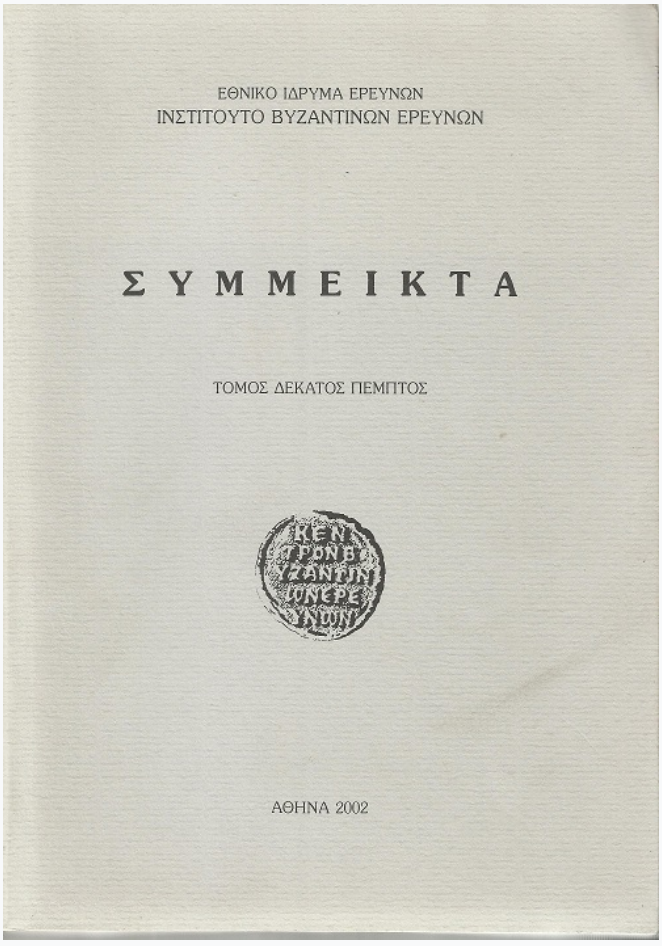
ePublishing

EKT ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΤΕΚΜΗΡΙΩΣΗΣ NATIONAL DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

Byzantina Symmeikta

Vol 15 (2002)

SYMMEIKTA 15



The Strategos Paul and the Archonts of the Westerners

Tibor ŽIVKOVIĆ

doi: 10.12681/byzsym.894

Copyright © 2014, Tibor ŽIVKOVIĆ

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0.

To cite this article:

ŽIVKOVIĆ, T. (2008). The Strategos Paul and the Archonts of the Westerners. *Byzantina Symmeikta*, *15*, 161–176. https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.894

https://epublishing.ekt.gr | **e-Publisher:** EKT | **Downloaded at:** 20/04/2024 10:13:54

TIBOR ŽIVKOVIĆ

THE STRATEGOS PAUL AND THE *Archontes of the Westerners**

It seems that the *Chronography* of Theophanes still represents an inexhaustible mine, which gives very important information about the relationship between Byzantium and the «barbarians» of the West. The value of this information is strengthened by the fact that Theophanes pays more attention to the eastern part of the Empire, than to the events that took place in the West, especially in the part related to the years 669–718. However, indefinite terms employed by Theophanes, in relation to various rulers of the Western nations are still problematic for historians. A single misunderstanding of his narration can lead to a completely wrong interpretation of an entire passage. Such an instance is offerd in Theophanes' narration of the rebellion in Sicily in 718[1]. At first sight this passage would not have attracted our attention, but within its wider historical context and with the additional support of other sources, we believe that this passage could be used as a main proof on the nature and character of the relationship between Byzantium and the «barbarians» settled in the Balkans. It is almost incredible how this short story yields so many clues for understanding the political picture in the year 718.

When the emperor Leo III ascended to the throne on the 25th March 717, it seemed that the instability of the Empire was over[2]. Leo's incapable predecessors, Bardan Philippikos (711–713), Anastasios II (713–715) and Theodosios III (715–717) were just marionettes unable to solve the deep crisis, which the Empire faced[3]. Still,

* I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Eleonora Kountoura-Galaki for her valuable advice on some topics dealt within the present paper as well as for her patience.

1. *Theophanes Chronographia*, ed. C. DE BOOR, Berlin 1883, vol. I (herafter: THEOPHANES), 398.5–399.4.

2. THEOPHANES, 412.24–25.

3. About these rulers, see G. OSTROGORSKY, *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates*, Munich 1963 (hereafter: OSTROGORSKY, *Geschichte*), 127–130.

the new Emperor had to fight the most important battle of his time, that is the struggle against the Arabs, who arrived at the capital in August 717. The siege of Constantinople (15 August 717–15 August 718) was the most important turning point in the long-waged war between Byzantium and the Arabs[4]. The capital resisted and with the help of winter[5], famine[6], pestilence[7], and the Bulgarians[8], the Arabs were finally defeated. However, during the siege, in the second year of Leo's rule (25 March 718–24 March 719), the strategos of Sicily, Sergios, being convinced that the capital would not resist to the Arab attacks, proclaimed emperor Basil, the son of Gregory the Onomagul, a native of Constantinople, whom he himself was renamed Tiberios. The usurper, appointed dignitaries and army officers according to the will and choice of Sergios[9].

Our objective is not to give a full account of the usurpation of Tiberios nor to describe the situation in Sicily and Italy, but to discuss the reaction against the legitimate emperor, Leo III. Further in his narration, Theophanes says that Leo III appointed Paul, τὸν οἰκεῖον αὐτοῦ χαρτουλάριον[10], *patrikios* and *strategos* of Sicily,

4. For the beginning of the siege by land (15 August 717), see THEOPHANES, 395.17–19. In the 11th September 717 the Arab flee numbering 1800 ships arrived; cf. THEOPHANES, 395.24–25. In early spring 718, two additional Arabic fleets, one from Egypt and another from Africa (Carthage?), numbering 400 and 360 ships (transport ships were also included), appeared in front of Constantinople: cf. THEOPHANES, 396.28–397.3.

