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

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http://dx.doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.820

To cite this article:

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-PARMENTIER, p. 135, 136, 160, 204.); GENESIUS, II. 5, III. 2, 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. MORAVSKIC-JENKINS, p. 50, 188); LEON DIACONUS, I.2, III.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): εἷς τήν Ῥωμαίαν.

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): θεομαϊκά δρια; EVAGRIUS, IV, V. 7 (p. 170, 203); NICEPHORUS, 11.8-11, 34.20-22, 37.8-10, 58.11-13 (DE BOOR); THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, 54; CONSTANTINUS P homophobicus, *De them.*, 62 and 97 (ed. PERTUSI); SKYLITZES, 31; LEON DIACONUS, II.1, II.11 and X.8 (p. 18, 33, 173): Ρωμαϊκά δρια; ATTALEIATES, 181 (Ρωμαϊκά δρια), 117 (τα της Αύσονίτιδος δρια); CINNAMUS, 79, 11-14 (CSHB); ACROPOLITES, 113, 187; GREGORAS, 1.3, III.5, III.5 (CSHB, p. 18, 19, 72); PACHYMERES, II.30 (p. 209).


5. E. g. ACROPOLITES, 34, where the notorious expression: έν στενφ τεθεαμένος οδσαν την θωμαιων αρχην. Cf. ACROPOLITES, 35, 73, 74, 76, 89, 154, 156, 158, 163.
Τωμαίων ἀρχή is regularly used during the Comnenian period, mainly by Anna Comnena6 (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 ἀρχή7.

The constitutional aspect of the term Τωμαίων ἀρχή 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 thereafter, whatever reforms have been introduced from time to time in our state (τῇ καθ’ ἡμῖν πολιτείᾳ), and also throughout the Roman empire (ἐν πάση τῇ Ἱρωμαίων ἀρχῇ)8. The order of terms is repeated in another chapter of the same work9, as if to confirm the affinity of both meanings.

Generally speaking, the term Τωμαίων ἀρχή 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 ἑτέρας) to the Roman empire (τῇ Ἱρωμαίων ἀρχῇ)10. In a famous passage of the Gothic War11, the same author reveals the close connexion that exists between the preservation of a just political order in the empire (πολιτεία

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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). Chroniates, 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).
'Ρωμαίοις) and the maintaining of its territorial integrity. In another equally unequivocal passage of the Buildings\textsuperscript{12}, Procopius makes a remarkable distinction between the component parts of the πολιτεία: under Justinian I, the empire (πολιτεία) has more than doubled its territories and other trappings of power (τῇ τε χώρᾳ καὶ τῇ ἄλλῃ δυνάμει). If the term 'Ρωμαίων ἀρχή 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 Panium\textsuperscript{13}, 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 οἱ μὲν νόμοι καλοὶ καὶ η ἰπολιτεία 'Ρωμαίων ἀγαθή), excepting a number of critical remarks prompted by the conduct of some of its leaders\textsuperscript{14}.

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 ἐπικράτεια\textsuperscript{15}. 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 Evagrius\textsuperscript{16}. This evolution of the meaning of the 'Ρωμαίων πολιτεία is of crucial interest, not only because the tyrant Phocas destroyed the τάξις in 602, δόντος, εἴσηκαν Γαλλίαν Οὐσίγοτθοι ἐσχόν μέχρι Ἀλπεων, αἱ τα Γάλλων τε δρια καὶ Λιγούρων διορίζονσι.

\textsuperscript{12.} Procopius, I 1, 15-16 (p. 7-8); Agathias, I 2. 2 and 20. 3 (p. 11, 35) prefers the term πολιτεία ἀρχή, while the term ἰομαϊκή κατάστασις (IV 26, p. 156) conveys the meaning of the whole Roman political establishment.

\textsuperscript{13.} Priscus, 136; Candidus of Isauria, Frg. 1: FHG IV, 136, designates by the same term the byzantine state under Zenon (474-491).

\textsuperscript{14.} Priscus, 138.

\textsuperscript{15.} Malalas, 361, 412, 422, 449, 460 (CSHB); Evagrius, II. 9 (p. 59).

