and X.8 (p. 18, 33, 173): Ρωμαϊκά δρα; ATTALEIATES, 181 ('Ρωμαϊκά δρα), 117 (tā tis Αύσονίτιδος δρα); CINNAMUS, 79, 11-14 (CSHB); ACROPOLITES, 113, 187; GREGORAS, I.3, III.5, III.5 (CSHB, p. 18, 19, 72); PACHYMERES, II.30 (p. 209).


5. E. g. **ACROPOLITES, 34**, where the notorious expression: ἐν στενῷ τεθειμένος ὀδόν τὴν δομαώδα δρα. Cf. ACROPOLITES, 35, 73, 74, 76, 89, 154, 156, 158, 163;
Τωμαίων αρχή is regularly used during the Comnenian period, mainly by Anna Comnena (from whose text the term Τωμαίων πολιτεία is totally absent, as will be discussed below). The same remark is valid for the History of John Cantacuzenus, where all kinds of misfortune are foreseen to engulf the Τωμαίων αρχή.

The constitutional aspect of the term Τωμαίων αρχή needs to be seen as closely associated with the well-known term Τωμαίων πολιτεία, as used, in fact, by Constantine Porphyrogenitus himself in his treatise De administrando imperio: 'and thereaf ter, whatever reforms have been introduced from time to time in our state (τη καθ’ ήμις πολιτείας), and also throughout the Roman empire (ἐν πάση τη Τωμαίων αρχή)’. The order of terms is repeated in another chapter of the same work, as if to confirm the affinity of both meanings.

Generally speaking, the term Τωμαίων αρχή has a much broader meaning than the term πολιτεία, as this is found in Procopius, when dealing with territorial expansion of the empire under Justinian I: 'the emperor,' says Procopius, 'has considerable experience in annexing other states (πολιτείας άτέρας) to the Roman empire (τη Τωμαίων αρχή)'. In a famous passage of the Gothic War, the same author reveals the close connexion that exists between the preservation of a just political order in the empire (πολιτείαν

MICHAEL PALAEOLOGUS, De vita sua opusculum, 455 (ed. GRÉGOIRE); PACHYMERES, I.27, II.25, 30 (p. 109, 187, 209); GREGORAS, VII.5, XII.12 (p. 233, 612).

6. ANNA COMNENA, I. 9, 123, 130, 137, 146, 156; II. 69, 73, 81 passim; CINNAMUS, 13.9-14, 118-119, 174.15-19, 201.8-13, 202.3-6, 208.9-16, 212.18-23, 231.15-19, 243 (two mentions). CHONIATES, 246, 315, 347, 437, 475, 498, 529, 541 (ed. VAN DIETEN), where the term obviously declines in use and meaning as well.


8. DAI, Proem., 23-24 (p. 46).


11. PROCOPIUS, De Bello Gothico, I. 12, 20 (ed. HAURY-WIRTH II, 65-66): "Εσόμεν οὖν πολιτεία Ρωμαίων ή αὐτή έμενε, Γαλλίας τὰ ἐντὸς Ροδαίου ποταμοῦ βασιλείας εἶχεν. ἐπεὶ δὲ οὗδακρος ἐς τυραννίδα μετέβαλε, τότε δὴ, τοῦ τυράννου οἰκίσκων ἐνδι-
The term ‘Ρωμαίων πολιτεία’ signifies the Roman empire in general, in Procopius the term πολιτεία conveys the meaning of the old res publica headed by the emperor, that is, a political system, which, according to Priscus of Panium13, had been invented by wise and good men in Antiquity, who took care to maintain the laws, the army, and other institutions. As early as the first half of the fifth century, Priscus found the laws and the Roman political system to be good (ὡς οί μὲν νόμοι καλοί καὶ ἡ πολιτεία Ρωμαίων ἄγαθή), excepting a number of critical remarks prompted by the conduct of some of its leaders14.