5. THEOPHANES, 396.24–27, says that the winter 717/718 was so heavy that for 100 days the ground was covered by snow.

6. THEOPHANES, 397.23–245, mentions that the starving Arabs ate horses, camels, asses, even their own dead.

7. THEOPHANES, 397.27–28.

8. According to Theophanes, 397.28–30, the Bulgarians killed some 22.000 Arabs. One western source (*Pauli historia Langobardorum*, ed. L. BETHMANN–G. WAITZ, in *MGH Scriptores Rerum Langobardicarum et italicarum saec. VI–IX*, Hanover 1878, 181.5–12, also mentions the Bulgarians. The *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. L. DUCHESNE, Paris 1955, I, 402.11–16, mentions only pestilence.

9. THEOPHANES, 398.7–12. Since the second year of Leo's rule began in the 25th March 718, the usurpation of Tiberios should be placed between this date and July of the same year. From Theophanes' narration about the siege we learn, also, that in spring 718, the Byzantine fleet defeated the Arab ships, whereas ground troops have won somewhere between Nicaea and Nicomedia. Byzantine ships were, thus, able to sail towards Asia Minor to obtain provisions; cf. THEOPHANES, 397.12–23. The trip of Paul, who sailed off from Kyzikos, began obviously after the aforementioned victories, that is by the end of April or during May 718. On the name Onomagul, see Ilse ROCHOW, *Byzanz im. 8. Jahrhundter in der Sicht des Theophanes*, Berlin 1991 (hereafter: ROCHOW, *Byzanz*), 94.

10. THEOPHANES, 398.13–14.

and sent him to Sicily to reestablish the order[11]. Together with Paul, Leo sent two *spatharioi* and few men to help him to fulfill his task[12]. The dignitaries, faithful to the emperor, sailed off from Kyzikos on a single expeditionary *dromon*[13], which could take no more than 300 people, mostly oarsmen[14]. According to Theophanes, the most important «weapon» they had with them was the imperial orders (κελεύσεις) for the *archontes of the westerners*[15] and the *iussio* (σάκρα) for the army of Sicily[16]. It would have been a unique case in the history of usurpation, from the time

11. It is interesting to note that the Patriarch Nikephoros describes Paul as a man experienced in military matters —*τακτικῶν ἔμπειρον*; cf. *Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople Short History*, ed. C. MANGO, Washington 1990, 55.9.

12. THEOPHANES, 398.12-16.

13. THEOPHANES, 398.17-19. However, according to the Slavic version of pseudo-Symeon Logothete (*Slavjanskij perevod chroniki Simeona Logotheta*, ed. V. I. SREZNEVSKIJ, London 1971, 78), Paul went to Sicily with war-ships. This misunderstanding is developed further in KEDRENUS, ed. I. BEKKER, Bonn 1838, I, 790.23-791.12, who speaks of Paul being sent *μετὰ δυνάμεως*.

14. According to *Constantini Porphyrogenneti, De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae*, ed. I. REISKE, Bonn 1829, I, 653.5-15, a *dromon* had 230 oarsmen and 70 soldiers. THEOPHANES, 396.5, says that the transport ships of the Arabs in 717 had for their protection 100 soldiers (not including the oarsmen). In the case of Paul's expeditionary *dromon*, the number of men should be something more than 240, since Theophanes does not mention the soldiers.

15. THEOPHANES, 398.16-17: *ἄρχοντας τῶν δυτικῶν*, which C. MANGO-R. SCOTT, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, Oxford 1997 (hereafter: MANGO-SCOTT, *Theophanes*), 549, translate as the «western commanders». ROCHOW, *Byzanz*, 95, thinks that the *archonts* of the text could be Byzantine officers in Sicily and Ravenna. We understand the expression «archonts of the Westerners» as «chieftains of the Western people». Our interpretation is based on the following evidence: a. THEOPHANES, 381.6 (under the year 710/711) mentions *τὰ δυτικὰ μέρη ἕως Ῥώμης* (the western parts of the empire as far as Rome); cf. also in THEOPHANES, 398 note 17, the reading from the ms. Z, which bears *τῶν δυτικῶν μερῶν*. In this case, the expression must be translated as: [officers] of the western parts (provinces). b. THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, ed. I. BEKKER, Bonn 1838, 306.3-4, employs *δυτικῶν* in the sense of «westerners», which in our case would be rendered as «troops from the western themata». c. The term *δυτικῶν* in the sense of «westerners» is also to be found in *Theodori Studitae Epistulae*, ed. G. FATOUROS, Berlin 1992, no 410.31 (dated in 819).

16. THEOPHANES, 398.17 runs as follows: *σάκραν πρὸς τὸν λαόν*, which MANGO-SCOTT, Theophanes, 549, translate as «iussio for the people». In the Latin translation of Theophanes by Anastasius the Librarian, the terms *λαός* and *κέλευσις* are constantly rendered as *populus* and *iussio*: cf. THEOPHANES II, 176.4, 257.25-26, 263.6, etc. However, the term *λαός* is used by Theophanes in the sense of «army» or «troops»: THEOPHANES, 286.15 (on Maurice ordering in 602 the strategos Petros to spend the winter in Slavic land with the troops), *ibid.*, 414.21 (on the troops of the Opsikion, which followed Artabasdos in 741), *ibid.*, 462.8-9 (on Stavracius willing to expel the «godless troops» off Constantinople). The term is used again in the passage concerning Paul and in any case it seems to indicate the army or troops.

of the Roman Republic onwards, that the aspirant to the throne should be suppressed by a piece of paper and not by the military force. Before we discuss the key-terms of the passage, κελεύσεις and *archonts of the Westerners*, we should summarize the rest of the story.

