Although often mentioned in textbooks about the Carolingian and Byzantine empires, the Treaty of Aachen has not received much close attention. This volume attempts not just to fill the gap, but to view the episode through both micro- and macro-lenses. Introductory chapters review the state of relations between Byzantium and the Frankish realm in the eighth and early ninth centuries, crises facing Byzantine emperors much closer to home, and the relevance of the Bulgarian problem to affairs on the Adriatic. Dalmatia’s coastal towns and the populations of the interior receive extensive attention, including the region’s ecclesiastical history and cultural affiliations. So do the local politics of Dalmatia, Venice and the Carolingian marches, and their interaction with the Byzantino-Frankish confrontation. The dynamics of the Franks’ relations with the Avars are analysed and, here too, the three-way play among the two empires and ‘in-between’ parties is a theme. Archaeological indications of the Franks’ presence are collated with what the literary sources reveal about local elites’ aspirations. The economic dimension to the Byzantino-Frankish competition for Venice is fully explored, a special feature of the volume being archaeological evidence for a resurgence of trade between the Upper Adriatic and the Eastern Mediterranean from the second half of the eighth century onwards.

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Imperial Spheres and the Adriatic
Byzantium, the Carolingians and the Treaty of Aachen (812)

Edited by Mladen Ančić, Jonathan Shepard and Trpimir Vedriš
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Although often featuring in textbooks about the Carolingian and Byzantine empires, the Treaty of Aachen has not received very much close attention from western medievalists, Byzantinists or Slavists. This is surprising, given that it marks the climax of a series of confrontations, armed conflicts and intensive negotiations involving the papacy and local elites in northern Italy and the Upper Adriatic, Dalmatia (a term deriving from the ancient Roman province, encompassing the coast and the hinterland of the north-eastern Adriatic) and the Middle Danube region, as well as the Frankish and the Byzantine leaderships. And although the treaty’s text has not survived, and tensions between Byzantine and Frankish rulers were not eliminated, the treaty represents a milestone in the establishment of legitimate Carolingian hegemony in the west. This volume, the fruits of a conference held in Zadar in September 2012, makes an attempt not just to fill the gap in scholarship but to view the episode from all possible angles, political, diplomatic, military, economic and cultural. A mixture of veteran and younger scholars were enlisted for this task so as to draw upon several other disciplines besides general history and to present in the English language important work done by Central and Eastern European scholars.

Introductory chapters review the state of relations between Byzantium and the Frankish realm in the eighth and early ninth centuries, comparing them with international relations in modern times and setting them in the context of western aemulatio imperii and the problems facing Byzantine emperors much closer to home (see the chapters by Shepard, Ančić, Majnarić, Sophoulis). One theme of these and subsequent chapters is the relevance of the Bulgar problem to Byzantium’s general interest in the Upper Adriatic (Nikolov, Ziemann). This is why the populations of the coastal towns of the old Roman province of Dalmatia along with those of the interior receive extensive attention, with coverage of the ecclesiastical history and of the cultural affiliations of the townsmen and the various inland elites (Skoblar, Cerno, Dzino, Betti, Komatina, Basić, Vedriš). Some chapters focus on the local politics or the local and long-range commerce of Dalmatia, Venice and the Carolingian marches and the interaction of these with the high politics of the Byzantino-Frankish confrontation (Gelichi, Štih, Budak): individuals and families could raise their status by aligning with one side or another, while established regimes might feel themselves threatened. The Franks’ relations with the Avars are analysed in detail and, here too, the three-way play between the
two empires and ‘in-between’ parties is a theme. Archaeological, sculptural and
other material indications of the Franks’ presence in Dalmatia and the Middle
Danube are reviewed (Szőke, Gračanin, Takács). The economic dimension to the
Byzantino-Frankish contest for Venice is fully explored, a special feature being
the archaeological evidence for a resurgence of trade between the Upper Adriatic
and the eastern Mediterranean from the second half of the eighth century onwards.
Thus the diplomatic exchanges between Constantinople and Aachen and the inter-
mittent bouts of armed conflict are set within the broader background of shifting
local allegiances and an economic upswing.

The end of the eighth and beginning of the ninth centuries was, then, a
turning-point at several levels and, in an era of experiment, fragmentation and flux,
the image of a spinning compass needle would perhaps be more apt. The careers
and changing alignments of Slav warlords like Liudewit in Pannonia and church-
men like Fortunatus of Grado epitomise this, while the problems of attribution of
ciboria in that town and of assessing the significance of swords and other Frankish
weaponry and Byzantine coins found in Pannonian and Dalmatian soil offer mate-
rial evidence of this. This volume aims to shed light on the periphery of two political
systems, namely the otherwise neglected region between the eastern Adriatic and
the Middle Danube. Setting out the problems, it illuminates the multiple processes
underway when a variety of communities and cultures find themselves confronting
one another, some entering the historical stage for the first time. Such a kaleidoscope
does not lend itself to a ‘grand narrative’, let alone to an overarching synthesis. But
it could be that markers have been laid down here for further interdisciplinary work
on the Upper Adriatic and Middle Danube regions and even for a more nuanced
history of early medieval Europe in general. And narratives of the main events and
issues in the run-up to the making of the Treaty of Aachen are offered in such con-
tributions as those by Mladen Ančić and Daniel Ziemann and in other chapters in
the first two parts, while the limitations of our knowledge about key topics like the
collapse of the Avar khaganate are shown by Miklós Takács’ chapter.

Such interdisciplinary work inevitably poses a veritable minefield of questions
for the editors to answer. How should we style names? Should we quote in the
original language or should we transliterate? And if so, how? Is it helpful to offer
a translation of article or book titles when no such translation of the work itself
is available? Answering such questions is never easy and invites accusations of
inconsistency – or worse. We have tried to make this volume clear and accessible
primarily to an English-speaking audience and to non-specialists in the history,
art and archaeology of the early medieval southern Slavs, Franks and Byzantines.
This has led us to some broad brushwork and possibly controversial decisions.
First and foremost, the styling of the very treaty itself: as Mladen Ančić notes
in his chapter (below, 34 n. 1), western medievalists have tended to fight shy of
styling the ‘Treaty of Aachen’ as anything more concrete than a series of nego-
tiations or possibly a pactum. We have bitten the bullet and call it a treaty. An
agreement was, after all, set out in writing, ratified by two powers claiming fully
legitimate authority over a disputed area and followed up by negotiations con-
cerning some of its territorial details a few years later. Since the text does not sur-
vive, we have to infer its contents from the Frankish annals; Byzantine chronicles
are (characteristically) silent about this, as about most other events in the empire’s relations with western potentates. This does not make the formal agreement any less of a treaty. Other issues of terminology include the use of Bulgars rather than Bulgarians up to their Christianization around 864; and Croats become Croatians from the early ninth century, with the formation of what eventually became the kingdom of Croatia. We have also styled as Abodrites the West Slavs who lived in northern Germany in what is today Mecklenburg and Holstein, and as Obodrites the tribe mentioned by the *Annales regni Francorum* in 822–824 (*Praedenecenti*) as living close to the Danube in Dacia. We have also tried to be consistent when styling the leaders of the Venetians (as doges), of the Franks (as dukes) and of local Slav groupings (as *duces*). Colleagues who specialize in any of the fields we range into and perhaps trample upon may, understandably, be uncomfortable with such an approach. For this, we can but plead that these fields are now a little more open to comparison and to exploration.

We have tried to ensure that frequently cited proper names and technical terms are consistent and comprehensible. Greek forms of proper names have generally been adopted – Porphyrogennetos instead of Porphyrogenitus, for example – after c. 500; place names have generally been left untouched unless a familiar English form exists – Athens not Athenai. Some names in the present-day Balkans and Asia Minor appear in their current form when the author is guiding the reader through reference to present-day locations. Because the places and territories under discussion are at the point of so many overlapping circles, they tend to have many names. We have provided a short list of Alternative Place Names at the back of the volume (316–18) to help orient the reader and to prevent overloading the text. Thus the reader will find ‘Serdika’ in the text; but reference to the table at the back will show the alternative forms and spellings encountered elsewhere, including Sardika, Serdica and Sofia.