There are some exceptions to the rule. Less literary sources of the second half of the sixth century, such as the Chronography of John Malalas and the Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius, use the term ‘Ρωμαίων πολιτεία in a strictly territorial sense, almost equivalent to the term ἐπικράτεια15. This tendency seems to become general towards the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century, when a literary source such as the History of Theophylactus Simocattes uses the term ‘Ρωμαίων πολιτεία in the same sense as Malalas and Evagrius16. This evolution of the meaning of the ‘Ρωμαίων πολιτεία is of crucial interest, not only because the tyrant Phocas destroyed the τάξις in 602,
17. CHRONICON PASCHALE, 707 (CSHB). According to the same source (p. 708), Heraclius liberated the 'Ρωμαϊκής πολιτείας in 610.
20. DAI, 21. 52-54 (p. 88); THEOPHANES, 355.21-25, 359.17-19, 395.5-7; NICEPHORUS, 15.11-15, 23.17-21, 50.4-6, 52.7-9.
22. NICEPHORUS, 28.5-8: μηδὲ δοιη θεὸς ἐν τούτῳ τάξεως τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς ἐλεύθερης πολιτείας...
23. Cf. supra, note 6, on the absence of the term in Anna's Alexiad.
24. GENESIUS, 1.9 (p. 9).
25. SKYLITZES, 12.
26. GENESIUS, 1.16 (p. 14); SKYLITZES, 47.
τεία seems to have lost something of its earlier meaning and to return to its original sense, adapting to new realities: Ρωμαιων πολιτεία in the ninth century means ‘the organisation of the state’, not only in Genesius and Skylitzes but also in other sources up to the twelfth century, whereas Ρωμαιων ήγεμονία fulfills the functions of the old term Ρωμαιων δρχη, the imperium romanum, and is used in this sense by Anna Comnena. Only once is the term πολιτεία (unaccompanied by Ρωμαιων) to be found in Anna’s text in clear juxtaposition with the term Ρωμαιων δρχη: Anna Dalassena was able to govern the state apparatus (πολιτείαν), not only in the Roman empire, but also in any realm under the sun.

It could be argued, that the reappearance of the term Ρωμαιων πολιτεία in its original, constitutional sense, is attributable to the decline of the rather confusing style of the Chronography in general and to the revival of the sounder historiographical style, something that is very apparent in Leo Diaconus: in the text of his History (a literary genre that reappears at the end of the tenth century), we have four clear mentions of the term with the meaning ‘state organisation’, as well as six mentions of the term Ρωμαιων (or ἴομαίων) ήγεμονία with the meaning of Roman empire, inclusive of its territories and power.

The History of Leon Diaconus is permeated by a belief in long-term stability and power, which underlines the longevity of the Empire. Hence, all terms concerning Byzantine self-determination are used very clearly. However, just

28. Which may be interpreted: the singularity of Byzantine state organisation.
29. DAI 13. 173-175 (p. 74): τήν ευγενή πολιτείαν Ρωμαιων; THEOPH. CONT., 442, 446; Fontes historiae imperii Trapezuntini, 79.3-9; CINNAMUS, 281.10-12.
30. ANNA COMNENA, I 10, 57, 72, 106, 127, II 72, 73 passim. Cf. also supra, note 6.
31. ANNA COMNENA, I 123.
33. LEON DIACONUS, III. 3, 5, VI. 2, VII, 7 (p. 40, 42-43, 95, 124).
34. LEON DIACONUS, III. 6, IV. 1, V. 1, 7 and 8 VII. 7 (p. 44, 56, 77, 88, 90, 124). Similar use of the term in ATTALEIATES, 131 and 194.
35. Cf. the combined use of three terms in order to describe the empire’s growth in LEON DIACONUS, III.6 (p. 45): και προσέτα τα μέγιστα την πολιτείαν ονήσιοντα, και της Ρωμαιως δρχης την επιφέραν αιξιοντα. The double use in LEON DIACONUS, IX.4 (p. 146): την της ήγεμονίας δρχην, presents no difficulty. It must be noted, however, that
the opposite occurs in Michael Attaleiates, Anna Comnena and Nicetas Choniates, whose historiographical texts constitute the beginning and end of a particular period of ‘Roman’ history: the term Ἱππαίων πολιτεία is totally absent from their texts, literary though they may be. The term exists, however, in the History of John Cinnamus, in whose time the empire was not on the brink of destruction, as it was in the case of Anna and Nicetas. In the History of John Cinnamus the term Ἱππαίων πολιτεία acquires, as a rule, a meaning which includes state organisation and society and which will later also be found in George Pachymeres and Nicephorus Gregoras. Last, but not least, we have to take into account the fact that the term Ἱππαίων ἡγεμόνια means indisputably the Byzantine empire in Gregoras, but not in Pachymeres, who uses the rather ambiguous expression τὰ πράγματα τῆς τῶν Ἱππαίων ἡγεμονίας. The term τὰ Ἱππαίων (sc. πράγματα) is known by its broad use in the History of Nicetas Choniates, to whom the term Ἱππαίων πολιτεία is totally unknown (as already pointed out). A similar example is to be found in John Cantacuzenus in the fourteenth century.