After sailing off Kyzikos, Paul wandered from place to place by land and sea, until he «suddenly» arrived to Sicily[17]. Hearing about Paul's arrival, Sergios recognized his own guilt and sought refuge to the Longobards of Calabria. Then, Paul gathered the army and read aloud the *iussio*, confirming that the Empire was staying firm and Constantinople confident against the Arabs; finally, Paul told them about the two fleets, which were sailing for Sicily[18]. At this point, the soldiers of the Sicilian army acclaimed Leo as the sole legitimate emperor, captured Basil-Tiberios and his officers and surrendered them to the *strategos*. Paul ordered Basil and his commander in chief to be beheaded and the rest of the rebelled officers to be beaten, tonsured monks, mutilated, and expelled. As for Sergios, he requested from Paul immunity, and once he obtained the strategos' promise he joined him. And so, concludes Theophanes, peace and order were established in the «western lands»[19].

The account of Paul's expedition as recorded by Theophanes contains a number of points, which are worth to be further investigated. We will, thus, try to answer three questions: 1. Who are the *archonts of the westerners* and what was their role during the events of Sicily? 2. Why did Paul travel «by land and sea»? 3. From where did the two supposed fleets sail off?

On the interpretation of *λαός* as «army», see also ROCHOW, *Byzanz*, 95. On the *κέλευσις* and the *iussio* being documents of two different sorts, addressed to different recipients, as in the case of Paul, see T. C. LOUNGHIS, *Les ambassades byzantines en Occident depuis la fondation des états barbares jusqu'aux Croisades (407-1096)*, Athens 1980 (hereafter: LOUNGHIS, *Les ambassades*), 131.

17. *ἀπὸ <δὲ> τόπου εἰς τόπον, διά τε γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης τὴν πορείαν ποιησάμενοι ἐξάπινα τὴν Σικελίαν καταλαμβάνουσιν:* THEOPHANES, 398.19-20.

18. THEOPHANES, 398.20-26.

19. THEOPHANES, 398.26-399.4; cf. NIKEPHOROS, 55.11-12, who preservers a different version of the whole account, although he is thought to have used the same source as Theophanes. Nikephoros employs the term γράμματα (i.e. diplomatic letters; on γράμματα see LOUNGHIS, *Les ambassades*, 274) instead of the κέλευσις and σάκρα in Theophanes; he ascribes the Sicilian rebellion to both the strategos Sergios and the λαός of the island, and he ignores the «two fleets».

For the now lost *Constantinopolitan Chronicle*, supposed source of Theophanes for the years 668-720, see MANGO-SCOTT, *Theophanes*, lxxxvii. A more or less careful transcription of this source explains, in my opinion, the clear distinction between the two types of imperial documents (*κέλευσις* and *σάκρα*), as well as the expression «pious Emperor» for Leo III, who elsewhere in Theophanes' *Chronicle* is dubbed impious, lawless, God's enemy etc.

First, let us examine Paul's task. We concluded that the emperor gave him documents of two different types: the κέλευσις for the *archonts of the Westerners* and the *iussio* (σάκρα)[20]. To whom were these commands or orders addressed to? As we have already seen, the *iussio* was addressed to the army of Sicily, and we assume that by the term *army* we are to understand the archonts, i.e. the officers of that particular army. Is it possible to assume that the κέλευσις was also intended for the *archonts* (=officers) of the Sicilian army? It does not seem likely.

Our reasons for denying this possibility are: 1. Κέλευσις or κελεύσεις are most often intended for foreign rulers, who acknowledge the imperial rule[21]. 2. Theophanes relates that Paul, once arrived in Syracuse, read the *iussio* to the gathered λαός. The passage does not mention the κέλευσις. 3. After the suppression of the rebellion, officers of the Sicilian army have been tonsured monks, severely punished or expelled. 4. It is hard to believe that Paul carried imperial κέλευσις for the rebelled officers. Thus, we may conclude that the κέλευσις has not been intended to be given to the officers in Sicily or Italy (Calabria)[22].

Generally speaking, *iussio* was a document for internal policy, while a κέλευσις was a document often related to foreign policy[23]. We will see below how Con-

20. On these documents, see LOUNGHIS, *Les ambassades*, 274-276, and T. K. ΛΟΥΓΓΗς, Διπλωματία και διπλωματική. Το παράδειγμα της *jussio*, *Σύμμεικτα* 3, 1979, 63-82.

21. Cf. *De cerem.* 691.8-11 (the rulers of the Slavic principalities in the Balkans –Croats, Serbs, Moravians, etc.– receive *κελεύσεις*); *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De administrando imperio*, ed. Gy. MORAVCSIK-R. J. H. JENKINS, Washington 1967, 8.23-25 (the clerc Gabriel carried to the Hungarians an imperial *κέλευσις* ordering them to attack the Petcenegs); *ibid.*, 43.62 and 45.83 (the archonts of Taron and of Iberia receive κελεύσεις); *ibid.*, 31.19 (the Croats are settled in Dalmatia by a κέλευσις of Heraclius); *ibid.*, 29.109-11 (the Slavic tribes of Dalmatia took part in the campaign against the Arabs of Bari in 868/9 by the *βασιλική κέλευσις*).

22. THEOPHANES, 398.29-30, says that Paul beheaded the *monostrategos* of the usurper. We assume that Basil-Tiberios was recognised from both the Italian (Calabrian) and Sicilian army. The *monostrategos* may be identified with George mentioned in NIKEPHOROS, 55.16.

23. Already underlined by LOUNGHIS, *Les ambassades*, 275. W. E. KAEGI, *Byzantine Military Unrest (471-843)*, Amsterdam 1981, 211, thinks that Paul carried «an imperial letter and orders for the army». F. DÖLGER, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565-1453*, 1. *565-1025*, Munich 1924, nos 1, 25, 60, 75, 177, 190, etc., does not distinguish between the verb *κελεύω* (to order) and the noun *κέλευσις* (the order); cf. also J. J. KARAYANNOPULOS-F. DÖLGER, *Byzantinische Urkundenlehre*, Munich 1968, 91 n. 10 and 115 n. 15. However, it is not clear when the κέλευσις became a document exclusively related to foreign policy. According to the *DAI* and the *De ceremoniis* (see above n. 21), this may have happened sometime around the middle of the IXth century. It is quite possible that during the 7th and the 8th century, this type of document was used for both internal and foreign policy; cf. I*oannis*

stantine IV (668-685) used this type of order (κέλευσις), sending it to the Slav chieftains of the Drogubitoi.