With a few exceptions, we have transliterated quotations and book titles in Greek, Bulgarian and other Slavonic languages using a modified version of the Library of Congress system for Cyrillic. We have tried to avoid long quotations in the original language, preferring an English translation – unless the passage is the subject of detailed textual analysis. Translations are mostly by our authors unless otherwise specified in the endnote. Given the scarcity of sources for the early history of the Upper Adriatic, some are discussed by more than one of our authors, and so the reader will find different interpretations – and sometimes translations – in the book.

The reader will find a short Glossary at the end of the volume. This does not aim to be exhaustive, and when possible, we have tried to explain technical terms or foreign words in the text. The maps at the start of the book should help to orient the reader and locate some of the key places and areas mentioned by our authors. Absolute consistency is difficult to achieve, and readers may find modern place names alongside ancient ones. It also goes without saying that all boundaries depicted are approximate and, in some cases, highly speculative or controversial. Unless otherwise stated, tables are by the author of a given chapter.

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Jonathan Shepard
Trpimir Vedriš
We would like to thank the following people and institutions, and to acknowledge their help in seeing this volume into print.

The conference which sparked the whole project off, ‘The Treaty of Aachen, AD 812: the Origins and Impact on the Region between the Adriatic, Central, and Southeastern Europe’, held at the University of Zadar between 27 and 30 September 2012, would not have been possible without the help and financial support of the Department of History, University of Zadar; the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports; the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb; the Museum of Croatian Archaeological Monuments, Split; the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split; and the Archdiocese of Zadar. Particular thanks for help with the conference organisation go to Judith Rasson, Nikolina Antonić and Anita Jambrek at the Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest, and to Kristian Bertović and Sara Katanec at the University of Zagreb.

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Each chapter is accompanied by a bibliography, broken down into primary sources (with short titles used in the endnotes) and secondary literature (using the name-date system in the endnotes). Where forenames of primary text authors are known, they are cited first: ‘Niketas Choniates’, not ‘Choniates, Niketas’. Where a primary source appears frequently in only one chapter, this has been abbreviated within that chapter’s bibliography (for example, ‘AM’ for ‘Amalarius of Metz, Opera liturgica’ is only found in Chapter 19). Primary sources – and a few secondary works – which are cited frequently by many of our authors appear in the endnotes in abbreviated form, but full details are given in the list of abbreviations that follows. This list also contains the titles of some journals and institutions. Well-known sources (such as the Bible and some Latin and Greek authors) are cited without full bibliographic referencing. Works published in two languages show both titles, divided by an oblique (for example: Goran Bilogrivić, ‘Karolinški mačevi tipa K/Type K Carolingian Swords’). Where a summary – however brief – is known to be available in a western language, the title is shown in square brackets (for example: Béla Miklós Szőke, ‘A 9. századi Nagyalföld lakosságáról [Die Bevölkerung der Großen Ungarischen Tiefebene im 9. Jahrhundert]’).

**Abbreviations and notes on bibliography**

**AA**
*Antichità altoadriatiche*

**AD**

**AH**
*Acta Histriae*

**ARF**
*Annales regni Francorum, ed. Friedrich Kurze, Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi, MGH SRG 6 (Hanover: Hahn, 1895)*

**ASM**

**Attirovigno**
*Atti del Centro di Ricerche Storiche Rovigno*

**BaB**
*Panos Sophoulis, Byzantium and Bulgaria, 775–831 (Leiden: Brill, 2012)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BB</td>
<td>Byzantinobulgarica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCC</td>
<td>Bizantini, Croati, Carolingi. Alba e tramonto di regni e imperi, ed. Carlo Bertelli, Gian Pietro Brogiolo et al. (Milan: Skira, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSBC</td>
<td>Danijel Dzino, Becoming Slav, Becoming Croat: Identity Transformations in Post-Roman and Early Medieval Dalmatia (Leiden: Brill, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSI</td>
<td>Byzantinoslavica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>Croatica Christiana periodica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSL</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum, series latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFHB</td>
<td>Corpus fontium historiae byzantinae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CISAM</td>
<td>Centro italiano di studi sull’alto Medioevo, Spoleto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CodCar</td>
<td>Codex Carolinus, ed. Wilhelm Gundlach, in MGH EKA 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892), 469–657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EME</td>
<td>Early Medieval Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FiF</td>
<td>Harald Krahwinkler, Friaul im Frühmittelalter: Geschichte einer Region vom Ende des fünften bis zum Ende des zehnten Jahrhunderts (Vienna: Böhlau, 1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GHI</td>
<td>The Astronomer, Life of Louis the Pious, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz, in MGH SS 2 (Hanover: Hahn, 1829),</td>
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604–648; ed. and German trans. Ernst Tremp, in *Thegan*, *Die Taten Kaiser Ludwigs (Gesta Hludowici imperatoris)*; *Astronomus, Das Leben Kaiser Ludwigs (Vita Hludowici imperatoris)*, *MGH SRG* 64 (Hanover: Hahn, 1995), 279–555

**GZMS** *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja Bosne i Hercegovine u Sarajevu. Arheologija*

**HAM** *Hortus Artium Medievalium*

**HAZU** Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Zagreb


**JAZU** Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Zagreb

**JD¹** John the Deacon, *Chronicon Venetum* [*Cronaca Veneziana*], ed. Giovanni Monticolo, in *Cronache Veneziane antichissime, Fonti per la storia d’Italia* 9 (Rome: Instituto storico italiano, 1890), 57–171


**MEFRM** *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome: Moyen Âge*

**MGH** *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*; available online: <www.dmgh.de>

**MGH EKA** *MGH Epistolae Karolini aevi*, 5 vols (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892–1925)

**MGH PLAC** *MGH Poetae Latini aevi Carolini*, 4 vols to date (Berlin: Weidmann, 1881–)

**MGH SRG** *MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum*, 78 vols to date (Hanover: Hahn, 1871–)

**MGH SRG n.s.** *MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum* n.s., 24 vols to date (Berlin–Weimar–Hanover: Weidmann–Hahn, 1922–)

**MGH SRLI** *MGH Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum* (Hanover: Hahn, 1878)

**MGH SS** *MGH Scriptores*, 39 vols to date (Hanover: Hahn, 1826–)

**MHAS** Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika u Splitu


**ÖAW** Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften

 Abbreviations and notes on bibliography

**PG**

**PIAZ**
*Prilozi Instituta za arheologiju u Zagrebu*

**PL**

**P-RT**

**RadZhp**
*Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest*

**RéB**
*Revue des études byzantines*

**RKK**

**SANU**
Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti

**SHP**
*Starohrvatska prosvjeta*

**SL**

**SSCI**
*Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull’alto Medioevo*, Spoleto

**TFLAC**
*The Transformation of Frontiers from Late Antiquity to the Carolingians*, ed. Walter Pohl, Ian Wood and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden: Brill, 2001)