The term, which almost imperceptibly replaced Ἱππαίων πολιτεία in Byzantine narrative sources, is not τὰ Ἱππαίων πράγματα, but the very commonly encountered expression Ἱππαίων βασιλεία, also very frequent in Nicetas Choniates and designating the nature of the Byzantine political

in Leon Dicconus, V.3 (p. 81): δυναστεία ἰππαϊκή denotes the successive emperors, the line of sovereigns, and not the dynasty.

37. E. g. CINNAMUS, 276-277, 275, 285.
39. GREGORAS, II.6 (p. 42). Cf. also supra, notes 3 and 5, for the meaning of the term Ἱππαίων ἀρχῆ in Gregoras.
40. GREGORAS, I.2, 4, 17, II.1, V.5, VI.6, 11, VII.1, 5, XII.2 (p. 13, 13-14, 20, 77, 24-25, 144-145, 187, 208, 208-209, 214 [two mentions], 215, 234, 579); GREGORAS, Epp. 90.41-49 and 130, 11-19 (ed. Leon, p. 242 and 331).
41. PACHYMERES, I.17 (p. 77).
42. CHONIATES, 46, 96, 194, 223, 436, 438, 472, 507, 510, 522, 551, 572. ATTALEIATES also uses this expression, though not so often (199, 223).
44. CHONIATES, 120, 127, 238, 327, 433, 477, 557, 571.
system, starting from the second half of the sixth century, that is at the same time that Malalas, Evagrius and Simocattes begin to alter the original, constitutional meaning of the old term Τωμαίων πολιτεία. The first mention of the term Τωμαίων βασιλεία in the sense of the Byzantine political system, and not the reign of a given sovereign, which is current much earlier, is to be seen in Evagrius of Epiphaneia, followed by the Chronography of Theophanes and its Continuators, just once by Nicephorus the Patriarch, by the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, John Skylitzes, Michael Attaleiates, Anna Comnena, John Cinnamus (who, using the term Τωμαίων πολιτεία, seldom uses βασιλεία), Nicetas Choniates and, afterwards, George Acropolites, George Pachymeres, Nicephorus Gregoras and the emperor John Cantacuzenus, who prefers both the term Τωμαίων αρχή, and, more importantly, Τωμαίων ηγεμονία, which is mentioned some seventy times in his work in the sense of the Roman empire, in most cases coinciding