However, if we accept that the content of the κέλευσις carried by Paul would be extended upon the officers of the imperial army, then we should assume that the document was written for the Byzantine officers who were on duty in towns or strongplaces between Constantinople and Sicily[24]. This interpretation would, also, explain why Paul had to sail from place to place by land and by sea: he carried orders for the local commanders in the western parts of the Empire to help him to suppres the rebellion at Sicily[25]. Moreover, it would be an indication that Leo III wanted to reassure his control over distant areas of the West. Is this interpretation more lausible than the previous one?

By 718, the Byzantine Empire had at its disposal the following ground troops on the West: 1. The army of the Exarchate of Ravenna (including the troops of Istria); 2. The thematic army of Sicily (part of which was garrisoned in Calabria); at this time the army rebelled; 3. The thematic army of Hellas; 4. The garrison of

Malalae Chronographia, ed. L. DINDORF, Bonn 1831, 457.2: *θείας κελεύσεις* were dispatched to the king of Ethiopia, containing an order to attack the Persians. The same document is understood by THEOPHANES, 244.16 as σάκρας wrongly placed under the year 571.

24. In fact, the term *archonts* has different meanings according to the source. In Theophanes, *archonts* are the Byzantine officers, execept in this particular case where the term is used in conjunction with the *κέλευσις*. Hélène AHRWEILER, *Byzance et la mer*, Paris 1966 (hereafter: AHRWEILER, *Mer*) 59, believes that in the earliest records the term *archonts* refers to officers which are at the head of a region. For other meanings of the term archon, see L. MARGETIĆ, Probintsijalnii archonti taktikona Uspenskog (s osobitim obzirom na archonta Dalmatsije), *ZRVI* 29/30, 1991, 45-59; J. FERLUGA, *Vizantiska uprava u Dalamtsiji*, Belgrade 1957, 50; *ODB* I, 160. See also, N. OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles*, Paris 1972, 342-343 and n. 317; ID., L'archonte slave de l'Hellade au VIIIe siècle, *Viz. Vrem.* 55, 1998, 111-118 (for more specific cases).

25. Theophanes does not clarify the relations between the rebels in Sicily and the Exarchate of Ravenna. It seems that Basil-Tiberios had under control both Sicily and Calabria, but we know nothing about any diplomatic efforts towards Rome or Ravenna. Since Sergios escaped to the Longobards, it is quite possible to assume that they played some role in the rebellion, while the hostile relations between the Pope and the Longobards, at the time, exclude any support of Rome to the rebels. From the *Liber Pontificalis* I, 408.13-409.3, we know that the Pope did not support the usurper Tiberios Petasios in 728/9, when religious dispute between Rome and Constantinople had already begun. It is, thus likely to assume that the Pope had no reasons to be unfaithful to Leo ten years earlier. For a general survey of the Pope's attitude towards the Longobards, see T. S. BROWN, *Gentlemen and Officers*, Rome 1984 (hereafter: Brown, Gentlemen) 41-42, 178-181, and E. ZANINI, *Le Italie bizantine. Territorio, uinsediamenti ed economia nella provincia bizantina d' Italia (VI-VIII secolo)*, Bari 1998, 90-96.

Thessalonica under the command of a former prefect of the Illyricum; 5. Militias in Dalmatian towns, such as Zadar and Trogirium (probably at Split); 6. The militia of Dyrrachion (probably a garrison of regular army); 7. Groups of armed citizens in other, smaller coastal towns, such as Demetrias or Monemvasia, Methone, Patras and Nicopolis; 8. A few lesser units in Crete and the Aegean islands[26].

With the exception of the troops stationed in Hellas and Thessalonica, which were sufficient for the local or regional defence, all other units were too small to be converted into an expeditionary army. On the other hand, the entire imperial fleet –the fleet harboured in Constantinople and the fleet of Karavisianoi– was engaged in the naval war against the Arabs[27]. Therefore, it seems that there was no available fleet to be sent against the Sicilian rebels[28], and it is clear from Theophanes' account

26. The greatest part of the geographic area covered by these units was still under the spiritual guidance of the Pope of Rome. Since we dispose of no direct information about the relations between the Pope and the rebels of Sicily, we cannot put forth any hypothesis on the attitude of the western provinces towards the rebels or Leo III. However, if our supposition is true, then the western provinces remained most probably faithful to Leo III.

27. According to AHRWEILER, *Mer*, 24, the Karabisianoi fleet was created in the last quarter of the VIIth century. J. NESBITT-N. OIKONOMIDES, *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art*, II, Washington 1991 (hereafter: NESBITT-OIKONOMIDES, *Seals* II) 150, date the creation after 678. At an indefinite date the Karabisianoi was replaced by the theme of Kibyrrhaiotai. Theophanes, 370.24, mentions a droungarios of the Kibyrrhaiotai in 698, probably under the supreme command of the strategos of Karabisianoi; cf. NESBITT-OIKONOMIDES, *Seals* II, 110, 151.

THEOPHANES, 353.19-23, records the construction in 671/72 (or 674) by Constantine IV of large biremes and dromones, harboured in the Theodosian harbour of Constantinople; cf. MANGO-SCOTT, *Theophanes*, 354 n. 4. In 715, during the siege of Constantinople by the rebelled soldiers of the Opsikion and the so-called Graeco-Goths backed by a part of Karabisianoi, the Emperor built a fleet, which was harboured near St. Mamas; cf. THEOPHANES, 385.25-26 and 385.31-386.2. From THEOPHANES, 385.17-19, we learn that after the uprising of the Opsikion, the Karabisianoi fleet was divided in several squadrons, each of them sailing to its own naval base.