**Theoph.**

**TS**

**VAHD**
*Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju dalmatinsku*

**VAMZ**
*Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu*

**VAPD**
*Vjesnik za arheologiju i povijest dalmatinsku*

**VKM**

**ZRVI**
*Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta*
These maps are intended to help orient readers and to locate some of the key places and areas mentioned by our authors. Absolute consistency is difficult to achieve, and readers may find modern place names alongside ancient ones. It goes without saying that the historical boundaries depicted are approximate and, in some cases, highly speculative or controversial.
Map 1 The Carolingian and Byzantine worlds collide (c. 812)
Map 2 Geography and regions, past and present
Map 4 Pannonia, the Balkans and Byzantium, with insets showing the approximate boundaries of Roman, Late Antique and Carolingian Pannonia (although for a fuller discussion of the highly ambiguous term ‘Pannonia’, see 225–27 below)
Map 5 The Upper (northern) Adriatic, with inset showing the Venetian lagoons
Map 6  Italy before the Franks and at the death of Charlemagne
Map 7. Dalmatia, with inset showing the approximate boundaries of the Roman province, the early Croatian principality, the region of Ravni Kotar and the area inhabited by the Guduscani.
Map 8  Find sites in Lower Pannonia, showing the assumed boundaries of the area (although for a fuller discussion of the highly ambiguous term ‘Pannonia’, see 225–27 below)
Map 9  Ecclesiastical provinces and places mentioned, with inset showing western dioceses
Introduction

When Obelerius, Bishop of Olivolo, an island in the Venetian lagoon, died in 798, a sixteen-year-old Greek by the name of Christopher was recommended as the new bishop by the local representatives of the central Byzantine administration. The importance of this event to the ruling classes of the duchy of Venice can be seen from the Chronicle of Andrea Dandolo, which records that Christopher was nominated for the post by the Venetian doge John and his son and co-ruler Maurice II. These top Venetian officials approached the patriarch of Grado, as the relevant ecclesiastical authority, and requested canonical consent for Christopher’s election. However, he refused to grant it and, as this chapter will demonstrate, his refusal paved the way for subsequent upheavals.

Among all the twists and turns resulting from this dispute over the episcopal see of Olivolo, it is important to note that, according to long-standing practice, the right to nominate a bishop within a given province was the prerogative of the local Byzantine representative (in this case, the doge). But canonical consent for a candidate was the prerogative of the metropolitan, as his ecclesiastical superior—in this case, the patriarch of Grado. A successful election was thus only possible if the expectations and jurisdictions of all the interested parties converged, and this meant that even the wishes of imperial representatives were sometimes overridden. The whole process of electing and enthroning the bishop, described in Dandolo’s Chronicle, delineates a complex relationship between the semi-autonomous political formations developing in the Venetian lagoon and the Byzantine empire as their ancient parent body.

The undoubted significance of the events in this remote military and administrative unit of the empire can only be interpreted correctly in light of the general situation in 798. The failed attempt to anoint Christopher as bishop occurred at a moment when relations were strained between key representatives of what one might term the ‘conservative faction’ of the Venetian political elite and those favouring Frankish intervention in the internal politics of Byzantium’s northern Adriatic territories. At the head of the pro-Frankish party was John, patriarch of Grado, for whom the candidate nominated to this important ecclesiastical position would have seemed overtly provocative. As metropolitan, he refused to give
his consent on canonical grounds to the appointment of Christopher as bishop of Olivolo, citing his extreme youth. This could not fail to stir up a reaction: in 802, Doge Maurice II led a campaign to Grado and put John to death. John’s relative and successor, Fortunatus of Trieste, continued to refuse to ordain Christopher. In order to understand how this controversy arose in the first place, what diocesan and jurisdictional overlaps were involved, and how they came to be, we need to look back to the last decades of the sixth century. The events discussed and reinterpreted here should help establish the context necessary for understanding much later events, such as the Treaty of Aachen in 812. Underlying the Frankish-Byzantine dispute and the territorial demarcation of 812 were issues already crystallizing two hundred years earlier. Our chapter will shed light on these problems of jurisdiction and administrative rule by analysing historiographical, art historical and hagiographical sources.

The transition from the sixth to the seventh century was a time of relatively sudden decline in the ecclesiastical organization of the empire’s western provinces. Following the Lombards’ irruption, the same process was taking place along the western and eastern Adriatic coasts, especially in the north-western segment of the Adriatic. More than half of the early Christian dioceses documented in the Italian peninsula no longer existed by the turn of the seventh century. The situation was also very similar in Spain and Gaul.

In Dalmatia, the barbarian raids and disorder of the early seventh century put an end to both the urban life of Salona and its status as the province’s metropolis. According to Thomas of Split, various groups of Salonitan refugees fled first to neighbouring islands and then, led by a certain Severus the Great, they settled in Diocletian’s Palace, the core of the future town of Split. The move was supported by the government in Constantinople, which allowed them to occupy these imperial buildings and regulated their relationships with the neighbouring Slavs. Shortly after the destruction of Salona, the papal legate John of Ravenna arrived at the newly established town of Split. He re-instated the old archbishopric and metropolitan see of Salona there, and also transferred the relics of the Salonitan martyrs, St Domnius and St Anastasius, to the former mausoleum of the emperor Diocletian, which thus became the Cathedral of Split.

This is the mid-seventeenth-century narrative wrought by Ivan Lučić Lucius (1604–1679). The account became common among later historiography dealing with the creation and rise of the church of Split and other churches on the eastern Adriatic. This narrative has exerted a profound influence on the overall perception of events and continues to be widely accepted, with certain additions and alterations, in many scholarly publications. A detailed analysis of the historiography is beyond our scope here. Instead, we will attempt to explain why the founding of the eastern Adriatic bishoprics should be seen in a different social and chronological context – namely that of the late eighth century – sustaining our thesis with a critical examination of the sources; archaeological and art-historical evidence; and comparison with regional, Adriatic and pan-Mediterranean contexts.

Generally speaking, our primary sources are scarce. Among them, the earliest and chronologically closest to the events is the Liber pontificalis, recounting the
mission of a certain Abbot Martin who gathered relics and ransomed prisoners in Dalmatia and Istria in 641. Other sources include Chapter 31 of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos’ *De administrando imperio*; the chapters of Thomas of Split’s chronicle *Historia Salonitana* dealing with the origins of Split and its first archbishop; the Gospel Book of Split (*Evangeliarium Spalatense*); and finally, a group of artworks, especially a sarcophagus inscribed with the name of John, archbishop of Split.

In keeping with the long-established scholarly narrative mentioned above historians have tended to conflate the information about Abbot Martin’s journey with Thomas’ account of John of Ravenna, the first archbishop of Split. Both were then linked to the *De administrando*’s record of the priests reportedly sent from Rome to Dalmatia by Emperor Heraclius (610–641) who, in turn, were responsible for the conversion of the neighbouring Slavs and Croats. Based on this, it was generally accepted that the metropolitan see of Salona was re-instated in nearby Split in the mid-seventh century, with John of Ravenna at its head. According to this interpretation, the pope who sent John as his legate to Dalmatia was John IV (640–642), himself of Dalmatian origin and the same pope who sent Abbot Martin on his mission. Although the pope in question is unnamed in Thomas’ *Historia Salonitana*, the overall context of the events seemed to imply that they occurred in the seventh century, while the refugees from conquered Salona were still alive.

Although the accounts of these events did not explicitly link John IV to John of Ravenna, this was the prevalent view in our early historiography.

In the 1970s a new source for the earliest ecclesiastical history of medieval Dalmatia emerged: the acts of the ecumenical council held at Nicaea in 787, which mention the bishops of ‘Salona’, Osor, Rab and Kotor. This was the first solid
piece of information after the secure dating of Abbot Martin’s activities in Dalmatia and Istria in 641, some 150 years earlier. In the development of ecclesiastical centres in the eastern Adriatic during the seventh and eighth centuries, the years 641 and 787 remain the only dates that are uncontested, and this is the time frame within which our scholarly debates are situated.