\textsuperscript{16.} Simocattes, II 10.4 and IV 11. 8 (p. 89, 170). It must be noted, however, that the old, 'constitutional' use of 'Ρωμαίων πολιτεία is also to be found in Simocattes, III 5.4 (p. 117). Cf. also the use of the expression το 'Ρωμαίων πολιτεία, Simocattes, III 9.6 (p. 128). All mentions in Simocattes concern the earliest part of his History, thus they do not extend beyond Book IV, with the single exception in VIII 11.11 (p. 306).
The beginning of the ninth century witnesses the appearance of the term 'Ρωμαίων ἡγεμονία. Its first mentions are attributed to Genesius\(^{24}\) and Skylitzes\(^{25}\) almost simultaneously with the revival of the term 'Ρωμαίων πολιτεία, used alternatively by the same authors\(^{26}\). Here, the term 'Ρωμαίων πολιτεία, according to the Chronicon Paschale\(^{17}\), but mainly because, starting from that time, the Chronography of Theophanes the Confessor uses the term 'Ρωμαίων πολιτεία in the sense of 'the Byzantine State'\(^{18}\). In Theophanes, all uses of the 'Ρωμαίων ἡγεμονία concern the early Byzantine period, till the beginning of the seventh century. From then on, it is replaced by another, more current, term.

Theophanes, Constantine Porphyrogenitus (who follows his great-uncle\(^{19}\)) and, at times, Nicephorus the Patriarch, make use of the term 'Ρωμαίων πολιτεία in this sense very frequently throughout the seventh century\(^{20}\), up to the year 724\(^{21}\), while very few echoes of its old meaning are to be detected in the Short History. Such is the case for the year 641 (under the empress Martina), when the author uses highly expressive language to point out his exasperation: 'God forbid that the Roman state sink into such bad order'\(^{22}\). From the year 724 on, there are no references to the term 'Ρωμαίων πολιτεία and it is totally absent from the Chronography of Theophanes\(^{23}\) which covers the entire eighth century up to the year 813, that is, shortly after Charlemagne’s diplomatic recognition.

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\(^{17}\) CHRONICON PASCHALE, 707 (CSHB). According to the same source (p. 708).


\(^{19}\) Cf. T. C. LOUNGHIS, Κωνσταντίνου Ζ’ Πορφυρογέννητου, De administrando imperio (Προς τόν ίδιον υἱόν Ρωμανόν). Μια μέθοδος ανάγνωσης, Thessalonica 1990, 45-49.

\(^{20}\) 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.

\(^{21}\) THEOPHANES, 402.9-15.

\(^{22}\) NICEPHORUS, 28.5-8: μηδέ δοίη θεός ἐν τούτῳ τάξεως τήν Ῥωμαϊκήν ἐλθεῖν πολιτείαν...

\(^{23}\) 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\(^{27}\), adapting to new realities: Ρωμαίων πολιτεία in the ninth century means 'the organisation of the state'\(^{28}\), not only in Genesius and Skylitzes but also in other sources up to the twelfth century\(^{29}\), whereas Ρωμαίων ἡγεμονία fulfills the functions of the old term Ρωμαίων ἁρχή, the *imperium romanum*, and is used in this sense by Anna Comnena\(^{30}\). Only once is the term πολιτεία (unaccompanied by Ρωμαίων) to be found in Anna's text\(^{31}\) in clear juxtaposition with the term Ρωμαίων ἁρχή: 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 Ρωμαίων 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\(^{32}\)), we have four clear mentions of the term with the meaning 'state organisation'\(^{33}\) as well as six mentions of the term Ρωμαίων (or Πωμαίκη) ἡγεμονία with the meaning of Roman empire, inclusive of its territories and power\(^{34}\).

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\(^{35}\). However, just

\(^{27}\) Cf. supra, notes 10-13.

\(^{28}\) Which may be interpreted: the singularity of Byzantine state organisation.

\(^{29}\) DAI 13. 173-175 (p. 74): τὴν εὐγενὴ πολιτείαν Ρωμαίων; 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.

\(^{32}\) T. C. LOUNGHIS, Η ιδεολογία της βυζαντινής Ιστοριογραφίας, Athens 1993, 172.