28. According to THEOPHANES, 405.14-24, in 726, the rebelled army of Hellas rose a great fleet and troops against Leo III. More than two centuries later, the *De Cerim.*, 653.15-16, informs us that the theme of Hellas had ten dromones with 700 soldiers on board. The same text (*De Cerim.*, 653.5, 652.12) records ten dromones for the theme of Samos, seven for the Aegean islands, and twelve for the Kibyrrhaiotai. Therefore, we suppose that the «great fleet» mentioned by Theophanes, should have consisted of ships of at least two regions: Hellas and the Kyklades, an indication for the reorganisation of the fleet after the abolishment of the Karabisianoi, probably after 718 as AHRWEILER, *Mer*, 19sq., has already proposed. In that case, the «great fleet» of Hellas did not exist by May-July 718, when Paul conducted his mission.

that Paul had only one ship at his disposal to fulfil his mission[29]. The military capacity of the western provinces of the Empire –small units, stationing in over an extended area and several islands– leads us to the conclusion that the κέλευσις was not intended for the Byzantine officers in command in these areas. It seems unlikely that Paul had to sail from place to place intending to gather all of them into one expeditionary army. Still, how did Leo III have the illusion that 230-240 people, mostly oarsmen, would be able to suppress the rebellion of the imperial army in Italy?

To answer this question we first have to note that, according to Theophanes, Paul arrived in Sicily suddenly (ἐξάπινα)[30], which means that the usurper was not informed about Paul's expedition. On the contrary, Sergios was surprised (ἔξέστη)[31]. The passage suggests that the usurper Basil-Tiberios had not been accepted in the provinces between Constantinople and Italy. However, we saw that the military force in these provinces was insufficient and, thus, we now have to examine upon which forces Paul could have relied[32].

The key to this question and to the whole problem is the meaning of the expression «archonts of the westerners» or, in other words, to whom had Leo III dispatched his κελεύσεις through Paul. The *iussio* (or *sacra*) had an entirely different intention, namely to prove that Leo III was still in power and that he continued to rule as the legitimate emperor. The *iussio* was his «proclamation» to the army, the reassurance of his sovereignty over Sicily, or more generally over the West. To solve the enigma of the «archonts of the westerners» we will attempt to reconstruct the sea and land route followed by Paul.

29. THEOPHANES, 398.18: *δρόμωνα*. When appointed by Justinian II (685-695, 705-711) as *strategos* of the theme of Hellas, Leontios had at his disposal three dromons (THEOPHANES, 368.20-21), and those were times of peace.

30. THEOPHANES, 398.20: *ἐξάπινα τὴν Σικελίαν καταλαμβάνουσιν*.

31. THEOPHANES, 398.21. Sergios would not be surprised because Paul arrived in Sicily very soon, since Paul's journey lasted at least two months. Paul sailed off in April-May (see above p. 162 n. 9), and the end of the rebellion should be placed in the first half of July (cf. NIKEPHOROS 56.5-7, about events placed after the suppression of the rebellion and the 15th August of the same year). The unusual duration of the journey, which normally lasted no more than three weeks (see below p. 175), is probably explained by the fact that Paul sailed «from place to place by land and by sea».

32. We exclude from our investigation the Slavs of Hellas or Peloponnesus. The Slavs of Thessaly and Peloponnesus were pacified only after 783, and they are not known to have been organized in military contingents. On the other hand, the Slavs settled near Thessalonica were better organized, but they would be more useful for the defense of the East.

Several sources inform us about the sea-route from Constantinople to Italy. According to Paul the Deacon, Constance II sailed along the coast (Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, Hellas), accosted to Athens, and arrived much later in Taranto[33]. From the Vita s. Willibaldi, who travelled in 723 from the West to the Holy Land, we learn that the saint's trip started from Syracuse; then he sailed through the Adriatic Sea, passed near Monembasia, and proceeded to Chios leaving Corinth on the left[34]. When, in 710/11, the Pope Constantinus I (708–715) travelled from Italy to Constantinople, he departed from Otranto (Ydronto) and reached Chios, where he was received by Theophilos, *patrikios* and *strategos* of Karavisianoi[35]. Finally, a *follis*, found in Monemvasia, struck in Syracuse and ascribed to Philippikos Bardanes (711–713)[36] completes the evidence, being contemporary of Paul's expedition. The data show that the sea route between Constantinople and Sicily was passing nearby Monemvasia and through the Aegean islands.

The second point related to Paul's route concerns the reference to his travel by land. We may assume that Paul arrived in the eastern port of Corinth, he continued by land crossing the Isthmus, he reached Lechaion, the north western port of Corinth, and then proceeded to Sicily. This assumption seems plausible, especially since Corinth was at that time the seat of the theme of Hellas[37]. However, if that was the case, Theophanes would have mentioned orders for the *strategos* and not κελεύσεις for the archonts. In our opinion, the κελεύσεις carried by Paul are to be connected with a specific land and sea-route. In other words the κελεύσεις organized the route of his journey; otherwise Paul would have sailed directly to Sicily by the usual sea route[38].

33. *Pauli Historia*, 146.16–18. The reasons for the choice of the long route remain unknown. R. JENKINS, *Byzantium. The Imperial Centuries AD 610–1071*, Toronto 1987, 41, supposed that Constance proceeded to an inspection of the fortresses in Greece before departing for Italy. According to the *Liber Pontificalis* I, 343/6–7, Constance arrived in Rome two years after his departure. Theophanes, 348.4–6, dates Constance's departure from Constantinople in 660/661.

34. *Vita Willibaldi episcopi Eichstetensis*, ed. O. HOLDER-EGGER, *MGH SS* XV/1, 86–106, Hannover 1887, 93.

35. *Liber Pontificalis* I, 390.7–12.

36. Βασιλική ΑΘΑΝΑΣΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ-ΠΕΝΝΑ, Η ζωή στις βυζαντινές πόλεις της Πελοποννήσου. Η νομισματική μαρτυρία (8ος-12ος αι. μ.Χ), *Μνήμη Martin Jesop Price*, Athens 1997, 201.

37. NESBITT-OIKONOMIDES, *Seals* II, 22.

38. That way would require about three weeks. Cf. THEOPHANES, 454.25–27: In February 781 Elpidios was appointed *strategos* of the theme of Sicily, and in April of the same year Theodore the patrician was sent to remove him. For Theodore sailing directly to Sicily cf. THEOPHANES, 455.26–28.