The shortcomings of our literary sources

A modern critical approach to our sources necessitates analysis of their genre and narrative nature, and of how they relate to known historical data. We first need to identify the literary genre chosen for the composition of any given text. In the case of Thomas of Split, for example, this is the *gesta episcoporum*. In this context, John of Ravenna and his pious translation of St Domnlius’ relics becomes a vehicle for *renovatio*. This genre-specific component of the *gesta episcoporum* serves to establish a new sequence of bishops in the meta-narrative, the component which guarantees continuity and acts as a link between the old world and a new era.11

The analysis of Thomas’ work carried out some fifteen years ago by Mirjana Matijević Sokol demonstrates that Thomas either does not want – or does not know when – to date John of Ravenna’s appearance, nor does he mention which pope dispatched John to Dalmatia. Furthermore, in describing the renovation of Salona’s ecclesiastical organization in Split, which Thomas could only view in terms of a metropolitan see, he uses the multivalent and neutral term ‘archbishop’ instead of ‘metropolitan’. Lastly, when Thomas does attempt to illustrate the status of the church of Split at that time, he points out that it was granted to Archbishop John ‘by the Apostolic See that the church of Split would have all the privileges and honours that Salona had formerly enjoyed’.12 This vague and simplified remark seems to refer to Split’s metropolitan rank, but lacks any further detail.

Thomas attempts to compile and synchronize a variety of records from different periods. It is clear that he tries to establish a chronological link between his information about Severus the Great and the first distinguished occupants of Diocletian’s Palace, and his information about Archbishop John of Ravenna, and that he borrows the latter from a source which differs in terms of genre, content and time of writing. Thomas interpolates the account of John of Ravenna into an older record about Severus, and deliberately avoids giving dates because of the potential for contradictions.

Information from our second source, Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos’ *De administrando imperio*, should be seen in light of recent research, especially the work of Florin Curta, which clarifies the role of Emperor Heraclius. Chapter 31 portrays Heraclius as initiating the ‘conversion of the Croats and the Serbs’: the emperor personifies the Byzantine mission to civilize barbaric nations, which at that time was inextricably linked with their entry into the Christian oecumene. Yet we have no indication that the imperial writer drew on any local *origo gentis* narrative of the Croats’ conversion to Christianity, nor that Heraclius directed any missionary activity outside Byzantine territory. The inclusion of the Croats into a hierarchical world order, supposedly undertaken by Heraclius, was part
of Byzantine propaganda aiming to further imperial ambitions and claims in the western Balkans. In essence, this episode in Chapter 31 of the *De administrando* is a pseudo-historical ideological construct. How the early medieval Salonitan-Split archdiocese actually rose to metropolitan rank has been well researched and clearly explained in modern historiography. It was only established as an ecclesiastical province with a metropolitan at its head by the two church councils held at Split in 925 and 928.

According to Matijević Sokol:

Thomas collated all the records known to him and [...] presented the two renovation processes as a single one. He intended to support the local ecclesiastical tradition at Split, which wanted to see itself as direct heir to the metropolitan see of Salona, without any gaps in time. This is why he portrayed it as already having been renovated in the seventh century.

The same could be said of the sources and historical facts described above. The first process included the renovation of religious life after the destruction of Salona and the establishment of an early medieval bishopric at Split, while the second process related to the battle of this re-established bishopric for the old metropolitan rights of the Salonitan archdiocese, which only ended in the tenth century. Thus Thomas the Archdeacon back-dated the creation of the metropolitan see of Split in a seemingly unified narrative by linking it to the restoration of religious life at diocesan level within Diocletian’s Palace. Although this process occurred much earlier than the tenth century, it does not seem to have taken place as early as the seventh.

**New or restored bishoprics on the northern Adriatic**

In the mid- to late eighth century there was a sudden proliferation in the number of bishoprics throughout the northern Adriatic basin. The first to be founded, in 756, was the bishopric of Capodistria (Koper), followed somewhat later, but before 776, by a bishopric at Novigrad (Cittanova) and in 774–775 the bishopric at Olivolo. Why were these bishoprics founded, or rather restored? In all three cases, they invoked an older tradition. The two Istrian bishoprics based their legitimacy on the brief existence of precursors in these towns around 600, during an extraordinary politico-religious period. The fact that both Capodistria and Novigrad were home to early Christian ecclesiastical organizational units, however briefly, is particularly important, and we shall return to this issue later.

The only testimony to the restoration of the bishopric of Capodistria in the eighth century is Dandolo’s *Chronicle*, which dates this to early in the office of Vitalianus, patriarch of Grado (755–766). Around 756, the people and clergy of Capodistria sought permission from Pope Stephen II (752–757) to establish a bishopric in their town. They elected a certain John as their bishop and obtained consent from the patriarch of Grado, who then ordained him. The newly appointed suffragan bishop duly paid homage to his metropolitan, Vitalianus. Dandolo’s
Ivan Basić account describes in detail how a bishop was elected, confirmed and ordained with the consent of the Holy See. Although both the Istrian bishoprics were established on Byzantine territory, they nevertheless came under the ecclesiastical authority of Rome from the start.

When Maurice ‘episcopus Histriensis’ was sent to Novigrad in Istria around 776–780, with a papal mandate to gather Peter’s Pence there, he met a dire fate. The Istrian Graeci accused Maurice of trying to hand over their territory to the Franks and blinded him in the course of his duties. The abuse inflicted on the bishop prompted Pope Hadrian I to write to Charlemagne, asking him to save Maurice from the irate Greeks and suggesting that his local agent Marcius, duke of Friuli, should intervene in the case. It is clear from this incident that the ecclesiastical hierarchy and political establishment were almost inseparable in the eyes of all involved. It also demonstrates the extent to which elites along the many borders between Byzantium, Venice and the Franks during the late 770s regarded the interests of the Carolingians and the papal curia as synonymous. The very fact that a bishop was collecting Peter’s Pence across the Istrian peninsula made him suspicious in the eyes of the local Byzantine authority (the Graeci), and thus the collection of the usual papal levies was perceived as overtly provocative.

The whole affair clearly indicates that significant attention was given to the role and importance of the clergy as precursors to military and political expansion. Equally, the request that Pope Hadrian addressed to Charlemagne – to reinstate the bishop to his see at Novigrad – is a clear sign how the Roman curia meddled in jurisdictional issues in regions where disputes were rife. The territory in question did not de iure belong to the Carolingians at this point; rather, this was an attempt to gain control before launching an actual campaign, using ‘a peaceful approach, by relying on papal authority, and by negotiations and diplomatic activities with the aim of obtaining leverage with the help of religious dignitaries’.

The canonical establishment of the bishopric on the Venetian island of Olivolo took a slightly different route. It seems to have been founded in 774–775 with the consent of Pope Hadrian I and John, patriarch of Grado, as a reflection of the growing political importance of this island in relation to the traditional seats of government, Heraclea and Malamocco. The first bishop, Obelerius, was appointed by Doge Maurice I, a layman, and ordained by the patriarch of Grado: thus the predecessor of the ill-fated Christopher took office at an opportune moment, when ‘Venetian’ and papal policy were in harmony. The creation of the bishopric at Olivolo in the last few decades of the eighth century reflected the advanced, autonomous position of Venice within the Byzantine empire. It was the first real bishopric to be created through the efforts of the Venetian elite: other bishoprics in the region were not of markedly ‘Venetian’ origin, but rather predated the medieval commune and were of ‘foreign’ origin. As Olivolo grew, the importance of a number of much older bishoprics in the lagoons gradually declined.

The bishoprics at Olivolo, Capodistria and Novigrad are excellent examples of ecclesiastical units which, although founded in territory nominally Byzantine, were not required to submit themselves in any way to the jurisdiction of the
Constantinopolitan patriarch. We have reliable records which indicate that these bishoprics were founded under papal aegis and that they were permanently and tightly subject to Rome. In this sense, the bishoprics disprove the traditional view that ecclesiastical and political borders in the Byzantine Adriatic territories were congruent. They also provide convincing parallels for events in Dalmatia at the same time, where imperial representatives did not obstruct the foundation of bishoprics which were also subject to Rome.