45. Cf. supra, notes 15 and 16.
46. Cf. e.g. Priscus, 584; Procopius, Aed., III 1. 11 (p. 83-84).
48. Theophanes, 68.2-3, 115.22-25, 220. 2-9, 290.12-16, 291.4-6, 294.1-7 (passim), 326.16-20, 386-387, 456-457, 482.16-17.
50. Nicephorus, 35-36; cf. also Life of Peter of Atroa, 63. 1-3 (p. 187).
52. Skylitzes, 29, 56, 97, 115, 130, 145, 197, 204, passim.
53. Attaleiates, 45, 139.
54. Anna Comnena, I. 9, 10 (alternately with Τωμαίων ηγεμονία), 18 (two mentions) 92, 130, 132, 144; II. 43. II. 63, 73, passim.
55. Cf. supra, note 37.
56. Cinnamus, 229-230.
57. Cf. supra, note 44.
58. Acropolites, 84 (as in the case of Cinnamus).
60. Gregoras, II.3, III.2, VII.5, XIII.3 (p. 28, 59, 242, 644, passim).
with the term Τωμαίων ἀρχή, which only in relatively few examples draws nearer to the official term Τωμαίων βασιλεία. It is also worth pointing out that in the History of John Cantacuzenus, the term Τωμαίων βασιλεία is used to designate the old, Roman age\(^64\). The historical work of Cantacuzenus, replete with a steady devaluation of the old, traditional terms, consists of an epilogue worthy of the best Byzantine administrative traditions. The author seems so conscious of the decline of all ‘Roman’ realities that, instead of a substantive, he ventures to use an adjective, τὸ Τωμαϊκὸν\(^65\), earlier used only by Attaleiates\(^66\). The adjective, τὸ Τωμαϊκὸν, which tends to be an equivalent of τὸ κοινὸν τῶν Τωμαίων, also used by Cantacuzenus\(^67\), has the meaning of what today we—in a non-Roman world—would call ‘the Roman element’ or ‘the Roman community’, an element which clearly has weak dimensions, as the empire dies away.

The term Τωμαίων ἐξουσία in the sense of ‘the Roman power’ or ‘the Roman domination’ appears in the Byzantine narrative sources from Nicephorus the Patriarch\(^68\) to Anna Comnena\(^69\), that is from the mid-eighth to the end of the eleventh century, in other words during the period of the so-called ‘limited oikoumene’, which starts with the papal political secession from the Empire and the forgery of the Constitutum Constantini, and ends around the time of the first Crusade. The term Τωμαίων ἐξουσία is used mostly by Byzantine sources close to the ideology of the Macedonian dynasty, that is the Continuators of Theophanes\(^70\), Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus\(^71\) and John

\(^{64}\) Cf. the cases in the examples cited in note 61.
\(^{65}\) CANTACUZENUS, I 422.
\(^{66}\) ATTALEIATES, 76, 141, 163, 233.
\(^{67}\) CANTACUZENUS, I 228, 283, 393, 505; III 253.
\(^{68}\) NICEPHRORUS, 64, 10-12.
\(^{69}\) ANNA COMNENA, II 55.
\(^{70}\) THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, 277, 291, 346.
\(^{71}\) DAI, 27.3-6, 29.213-216, 31.26-27, 32.21-23, 29-30, 44.122-124, 50.130-132 (p. 112, 134, 148, 152, 154, 204, 238).
Skylitzes\textsuperscript{72}, and underlines very clearly the fact that the Byzantine Empire rules territories and peoples beyond certain limits, that is, it points to Byzantine expansion. This, however, is not the subject of our discussion here: it is enough merely to compare the term with the Τωμαϊκόν in the world of the fourteenth century, when the εξουσία belonged to others.

In the second half of the sixth century, the Oriental chronicler John Malalas used the term ‘Ρωμανία in order to depict the eastern provinces of the Empire, that is the Eastern Roman Empire itself, since his use of the term does not embrace the reign of Justinian\textsuperscript{73}. At the beginning of the seventh century, in the Chronography of Theophanes, the term ‘Ρωμανία replaces the term ‘Ρωμαίων ἁγια, which is henceforth totally abandoned. The term ‘Ρωμανία in the territorial meaning of the Empire is more than frequent throughout Theophanes’s text\textsuperscript{74}. In a single mention, the Continuators of Theophanes inform us that the glorious general of the tenth century, John Courcouas, has doubled the size of ‘Romania’\textsuperscript{75}. The term seems to have been preferred by Skylitzes\textsuperscript{76} and especially by Constantine Porphyrogenitus\textsuperscript{77}, for whom ‘Ρωμανία has precise boundaries, such as with Armenia\textsuperscript{78}. It seems natural to conclude, therefore, that, for those same authors who also employ the term ‘Ρωμανία, the ‘Ρωμαίων εξουσία represents a notion of Byzantium that goes far beyond the boundaries of ‘Ρωμανία, a term that had restricted the ‘Ρωμαίων

\textsuperscript{72} SKYLITZES, 146-147, 156, 167. An echo of the achievements of the Macedonian dynasty en bloc in Fontes historise imperii Trapezuntini, 79, where ἁγια, πολιτεία and εξουσία are ὁμώνυμοι (i.e. Roman).