We have already seen that the κελεύσεις were addressed neither to the Byzantine officers in Hellas, Thessalonica and the towns or fortresses along the shores of the Ionian, Adriatic and the Aegean Sea nor to the officers of the rebelled army of Sicily. On the other hand, it seems that the two fleets, which Paul presented as if they were sailing towards Sicily, did not exist in reality. However, the κελεύσεις were addressed to the *archonts of the Westerners*. Thus, we have to investigate: a. who had significant troops in the Balkans or more generally in the West at that time, b. who were the allies or subordinates of the Empire, and c. the evidence about the possible archonts of the westerners (western tribes, peoples, etc.).

The Frank rulers are out of question, since they were not on the way to Sicily; besides, Theophanes calls them ῥῆγες (lat. *reges*)[39]. As for the Longobards we recall that upon Paul's arrival in Sicily Sergios fled to them, and we note that Theophanes qualifies their rulers as *gastalds* (γαστάλδοι), *exarchs* (ἔξαρχοι), and even *reges*[40]. In addition, independent rulers, such as the Franks or the Longobards, received diplomatic documents of a different type, such as imperial *grammata*[41].

The Slav leaders are the only foreign rulers to be constantly qualified by Theophanes as *archonts*. Under the year 691/2, he speaks about a special Slav corps, which was incorporated in the imperial army, and was under the command of the ἄρχοντά τε αὐτῶν Νέβουλον[42]. In 763 (or 767?) the emperor Constantine V (741-775) captured τὸν Σεβέρων ἄρχοντα Σκλαβοῦνον[43]; in 768/9 the same emperor dispatched an embassy to the τοὺς τῶν Σκλαβηνῶν ἄρχοντας (probably from the Strymon valley)[44]. On the occasion of Krum's celebration after his victory over Nicephoros I in 811, the khan gave to the τῶν Σκλαυινῶν ἄρχοντας to drink from the skull of the killed emperor[45]. Writing about the conspiracy of the *Helladikoi*,

39. THEOPHANES, 402.37; 403.11, 20, 21; 455.20; 463.26; 472.27; 475.12.

40. THEOPHANES, 356.3; 402.24; 449.2; 464.4.

41. Cf. *De Cerim.*, 686.3-692.2 (about the emperor sending *grammata* to the rulers of the Hungarians, Russians, Petchenegs, Bulgarians or Franks). For the terminology used by the emperor to designate himself in his correspondence with foreign rulers, see G. OSTROGORSKY, Die byzantinische Staatenhierarchie, *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 8, 1936, 49sq. and *Fontes Bizantini historiam populorum Jugoslaviae spectantes* II, ed. B. FERJANČIĆ and G. OSTROGORSKY, Belgrade 1959, 78 n. 291.

42. THEOPHANES, 366.2. We assume that Nebulos was already a prominent Slav leader with a title corresponding to the term *archont*. On Nebulos' noble origin, see Nikephoros, 38.13.

43. THEOPHANES, 436.15. For the dating, see V. N. ZLATARSKI, *Istorija na Bulgarskata derzava prez srednite vekove*, I/1, Sofia 1918, 221-22.

44. NIKEPHOROS, 86.9.

45. THEOPHANES, 491.21-22.

Theophanes qualifies Akamir, the Slav chief of Velegezitai Ἀκάμιρος... ἄρχων[46]. The term archont is connected to Slav chieftains in several other sources from the 6th to the 10th century[47].

The Slav populations were settled in places, which would only partly coincide with Paul's sea and land route. In fact, the earliest Slav settlements near the Dalmatian coastline date from the last decades of the 8th century[48]. However, the Slavs could gather manpower large enough to suppress a rebellion, and the sources show that the Slavs were on good terms with the Empire already by the 7th century[49].

According to Theophanes, in 678 or 679, immediately after the Arab defeat, the chagan of the Avars as well as the kings, gastalds, exarchs, and primates of the western tribes sent to Constantine IV embassies asking for peace[50]. In the same year, the emperor concluded an imperial peace (δεσποτική εἰρήνη) with those foreign archonts, among which were Franks, Longobards, Avars and the chieftains of the Slavs of the Balkans[51]. If this agreement was still in power in 718, it seems possible that Leo III would expect the support of the Slavs of the Balkans against the rebellion of the Sicilian and the Italian army.

Later, in the 10th century, Constantine Porphyrogenetus records that the Serbs and the Croats were subjected to the emperor of the Romans and that they came

46. THEOPHANES, 473.33. It is interesting to note that THEOPHANES (275.29) dubs the Slav chieftain Piragast ἔξαρχος, whereas his source, has *φύλαρχος, ταξίαρχος*: *Theophylacti Simocatta Historia*, ed. C. DE BOOR-P. WIRTH, Srtuttgart 1972, VII.5 (=253.13).

47. *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de saint Démétrius*, ed. P. LEMERLE, Paris 1979, II, 4. 217.20, 219.7; but also *ῥῆγα* Miracula II, 4, 209.3; 214.19; 218.30 as well as *ἔξαρχος ibid.*, 1, 179.5. *DAI* 29.113: Σκλαβάρχοντας (of the Serbs, Croats and other Southern Slavs); cf. also *ibid.*, 30.90, 31.21, 31.43-44, 31.58, 32.30, 32.42. THEOPHANES CONT. 292.6 and 292.11. Cf. also K. M. ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΟΠΟΥΛΟς, *Βυζαντιακά μολυβδόβουλλα τοῦ ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἐθνικοῦ Νομισματικοῦ Μουσείου*, Athens 1917, no 49 and 299. About these two and other similar seals, see OIKONOMIDÈS, L'archonte de l'Hellade, 112, 115.

48. I. GOLDTEIN, *Bizant na Jadranu*, Zagreb 1992 (hereafter: GOLDSTEIN, *Bizant*), 126. The Slavic toponymy in the Peloponnesus gives the same picture. The Slav pirates who plundered the north Aegean islands in the VIIIth century came from the middle flow of Strymon.