One indication that Dalmatian cities in the second half of the eighth century recognized Byzantine authority both nominally and in reality is an inscription from Trogir, which mentions an emperor by the name of Constantine, most probably Constantine VI (780–797). Political loyalty – or otherwise – towards the Byzantine emperor should not be confused with ecclesiastical jurisdiction, nor with matters pertaining to Christian doctrine. Thus the appearance of bishops in Dalmatia who owed their allegiance to Rome does not contradict the political attachment of their episcopal cities to the empire.

Although, as we have already seen, the Venetian elite were instrumental in founding the bishopric of Olivolo, it is clear that its creation was not an obstacle to cordial relations between Rome, Venice and Grado. Our sources show that this new ecclesiastical unit was established peacefully and without disruption and, indeed, that it had the pope’s approval. During the brief Lombard resurgence in Istria in 770, John, patriarch of Grado, sought the pope’s aid against the territorial pretensions of King Desiderius. Stephen III (768–772) responded to the patriarch’s request, and although he was not slow to assert papal rights over Venice and Istria, relations between the Venetian elite and the Holy See were good. In the late 790s, however, the issues around the election of a new bishop of Olivolo damaged relations between the Venetians and their metropolitan at Grado.

Grado was another important ecclesiastical unit located within the Byzantine empire which had never belonged to the patriarchate of Constantinople. From 802 onwards it was administered by Fortunatus II, and in 803, the new patriarch received confirmation of his metropolitan rank over Istria from Charlemagne at Salz, being addressed as ‘Venetiaram et Istriensem patriarcham’. This confirmation, issued in front of envoys sent by Emperor Nikephoros I (802–811), was a deliberate act of Frankish sponsorship over a ‘Byzantine’ metropolitan see, and clearly points to the one-sided nature of Frankish interference in the ecclesiastical administration of Byzantium’s Adriatic territories.

A relocated bishop in the central Adriatic: Salona-Split and Archbishop John

In contrast to the relative abundance of records for the northern Adriatic bishoprics, there is almost complete silence when it comes to those farther south. Local episcopal lists and other texts – both internal and external – contain no reliable or verifiable information about any of the bishops in the Byzantine towns of northern and central Dalmatia from the late sixth to the late eighth centuries. To date, the
only known record is that of 754, which mentions unnamed bishops ‘from Dalmatia’ attending the iconoclastic Council of Hieria.\textsuperscript{25}

We can only surmise what the relocation to new settlements and the revival of urban life in Dalmatia may have looked like in this dark period. Our only detailed narrative comes from Thomas of Split, while brief accounts can be found in the \textit{De administrando imperio} and the twelfth-century \textit{Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja}. If one excludes the unreliable elements of Thomas’ account, in essence he tells us about the displacement of various patricians from the city of Salona. They fled in different directions, including to nearby islands, only to return some years later. But instead of going back to Salona, they chose to move into the imperial palace of Diocletian or, more precisely, into the fortified settlement of Spalatum which had existed in the palace since the early Christian period.

The dating of the restoration of the Salonitan church at Split, with Archbishop John of Ravenna as its figurehead, has relied primarily on Thomas’ association of John with Severus, leader of the Salonitan patricians, and on the traditional dating of these events to around 641. This is the only reliable chronological point in our surviving sources, the \textit{Liber pontificalis} in conjunction with the \textit{De administrando}’s Chapter 31 on Heraclius. We know that the palace of Diocletian had been used as a safe haven once before, during the Gothic Wars, and the gradual relocation of the threatened population to more easily defensible sites was certainly under way before Salona was abandoned for good. Such withdrawals tended to follow a pattern, with senior churchmen taking the relics with them, and the translation occurring once the community had settled into its new seat, having abandoned the old settlement and cult places.\textsuperscript{26}

However, our sources suggest that the translation followed a very different path in the case of Salona and Split. The local relics were transferred to Rome in 641, at the behest of Pope John IV, when Abbot Martin ransomed captives and martyrs’ relics throughout Dalmatia and Istria, and took the latter to the safety of a purpose-built shrine inside the Lateran baptistery. Regardless of its implications for the ecclesiastical history of the Dalmatian and Istrian towns, our information about Martin’s trip indicates that Slav settlement in the eastern Adriatic was now an established fact.\textsuperscript{27} The people ransomed by Martin were Christians, captured as booty by pagan Slavs who had evidently been living in the former Byzantine territory for quite some time. In addition, since the pope and Abbot Martin believed that the relics of the Dalmatian and Istrian saints should be housed at Rome, they clearly considered them to have been in serious and imminent danger. Historians tend to merge these events with Thomas’ account of the \textit{translatio} performed by John of Ravenna and to assume they all occurred in the mid-seventh century, which becomes the context for the archdiocese of Salona’s re-establishment in Diocletian’s Palace. But our only reliable information – on Martin’s mission – directly contradicts the hypotheses about the continuity and early date of the restoration of the church at Split.

It is impossible to know what happened to the last archbishops of Salona after 600. Religious communities in the coastal enclaves certainly survived, but they did so in rudimentary form and without the power to restore the earlier metropolitan
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ecclesiastical network in their new seats. If a Salonitan archbishop did indeed take the saints’ relics and move into Diocletian’s Palace, his stay there left no permanent trace; and the relics could have passed smoothly into the hands of the papal envoy after the archbishop’s death. Another possibility is that the relics remained in Salona, only to be rediscovered later, during Abbot Martin’s mission. In either case, the real fate of the relics remained unknown to subsequent generations in Split, leading us to two conclusions: firstly, there was little or no continuity, and secondly, this was why the solemn translation of the relics was organized when ancient Salonitan tradition was needed to guarantee the ecclesiastical primacy of Split. Judging from all this, the translatio of the relics to Split Cathedral may have taken place as late as the closing decades of the eighth century.

The legends surrounding the translation of the relics of St Domnius and St Anastasius contain contradictions which indicate that they are not historically accurate and should make us wary of accepting traditional historiography on the matter. However, from the ninth century at latest, certain relics have been proven to be physically present in Split Cathedral, meaning that the arrival of the bodily remains did occur at some point. This leaves open the question of exactly when the archbishops of Split secured these relics to support their ecclesiastical pretensions. Three points help to answer this. Firstly, the earliest examples of the fabrics lining the reliquaries containing them date from the second half of the eighth century and were produced in the Middle East (Fig. 18.2).28

Secondly, Split’s oldest liturgical book, the Gospel Book of Split (Evangeliarium Spalatense), is of similar date and originated in northern Italy, where the church’s first archbishop hailed from.29 And finally, we have at our disposal lists of the bishops who attended the Seventh Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 787 to help us identify who the first archbishop was, and to place him in a convincing historical context.

The Council of Nicaea was attended by the bishops of Rab, Osor, Kotor and ‘Salona’. Archbishop John regularly features first among the Dalmatian bishops in attendance, and they are listed among those holding the rank of archbishop, but they are not listed in relation to any metropolitan.30 Moreover the Notitiae

Figure 18.2 Textile fragment found in the reliquary of St Anastasius, Cathedral of St Domnius, Split (photo: Joško Belamarić)
episcopatum, the eighth- and ninth-century Byzantine lists of bishops under Constantinopolitan jurisdiction, do not mention a single bishopric in Dalmatia. This suggests that ecclesiastical authority over towns such as Rab, Osor and Split, despite their political inclusion in the Byzantine empire, did not lie with the patriarch of Constantinople, but rather with the pope, to whom the province of Dalmatia had belonged without interruption since Late Antiquity.31

As is evident from the Council’s final, solemn statement of faith (horos),32 the four Dalmatian bishops were not suffragans of a metropolitan. They represented religious communities from a province lacking any ecclesiastical structure above diocesan level. The archbishop of Split had a degree of seniority over the three other bishops mentioned in 787, but not as their metropolitan. His position, as well as the name of his see (‘Salona’), shows that the new religious community at Spalatum was slowly growing, aware of its reliance on the Salonitan tradition and its church’s reputation, but that it still lacked metropolitan status.