\textsuperscript{73} MALALAS, 398, 400, 407, 408, 409.


\textsuperscript{75} THEOPH. CONT., 426-427: καὶ τὴν Ῥωμανίαν διπλὴν κατεστήσατο.

\textsuperscript{76} SKYLITZES, 135, 154.

\textsuperscript{77} DAI, 9.111-113, 22.21-22, 46.128-135, 46.135-142, 47.23-25, 53.530-532 (p. 62, 94, 220, 220-222, 224, 286).

\textsuperscript{78} Cf. DAI, 44.125-128 (p. 204): μέσον Ῥωμανίας καὶ Ἀρμενίας, cf. also DAI, 46.15 (p. 214).
αρχή at the beginning of the seventh century and which resulted in debasing the value of the term Ῥωμαίων πολιτεία, predicted once by Procopius of Caesarea.

The last Byzantine author to employ the term Ῥωμανία is George Pachymeres, in whose times the decline was not yet so marked. Later, however, with Cantacuzenus, a humbler polity seems to be implied by το Τομαϊκόν.

80. Pachymeres, I.31, V.3 (p. 123 and 125, 443).
Τ. Κ. ΛΟΥΨΗΣ, Σχετικά με την ορολογία των αφηγηματικών πηγών για το χαρακτηρισμό του βυζαντινού κράτους

1. Ο όρος 'Ρωμαίων επικράτεια προϋποθέτει συγκεκριμένα σύνορα και χρησιμοποιείται σε ολόκληρη την υπερχιλιετή ζωή του βυζαντινού κράτους.

2. Ο όρος 'Ρωμαίων αρχή προϋποθέτει σύνορα μόνο στη διάρκεια των «σκότεινων αιώνων» και αντικαθιστά στο Νικηφόρο και στο Θεοφάνη τον όρο 'Ρωμαίων επικράτεια. Βαθμιαία, ο όρος υπονοεί το ρωμαϊκό κράτος περιορισμένο στο χώρο, από την Άννα Κομνηνή ως τον Ιωάννη Καντακουζινό.

3. Ο όρος 'Ρωμαίων αρχή είναι ευρύτερος σε περιεχόμενο από τον όρο 'Ρωμαίων πολιτεία (Προκόπιος ή, ακόμα, Πρίσκος Πανίτης). Αντίθετα, στον Ιωάννη Μαλάλα, στον Εικάγιο και στον Θεοφύλακτο Σιμοκάττη, ο όρος ρωμαϊκό πολιτεία έχει εδαφική σημασία. Η σύνθεση αυτή θα υιοθετηθεί και από τους Νικηφόρο Πατριάρχη, Θεοφάνη και Κωνσταντίνο Πορφυρογέννητο για να αποδώσει καταστάσεις ως το 724.

4. Από τις αρχές του 9ου αιώνα εμφανίζεται ο όρος 'Ρωμαίων ηγεμονία (Γενέσιος, Σκυλίτζης), ταυτόχρονα με την επανεμφάνιση του όρου 'Ρωμαίων πολιτεία με ελαφρά διαφορετική έννοια τώρα (κρατική οργάνωση). Στην Άννα Κομνηνή και στο Νικήτα Χωνιάτη, ο όρος 'Ρωμαίων πολιτεία απουσιάζει, ενώ απαντάται σε κείμενα που αποτελούν βυζαντινή ιστορική συνέχεια και σταθερότητα (Λέων Διάκονος, Ιωάννης Κίνναμος).

5. Η μελέτη προσπαθεί να παρακολουθεί την εναλλαγή των αποχρώσεων της έννοιας των πιο πάνω όρων σε αντιστοιχία με την εξέλιξη της βυζαντινής πολιτικής ιδεολογίας στην εξωτερική πολιτική. Πρόκειται για προσωρινά σύμπερασματα, ιδιαίτερα σε ό, τι αφορά την εξέλιξη των όρων 'Ρωμαίων βασιλεία, η φωμαϊκόν, 'Ρωμανία κλπ.