49. The evidence derives from a posterior source, the *DAI*, 31.17-20. However, information provided by George of Pisidia (*Georgii Pisidiae Restitutio crucis*, ed. L. STERNBACH, *Wiener Studien* 13, 1891, v. 78-81) supports Constantine Porphyrogenetos' narration.

50. THEOPHANES, 356.2-7; NIKEPHOROS, 34.31-35.

51. LOUNGHIS, *Les ambassades*, 122-123, thinks that the ἐξοχώτατοι of he western tribes are to be identified with the «souverains mérovingiens de la Gaule». For the identification with the chieftains of the Slav tribes, see OSTROGORSKY, *Geschichte*, 104 n. 4 and *Fontes Bizantini historiam populorum Jugoslaviae spectantes* I, ed. G. OSTROGORSKY, Belgrade 1955, 224 n. 17.

to the Balkans on the call of the emperor Heraclius. With regard to the Serbs, Porphyrogenetus notes that the first ruler was succeeded by his son and then his grandson[52], an information confirmed by the *Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclea*, of the second half of the 12th century[53]. According to this text, the first Slav ruler, Selimir, was in good terms with the Christians (i.e. the Byzantines) to whom he paid tribute[54]. Although our text gives limited chronological information, it dates the rule over Serbia of Vladin, successor of Selimir, by the time of the Bulgarian arrival, i.e. 680. Vladin followed the peaceful policy towards Byzantium as his father did before him. It was only by the time of Vladin's son, Ratimir, that the Slav (Serb) attitude changed, and the definitive break of the relations between Serbs and Christians occurred during the reign of Ratimir's heirs[55]. Thus, the first three Serb leaders, who ruled from 630-634 to the early twenties of the 8th century, kept peace with Byzantium, and the persecution in Dalmatia against Christians started after the 720ties by the reign of the «four bad kings»[56]

Supplementary evidence about the peace between the «barbarians» and Byzantium can also be found in the canons 18 and 27 of the Quinisext Council of 692, which concern priests who had fled from their parishes. The canons considered that the priests abandoned their seats claiming that the towns were devasted by the barbarians or that they were expelled from them, and imposed them to return to their parishes[57]. It seems, thus, that, by the end of the 7th century, and according to the members of the Council the situation in «barbarian» lands was normal again.

The *Miracula s. Demetrii* inform us that in 679 Constantine IV sent to the chietain/chieftains of the Dragubitai a κέλευσις ordering them to provide victuals for Kouver's people[58]. If, then, the emperor addressed a κέλευσις to the Dragubitai,

52. *DAI* 31.17-20; 32.7-27; 32.31-32. For the Slavic sources of the *DAI*, see J. B. BURY, The Treatise De administrando imperio, *BZ* 15, 1906, 539. L. WALDMÜLLER, *Die ersten Begegnungen der Slawen mit der Christentum und den christlichen Völkern vom VI. bis VIII. Jh.*, Amsterdam 1976, 308 and n. 314, believes that the information about the Slavs is drawn from the imperial archives.

53. On this text, see T. ŽIVKOVIĆ, On the First Chapters of the Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclea [in Serbian], *Istorijski casopis* 44, 1998, 11-34.

54. *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina*, ed. V. MOŠIN, Zagreb 1950, 44.

55. *Letopis*, 44-47.

56. *Letopis*, 47. The reign of the «four kings» in the Chronicle is not recorded in the Xth century *DAI*, which does not know any Serb ruler until the very end of the VIIIth century.

57. ΡΆΛΛΗΣ-ΠΟΤΛΗΣ, II, 314, 388.

58. *Miracula* II, 5, 229.9-12.

who lived in the area west of Thessalonica[59], he would have address κελεύσεις to other Slav chieftains in the Balkans. In any case, the κελεύσεις would have been sent via towns of the western part of the Empire, where Byzantine dignitaries had their seats. In this context, we interpret the «two fleets» mentioned by Theophanes as two distinct ports, and we shall try to investigate futher Paul's journey «by land and by sea».

From the *Miracula s. Demetrii*, we learn that about 679 the *strategos* Sissinios sailed off from the theme of Hellas towards Thessalonica. On his way to the north, he passed near Euboea[60]. Therefore, he would have departed either from Piraeus, or Corinth or, even, Monemvasia. Following the opposite direction, Paul would have sailed from Kyzikos, and through the Aegean islands to Monemvasia, where he probably stopped in order to hand over one of the κελεύσεις, intended for the Slav chieftains of the area, to the Byzantine dignitary of the city. From there, Paul would have sailed to Dyrrachion, where he would give to the Byzantine officials κελεύσεις for the Slav chieftains of Dalmatia. Finally, from Dyrrachion, Paul would have turned on towards Sicily. However, this route does not fully explain the expressions used by Theophanes: «by land» or «from place to place».

Keeping in mind that the via Egnatia, the traditional land route linking the Eastern to the Western part of the Empire, was by that time dangerous especially without substantial military escort, we may assume that Paul sailed along the coast and that he disembarked in several places. The coastal journey would have begun at Kyzikos, continuing to Demetrias, and then Chalkis (on Euboea), probably Piraeus and Corinth, Methone, Patras and Dyrrachion. During this journey Paul would have had the time to go deeper inland in order to approach the Slav population. Thus, it would have taken him two months to reach Sicily, an information provided both by Theophanes and Nikephoros. We could furher assume that the «two fleets» correspond in reality to transport-ships used to convey Slavs from the Balkans to Sicily, from two ports. It is likely that one of those ports was Dyrrachion; the second was most probably Jadera, the largest town on the middle Adriatic Sea still under Byzantine control.

We know that in 640 or 642, Slavs from the Balkans were involved in the Byzantino-Longobard conflicts in Italy. At that time, they crossed the Adriatic Sea

59. On the «country» of the Dragouvitai, see H. DITTEN, Zur Bedeutung der Einwanderung der Slawen, in *Byzanz im 7. Jahrhundert. Untersuchungen zur Herausbildung des Feudalismus*, Berlin 1978, 99 and n. 4; cf. LEMERLE, *Commentaire*, 89 and n. 112-113.