As we have already seen (n. 28), the Council of Nicaea in 787 decreed that altars should contain relics.33 By the late eighth century, the practice of depositing relics in the altar during the consecration of a church was already widespread across the west. Possibly one of the first things the archbishop of Split did upon his return from Nicaea was to obtain relics for his cathedral. A formal search for the remains of early Christian martyrs was organized; and when the relics of the Salonitan martyrs were translated to Split, they were placed in reliquaries lined with late-eighth-century fabrics of Middle Eastern origin, probably obtained during the archbishop’s stay at Nicaea. The translation may thus be seen as the implementation of the iconodule orthodoxy promulgated at Nicaea, which Archbishop John put in practice at local level.

A number of factors lead us to identify John of Ravenna as this earliest recorded prelate of Split, apart from his name and the mention in Thomas’ Historia Salonitana. They include the archbishop’s sarcophagus, which has survived in Split and which features carvings by the city’s earliest medieval workshop, as we shall see below. The style of this and several other sarcophagi, as well as the models for these carvings, originated in Rome and north-east Italy, including Ravenna and its surroundings, and also Friuli. From the early ninth century onwards, the lists of the bishops of Split and those of the bishops of other coastal towns become more reliable and are mostly without lacunae, making it possible to verify John’s immediate successors in other historical records. From this time onwards, the sequence of the archbishops of Split is confirmed by sources independent of Thomas’ chronicle. Our hypothesis is therefore that the see of the archbishop of Salona-Split was left vacant between the early seventh century and the last quarter of the eighth.

After a century and a half of silence, religious and secular leaders of Dalmatia reappear in our written sources. As already noted, the former can be found at Split in 787, in the person of a prelate who had lost metropolitan rights over his former district and retained only the vague title of archiepiscopus. Our secular leader appears in Zadar in 805, administering Byzantine Dalmatia’s diminished post-Roman territories, first as archôn, later as stratēgos. The assumption that
the continuity of religious organization between Salona and Split was uninterrupted begs two questions. Firstly, why did it take the archbishop of Split several centuries (until 925) to re-establish his metropolitan supremacy in the region, in comparison with, for example, the patriarch of Aquileia who successfully managed to do the same from Grado, albeit in somewhat different circumstances? Secondly, why did the representatives of the provincial government not relocate to the new seat of Split? One possible answer is that there was a deliberate separation between the regional seat of government and the regional ecclesiastical centre for reasons unknown, while the latter was not granted traditional ecclesiastical primacy, for reasons that are equally unclear. Alternatively there may simply have been no continuity of religious life in the proper sense of the word. In light of the evidence outlined here, the latter explanation seems most plausible.

Analogies in western Europe support this explanation. In this period, episcopal sees could lie vacant for decades, if not for centuries.\textsuperscript{34} Even in the case of Italian bishoprics of ancient origin, reliable and uninterrupted episcopal lists are rare.\textsuperscript{35} For example, out of sixty north Italian bishoprics, only eighteen managed to keep their episcopal lists; the number is even smaller in the rest of Italy, where only four (including Rome) are complete. Once again, the bishoprics at Novigrad and Capodistria offer good comparisons: having been founded in the sixth century, both were discontinued for a good 150 years and were only canonically restored through papal efforts after the mid-eighth century. It is justifiable to assume that the case of the eastern Adriatic towns was not dissimilar. The contemporary cultural landscape also supports our hypothesis of a significant interruption for most of the seventh and a large part of the eighth century. It was characterized by a dramatic decline in artistic production, poor-quality workmanship and re-use of old structures instead of building new ones.

**Evidence from material culture**

Archaeological studies throughout Dalmatia suggest little progress in the material culture between the first half of the seventh century and the last decades of the eighth.\textsuperscript{36} This changes at the beginning of the ninth century, with the appearance of material traces suggestive of political and social stabilization, a suggestion in key with our written sources. However, in order to substantiate our hypothesis about the late creation of the church in Split, we need to establish what brought about this change.

When evidence of early pre-Romanesque culture appears in late-eighth-century Dalmatia, it does so with speed and quality. The sudden abundance of deluxe artworks – bearing the hallmarks of both early Carolingian art and the ornately carved inscriptions, with stylized vegetal borders, characteristic of Lombard north Italy at this time, a style sometimes termed ‘Liutprandian’ – is without exception limited to those coastal cities and islands which housed a bishop, and apparently made no inroads inland. Why did this homogeneous cultural sphere suddenly appear in such specific geographical areas?
The Adriatic coast took centre stage in this sudden cultural efflorescence around 800. To assume a direct link between this phenomenon and later Frankish engagement in the region would be premature. Nevertheless, the early-ninth-century Frankish offensive may have been the easier because the Dalmatian coastal towns and their religious leaders had already created a northern Adriatic version of the early Carolingian cultural sphere. The following analysis will seek to justify this hypothesis.

A group of reliefs from the city of Split – some whole, some in fragments (Figs 18.3–18.6) – plays an exceptionally important part in our hypothesis. They were the work of a group of carvers active in late-eighth-century Split, especially in and around the cathedral. Their repetition of a crossed-lilies motif long ago identified this group as belonging to a stone-carving workshop, but this identification has recently been expanded both through new attributions and through broader contextualization.37

Based on our knowledge of the workshop’s most important patron, John, archbishop of Split, and also on comparative material – especially works from Novigrad in Istria that were commissioned by Maurice, its bishop and a contemporary

Figure 18.3 Chancel screen slab built in the sarcophagus-reliquary of St Domnius, Cathedral of St Domnius, Split (photo: Zoran Alajbeg)
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of John – this workshop’s carvings can be dated fairly accurately to the last few decades of the eighth century. However, their Liutprandian style, with peripheral interlaced ornaments, marks them out as ‘foreign’ to the Dalmatian coastal cities in general and to Split in particular. The Liutprandian style apparent in these late-eighth-century carvings from the Split Cathedral workshop is more likely to have been due to external factors; comparable reliefs are to be found in north-eastern Italy, around Ravenna and in the traditional centres of the Lombard kingdom and Friuli, but also in Rome itself.

The situation in late-eighth-century Istria was similar, where Maurice commissioned a new baptismal ciborium for Novigrad Cathedral (Fig. 18.7). This was a highly political undertaking and marked the installation of Frankish rule on the peninsula. Members of the social elite were dispatched to Istria as governors, and major monuments were built, not in the local style of early Christian origin, but along Carolingian lines. There is no doubt whatsoever that these innovations were brought from their homeland by the new elite, members of the highest echelons of society. The attention paid by this new elite to politico-religious events found visual form within their churches. The carvings produced by the Split workshop should be viewed in this context, as it helps to explain the presence of uniform reliefs decorated with crossed lilies found in the corpus of late-eighth-century sculpture in Split. These carvings evidently have their roots in northern Italian sculpture of the same period and cultural milieu, and there is no doubt that they are Liutprandian in style. Preliminary comparative analysis of the carvings in Novigrad and Split shows similarities with sculptures produced in Rome during Pope
Figure 18.5  Chancel screen pilasters found in the Cathedral of St Domnius and its bell tower (Archaeological Museum, Split; after Piteša 2012, no. 4 on 25, no. 11 on 44, nos 12 and 13 on 47; photo: Ante Verzotti)
Hadrian I’s pontificate (772–795). This is all the more important because we know that Hadrian had contacts with the Frankish ruler, which may explain how he was so well informed about Bishop Maurice and the circumstances in Istria.