\(^{33}\) 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 VIII. 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 προσέτι τὰ μέγιστα τὴν πολιτείαν ὄνησοντα, καὶ τῆς Ρωμαίας ἁρχῆς τὴν ἐπιφύλαξαν αἰξίωσοντα. The double use in LEON DIACONUS, IX.4 (p. 146): τὴν τῆς ἡγεμονίας ἁρχὴν, 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 ‘Ρωμαίων 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 ‘Ρωμαίων 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 ‘Ρωμαίων ἡγεμονία means indisputably the Byzantine empire in Gregoras, but not in Pachymeres, who uses the rather ambiguous expression τὰ πράγματα τῆς τῶν Ρωμαίων ἡγεμονίας. The term τὰ ‘Ρωμαίων (sc. πράγματα) is known by its broad use in the History of Nicetas Choniates, to whom the term ‘Ρωμαίων 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 ‘Ρωμαίων πολιτεία in Byzantine narrative sources, is not τὰ ‘Ρωμαίων πράγματα, but the very commonly encountered expression ‘Ρωμαίων βασιλεία, also very frequent in Nicetas Choniates and designating the nature of the Byzantine political

in Leon Diaconus, V.3 (p. 81): δυναστεία δωματίων 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 ‘Ρωμαίων ἀρχὴ 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. LEONE, 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. 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 διχή, 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. 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, το Τωμαϊκόν, earlier used only by Attaleiates. The adjective, το Τωμαϊκόν, which tends to be an equivalent of το κοινό των Τωμαίων, also used by Cantacuzenus, 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 εξουσία in the sense of ‘the Roman power’ or ‘the Roman domination’ appears in the Byzantine narrative sources from Nicephorus the Patriarch to Anna Comnena, 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 εξουσία is used mostly by Byzantine sources close to the ideology of the Macedonian dynasty, that is the Continuators of Theophanes, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus 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. NICEPHORUS, 64, 10-12.
69. ANNA COMNENA, II 55.
70. THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, 277, 291, 346.
Skyllitzes\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 \textit{Ῥωμαϊκόν} in the world of the fourteenth century, when the ἐξουσία belonged to others.

In the second half of the sixth century, the Oriental chronicler John Malalas used the term \textit{Ῥωμανία} 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 \textit{Chronography} of Theophanes, the term \textit{Ῥωμανία} replaces the term \textit{Ῥωμαιόν ἄρχη}, which is henceforth totally abandoned. The term \textit{Ῥωμανία} 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 Courcous, has doubled the size of \textit{Ῥωμανία}\textsuperscript{75}. The term seems to have been preferred by Skyllitzes\textsuperscript{76} and especially by Constantine Porphyrogenitus\textsuperscript{77}, for whom \textit{Ῥωμανία} 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 \textit{Ῥωμανία}, the \textit{Ῥωμαιόν ἐξουσία} represents a notion of Byzantium that goes far beyond the boundaries of \textit{Ῥωμανία}, a term that had restricted the \textit{Ῥωμαιόν}

\textsuperscript{72} SKYLITZES, 146-147, 156, 167. An echo of the achievements of the Macedonian dynasty \textit{en bloc} in \textit{Fontes historiae imperii Trapezuntini}, 79, where ἄρχη, πολιτεία and ἐξουσία are ὄμωνυμοι (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 Τωμαίων πολιτεία, predicted once by Procopius of Caesarea.

The last Byzantine author to employ the term ‘Ρωμανία’ is George Pachymeres80, in whose times the decline was not yet so marked. Later, however, with Cantacuzenus, a humbler polity seems to be implied by τὸ Τωμαϊκόν.

80. PACHYMERES, I.31, V.3 (p. 123 and 125, 443).
Τ. Κ. ΛΟΥΠΗΣ, 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 «σκοτεινών 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 Καντακουζηνό.


4. Από τις αρχές του 9ου αιώνα εμφανίζεται ο όρος ‘Ρωμαίων πολιτεία (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 αποκλείεται, ενώ απαντάται σε κείμενα που αποτελούν βυζαντινή κρατική 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 προσωπικά συμπεράσματα, ιδιαίτερα σε ό, τι αφορά την εξέλιξη των όρων ‘Ρωμαίων βασιλεία, το ρωμαϊκόν, Ρωμανία κλπ.