60. *Miracula* II, 5, 231.6-8; 232.23-25.

with a grat number of ships and besieged Siponto. These Slavs acted as allies of the Byzantine Empire, but the origin of the ships is unclear. Can we presume that they used their own vessels –the traditional *monoxyla*– or were they transported on Byzantine ships?

The dependance of Dalmatia on Byzantium during the so-called «Dark Ages», has been long debated. It has been argued the Dalmatia did not depend on the Exarchate of Ravenna, and that its relations with Constantinople were rather weak. However, the older hypothesis according to which Dalmatia was subordinated to Ravenna, was recently re-examined with new arguments. To the evidence already studied by Mandic, we would like to add two examples.

First, a document, dated from the reign of Theodosius III (715-717), mentions the repairments made by some *muratori de Salona* of the Church of St. Maria in Trogirium (Trogir)[61]. The name of the Byzantine emperor shows, in our opinion, the existence of connections between Dalmatia and the imperial authorities. Secondly, the obverse of a seal, found in the vicinity of Salona, bears the inscription: Paul, patrikios and exarchos; the cruciform monogram of the owner, a type well known from the beginning of the eighth century, is engraved on the reverse of the seal[62]. A similar seal was found in Italy[63], and Paul, the *patrikios* can be identified with his homonym Exarchos of Ravenna (723-726/7), an official known from Latin sources[64]. Lastly, there is Porphyrogenetos's statement, that Ἡ δὲ Δαλματία τῆς Ἰταλίας ἐστὶ χώρα[65].

This evidence confirms the dependance of Dalmatia from the Byzantine exarchate in Italy, or, at least, strong contacts between Ravenna and Salona. The document of 715-717 and the recovery of the seal in Saloma shows that the exarchos of Ravenna sent orders or official letters to the Byzantine officials of Salona. Therefore, it seems likely that Paul would have given κελεύσεις to the By-

61. FARLATI, *Illyricum sacrum*, 1769, 306-307; cf. GOLDSTEIN, *Bizant*, 93 n. 608.

62. On this seal, now lost, see: Fr. BULIĆ, Iscrizioni e rappresentazioni su oggetti di metallo acquistati dal Museo di Spalato negli anni 1895-1901, *Bolletino di arch. e storia dalmata* 24, 1901, 139-140, and I. NIKOLAJEVIĆ-STOJKOVIĆ, Solinski pecat egzarha Pavla (723-726), *ZRVI* 7, 1961 61-66. On cruciform monograms, see N. OIKONOMIDES, *A Collection of Dated Byzantine Lead Seals*, Washington 1986, no 26.

63. G. SCHLUMBERGER, *Sigillographie de l'Empire byzantin*, Paris 1884, 515.

64. *Liber Pontificalis* I, 403 sq. On the identification of Paul exarchos with Paul, patrikios and strategos of Sicily, see HARTMANN, *Untersuchungen*, 21-23; BROWN, *Gentlemen*, 65; NIKOLAJEVIĆ-STOJKOVIĆ, *op.cit.*, 62. LOUNGHIS, *Les ambassades*, 130, thinks that they were two distinct persons.

65. *Costantino Porfirogenito De thematibus*, ed. A. PERTUSI, Vatican 1952, 9.35-36.

zantine officials of Dyrrachion, in order to communicate them to the Slav chieftains of the area. In this case, the Slavs were to embark for Sicily from two ports: Salona[66] (or Jadera) and Dyrrachion.

Furthermore, we would surmise that Paul, who travelled for almost two months, delivered personally the κελεύσεις to the Slavs in the vicinity of the Dalmatian coast: to the principalities of Dioclea, Trebunia, Zachlumia and Kanales). Paul could have reached these principalities from Ragusa (Dubrovnik), except Dioclea, which he would be reached from Butua or Dekatera, Further in the north, Paul could have disembarked in Salona (or Spalato/Split), from where contacts with the Pagans (Narentans) and Croats would have been easier[67]. Indeed, the seats of the Slav archonts were not distant from the Byzantine cities of the Dalmatian coast. Trebunia and the seat of Kanales were in the vicinity of Ragusa; Ston, the seat of Zachumia, was also far from Ragusa, while Mokro (Makarska) was on the sea-route between Ragusa and Spalato; the seats of the Croat archons' were inland, in a short distance from Jadera or Salona[68]. We could, thus, conclude by reconstructing Paul's journey as follows: From Constantinople to Dyrrachion, where Paul did not disembark; then he landed to Butua, probably to Dekatera, Ragusa, Salona (Spalato), and eventually Jadera, from where he made short journeys to the seats of the local Slav chieftains. Hence, the expression of Theophanes «he travelled from place to place by land and sea» is justified.

We may conclude that Paul received from Leo III κελεύσεις, which he delivered before arriving in Italy, since we know that in Sicily he only read the *iussio* for the army. The κελεύσεις were addressed to the Slavs of the Balkans, among them most probably the Serbs and the Croats, i.e. tribes subjugated to Byzantium or at least recognizing the imperial rule. Theophanes' expression «archonts of the westerners» indicates the Slav chieftains, and more precisely the Serbs and the Croats. Our interpretation is confirmed be Porphyrogenetos' and the Priest's of Dioclea testimony, about the attitude of the Serbs and the Croats towards the Empire.

In the 10th century, The *Vita Basilii* relates that the Serbs and the Croats approached Basil I (867-886) «recalling him of all the good things they have done for the Romans in the past[69]. These words are probably not to be related to 9th

66. On the fate of Salona in the beginning of the VIIth century, see M. SUIĆ, Nova post vetera - ponovni pad Salone, *Mogucnosti* 3-4, 1988, 330 sq; GOLDSTEIN, *Bizant*, 90-95.

67. On the borders of these Slav principalities, see *DAI*, 30.94-119.

68. For these places, see FERJANČIĆ, *Fontes II*, 59-65.

69. THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS, 291.8-10.

century realities, since Porphyrogenetus himself stesses the independance of the Slavs of the Balkans during the reign of Michael II (820-829); on the contrary, they may allude to events that took place in the 7th and the 8th centuries.