Given the likelihood that the Split workshop was strongly influenced by northern Italian, and possibly Roman, styles and given the similarities with the situation

![Image](image_url)
in Istria, the question remains: who were the leaders of these new religious and social elites, and when did they start to gain influence over local artistic norms, notably the carvings from our workshop? The most logical solution is to associate the reliefs produced by the workshop in Split Cathedral with Archbishop John, who attended the Council at Nicaea in 787. The remodelling of the interior of Split Cathedral corresponds chronologically with the episcopate of John of Ravenna, who re-established the archbishopric of Salona in Split during the last decades of the eighth century. Judging from all the evidence, the sarcophagus decorated with lilies and inscribed with an epitaph belongs to the archbishop. The relief decoration on the front panel is clearly in late-eighth-century Liutprandian style, and it provides a solid basis for identifying the person mentioned in the epitaph of Johannes archiepiscopus as Archbishop John.

Recent research has identified further centres from which the models used by the Split workshop originated, notably almost identical pieces from the Venetian island of Torcello and from Ravenna. This strengthens the argument that there were artistic links between these northern Italian regions and Split, especially in light of John of Ravenna’s appointment as the city’s first archbishop in the late eighth century. John’s position in Split was not unlike that of the bishop of Novigrad between 776 and 780. At this time – and at least eight years before the Frankish conquest of Istria – the bishop of Novigrad unequivocally represented Carolingian interests in the Byzantine-ruled peninsula, despite threats against his person. As archbishop of Split, John probably played a similar role. He was of Ravennate origin, sent by the pope – the legitimate ecclesiastical authority in this trans-Adriatic Byzantine province – in order to carry out a reorganization of the church there. Encouraged by Frankish pretensions in the eastern Adriatic, the pope wanted to consolidate his influence in the Dalmatian towns under Byzantine rule.
It would thus seem that the founder-restorer of the *ecclesia Salonitana* was a late-eighth-century supporter of papal and Frankish political interests in the Adriatic, and that these were implemented mainly via Ravenna and other north Italian centres. It also seems probable that the re-establishment of the Salonitan bishopric at Split was a Roman rather than Byzantine initiative, and that the Holy See followed its own, as well as Carolingian, political interests. John must have been dispatched from Ravenna – the seat of the former exarchate – before 787, a time when its interests in the Adriatic basin coincided with those of Rome and those of the Franks. The attitude of John and other senior churchmen towards Frankish pretensions in Dalmatia in subsequent years should be viewed from this perspective. Although he was sent to Split to restore a bishopric in Byzantine territory, even Constantinople could not question his jurisdictional dependence on the papacy. Co-ordinated political meddling by the pope and the Franks in religious institutions in Byzantine regions was not unusual: there are similar examples in the aforementioned Istrian and Venetian episcopal sees, as well as in the patriarchate of Grado.

The analogies between our reliefs in Split and those produced at the same time by a stone-carving workshop in Kotor, southern Dalmatia, are noteworthy. This workshop produced high-quality carvings during the reigns of Nikephoros I and Leo V (813–820), including two inscriptions which mention a local bishop by the name of John, the first dated to 805, the second to Leo’s reign. The earliest known bishop of Kotor is John, mentioned in the acts of the Council of Nicaea (787) as ‘Iohannes episcopus Decateron’, together with his peers from Osor, Rab and Salona. It is probable that the Bishop John mentioned in our inscription is the same John who attended the Council of Nicaea. Besides the name being the same, the two mentions that we can date to 787 and 805 are relatively close. The office of this bishop also corresponds to the years when the Kotor stone-carving workshop was active, and their carvings are, in turn, stylistically close to other Dalmatian workshops active in the same period.

Thus a visual and stylistic assessment of the relief carvings produced by the Split workshop enables us to place them accurately in a cultural milieu which had indisputable artistic contacts with neighbouring Italy. The stone-carving workshops in Split and Kotor were active at roughly the same time. Importantly, they were in towns on the Adriatic which had only just begun to lay claim to episcopal status; and the main commissioners of carvings from these workshops were the towns’ bishops: the same bishops who had taken part in the Council of Nicaea in 787. Their master-carvers drew on models closely linked to late Lombard and early Carolingian visual traditions, characteristic of northern Italian cultural and artistic circles.

**Church, regnum and sculpture**

Besides art historical evidence, these early Frankish contacts with Dalmatia can also be seen in the hagiography of Ursus the Confessor. Although the chronology is tenuous, it seems that Ursus, a Frankish noble, lived in Dalmatia between 779
and 788, the very period which other written sources portray as one of increasing Frankish interest in the Dalmatian lands. According to the *Acta sancti Ursii Confessoris*, religious and missionary embassies under the aegis of the Frankish and papal courts were being sent to the eastern Adriatic as early as the pontificate of Hadrian I. Carolingian political culture associated sacral with political geography, the religious with the secular: the Christian community and its institutions of government were one and the same, the church being a constituent part of the administrative hierarchy. Indeed, as scholars have shown, the term *regnum* was indivisible from the term *ecclesia*. In Mladen Ančić’s words, paraphrasing Mayke de Jong, ‘the contemporary church, simply put, as a hierarchically organized institution, was an actual part of the state apparatus, that is to say, in that period, ecclesiastical hierarchy was a constituent segment of the political authority’.

Modern scholarship on papal and Frankish political influence in southern Italy points to the significant role played by the rulers of Benevento, as well as the dukes of Spoleto and the abbeys of San Vincenzo al Volturno, Monte Cassino and Farfa. For example, the election of the Frank Theodmar as abbot of Monte Cassino in 778 provided a more solid political and cultural foothold for Carolingian expansion to the south of Rome than any military manoeuvre. A decade later, when Charlemagne sought control over key points in this area, he applied a similar model to the one he had used in Grado: he granted a privilege of immunity to the abbeys of Monte Cassino and Farfa – allowing them freely to elect their abbots – and, in addition, confirmed the estates of Monte Cassino. Such legal and political interventions expressed the Carolingians’ clear and unambiguous aspirations in southern Italy, in defiance of traditional Byzantine authority there. Since, as we have seen, high-ranking churchmen were often the main supporters of Frankish aspirations in the Dalmatian coastal towns, the strategy used in southern and northern Italy also seems to have been applied in Dalmatia.

In Dalmatia, the ground for this transition may have been prepared by a pro-Frankish social group who saw advantages in the new political situation. This group included Donatus, bishop of Zadar, and John, bishop of Salona-Split. Given that similar factions existed in neighbouring Venice, Grado and Istria in the late eighth century (led by the Venetian doges Obelerius and Beatus, Patriarch Fortunatus of Grado, and Bishop Maurice of Novigrad, respectively) it is highly likely that pro-Frankish factions were also present in the Dalmatian coastal towns. To describe the Dalmatian bishops as ‘men of the Franks’ would be an overstatement. But despite their recognition of Byzantine imperial administration until 805, their activities were in alignment with the pro-Frankish slant of the Holy See.

The Dalmatian bishops had several reasons for gravitating towards the Franks. Above all, as with their Istrian counterparts, the new rulers offered more opportunities for involvement in local administration. The Dalmatian bishops had always been subject to the Holy See. Some of them also owed the founding of their bishoprics – and, as a consequence, their personal status – to the joint initiative of the pope and the Frankish ruler, whose mutual ambitions coalesced in the late eighth century and aligned with theirs.

In order to test our hypothesis that a relatively early, significant Carolingian cultural and political wave enveloped the eastern Adriatic coast in the late eighth
century, we should establish whether there are any similarities with sculpture from the other Dalmatian towns whose bishops feature in the acts of the Council of Nicaea. As in Split and Novigrad, these towns have notably homogeneous bodies of sculpture which can be dated to the last decades of the eighth century and which also represent their earliest medieval works of art.53

The phenomenon noted in the case of the Split workshop can be also observed in Kotor, Dubrovnik, Zadar, Rab and Osor – that is, all the episcopal sees represented at Nicaea – with one exception. The works from the earliest stone-carving workshops in all these ecclesiastical centres show indisputable chronological and stylistic affinities, and a common source in the cultural sphere of late Lombard and early Carolingian northern Italy. Yet in none of these towns was ‘Liutprandian’ a style which their own stone-carving workshops might have developed spontaneously. Thus the sudden appearance of late Liutprandian art in these towns, as in Split and Novigrad, can only be explained by external influences. The reliefs adorning the churches in these towns are so similar in both date and style as to rule out coincidence, besides the fact that they can all be linked to the bishops who represented these towns in Nicaea in 787.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, there is a strong connection between ecclesiastical reorganization in the eastern Adriatic and the sudden cultural flourishing there at the end of the eighth century, as also between these events and the Frankish rule established somewhat later over the Dalmatian towns. This is not to claim that events of the 770s and 780s should be seen entirely through the lens of events between 805 and 812; they were not simply cause and effect. However, this chapter does argue for a more or less direct link between the two. While to conclude that this was all groundwork for later Frankish military and political advances may seem far-fetched, there is no doubt that the events around Hadrian’s initiative to re-establish the archdiocese of Salona had clear political repercussions of which the pope was well aware. On a cultural and artistic level, these events also portended a shift in the political affiliation of the Dalmatian towns, ushering in a period of turbulence which would only come to a close with the Treaty of Aachen.

**Notes**

1 AD, 124.
3 For discussion of the Christopher affair, see Štih 2010, 222.
4 Bratož 1996; Bratož 2011, 229.
5 This view has been most consistently upheld by Neven Budak (1994, 83–85). For a more detailed analysis, see Basić 2013, 179–88.
6 *Liber pontificalis*, vol. 1, 330.
7 TS, chs 10–12, 48–57.
The first to point them out was Stjepan Gunjača (1973, 453).


13 DAI, ch. 29, 124, lines 54–58; ch. 31, 146, 148, lines 8–25, 32–34; ch. 31, 150, lines 58–60. See also Ančić 1998, 16–17; BSBC, 104–17; Curta 2010a, 130–35. In fact, the only remaining argument for the traditional dating of John of Ravenna’s office is a note found posthumously in Lucius’ papers, which mentions that Severus’ grandson lived during the reign of Emperor Theodosios III (715–717): Katičić 1993; Katičić 1998, 253–54. For a more detailed discussion see Basić 2013, 197–206.


17 AD, 118. See also Bratož 1990, 47; Bratož 2001, 55–56.

18 CodCar, no. 63, 590; Ferluga 1992, 181–82; Margetić 1994a, 20; Štih 2010, 213–14; Borri 2010, 32–33.


20 JD, 104; Rando 1992, 645. See also Fedalto 1978; Cuscito 1990.

21 Namely Torcello, Caorle, Cittanova Eracliana and Malamocco, all of them relocated to the lagoons from the mainland: Ortalli 1980; Ortalli 2005.

22 Mihaljčić and Steinendorff 1982, no. 73, 47.


24 One should not rule out the possibility that members of the Carolingian politicoecclesiastical elite planned to merge the metropolitan sees of Cividale and Grado, which had been divided in 607: Krahwinkler 2005, 65, 69–70; Štih 2010, 222–23.

25 Michael the Syrian, Chronicle, vol. 2, 520. For a more detailed discussion, see Basić 2013, 183–86. There are serious doubts as to whether Michael’s term ‘Dalmatia’ actually implies the region of Dalmatia in the usual sense: Basić 2014a.

26 The process of withdrawal of the social elite (clerus, nobiles) from areas affected by military campaigning, led by the head of the church and involving the translation of saints’ relics to a safer and better fortified location, can be observed throughout the Adriatic in this period, whether under threat from the Lombards (as in the case of Aquileia–Grado and Altino–Torcello) or the Slavs (including Epidaurus–Ragusa [Dubrovnik] in Dalmatia; Emona–Novigrad in Istria; but also Sparta–Monemvasia on the Peloponnesian coast): Bratož 1994b.

27 Levak 2007, 49–52; see also BJ, 93. Neven Budak (2012, 173) points out that there was apparently no established church hierarchy in Split or Salona in 641, since nobody tried to prevent Martin from moving the relics.

28 Joško Belamarić (2014) connects these eastern fabrics with Archbishop John’s journey to the Council of Nicaea, where he could easily have obtained them; yet Belamarić also notes a decree issued by the same council that altars could only be consecrated if they contain relics.


30 Darrouzès 1975, 24–26; D62, D72, D77, E61, E71, E76 and F106–08 on 63–64; E327 on 68; Lamberz 2004, 8–11; 48 and n. 188; 50 and nn. 194, 197; 78 and n. 383.

31 Here, I am in broad agreement with Lujo Margetić and Predrag Komatina: Basić 2013, 284–86; Margetić 1983, 262 n. 36; see also the chapter by Komatina in this volume.

32 See n. 10 above. See also Margetić 1994b, 22; Basić 2013, 285; and the chapter by Komatina in this volume.
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33 ‘Ut templæ sine reliquiis sanctorum consecrata supplementum accipiant’: Canon VII in Mansi, vol. 13, cols 747A, 751A–B. This is noted by both Neven Budak (2012, 160) and Željko Rapanić (2013), but without drawing out the full implications. See also Bolgia 2006, 26 n. 66.

34 For example, episcopal seats were left empty at Bordeaux from 675 to 814; at Périgueux from 675 until the tenth century; at Châlons from 675 to 779; at Geneva from 650 to 833; at Arles from 683 to 794; at Toulon from 679 to 879; and at Aix from 596 to 794. The episcopal catalogues at Nîmes, Béziers, Uzès, Carcassonne, Maguelonne, Elné and Agde are blank between the end of the seventh century and 788: Le Goff 1988, 35; see also Map 9.


36 Selected surveys include Jelovina 1976; Belošević 1980; Milošević 2001; Sokol 2016; Piteša 2006; Petrinec 2009.


38 Basić and Jurković 2011, 168–70.

39 For different perspectives on this event, see Bilić and Bervaldi 1912; V. Novak 1923; G. Novak 1928; Dabinović 1930; Barada 1931; Barada 1940; Karaman 1940; Koščak 1982; Delonga 2001, 199–202, 209–13; Matijević Sokol 2002, 75–121. According to Rapanić, Donatus, bishop of Zadar and John ‘the Nicaean’, archbishop of Split, were Byzantine supporters who arrived from Ravenna on the eve of the Lombard conquest of the city of 751 or soon afterwards and reorganized the ecclesiastical hierarchy at Zadar and Split: Rapanić 2007, 180–86.

40 Piteša 2012, no. 9, 36–38; no. 10a, 39–43; no. 11, 43–46; no. 50, 98–100; no. 61, 117–20.

41 Basić 2008; Basić and Jurković 2011, 170–77; Basić 2014c.

42 A likely scenario of this kind was suggested by Antun Dabinović (1930, 206–11).

43 See Basić 2014c, with earlier literature.

44 Lončar 2006, 189, 191–92. See also Mihaljičić and Steindorff 1982, no. 135, 88; no. 143, 93; Jakšić 1999 [2000], 144 n. 31, 148; Curta 2010b, 268.

45 Acta sancti Ursii, 45, 46. This context has been noted by V. Novak 1923, 54. See also Šišić 1925, 308; Koščak 1982; BJ, 133.

46 A more detailed analysis is in Basić 2013, 241–43.


49 Bertolini 1965; Classen 1965, 560–61; West 1999, 341.


51 Dabinović 1930, 210. For the dependence of religious geography and territorial control, see Wolfram 2001; Reimitz 2001.


53 The relevant argument can be found in Basić 2013, 372–91, and will also be published in a more substantial forthcoming paper.

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