

THE HISTORY OF THE BYZANTINE DUCHIES
OF SOUTHERN ITALY: NAPLES AND AMALFI
FROM LATE ANTIQUITY TO THE EARLY
MIDDLE AGES

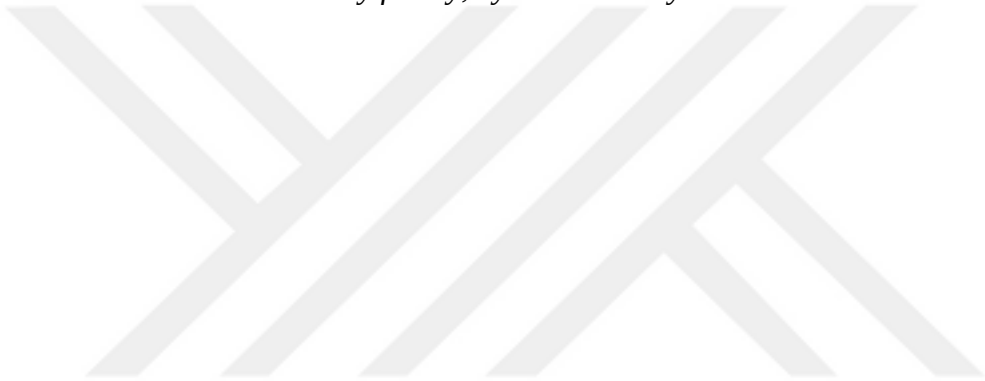
A Ph.D. Dissertation

by
FERMUDE GÜLSEVİNÇ

Department of
History
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University
Ankara
July 2025

FERMUDE GÜLSEVİNÇ THE HISTORY OF THE BYZANTINE DUCHIES OF SOUTHERN ITALY: NAPLES
AND AMALFI FROM LATE ANTIQUITY TO THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES Bilkent University 2025

To my family, by blood and by bond.



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The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

FERMUDE GÜLSEVİNÇ

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THE DEPARTMENT OF
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İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

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AMALFI FROM LATE ANTIQUITY TO THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

By Fermude Gülsevinç

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

Luca Zavagno
Advisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

Paul Latimer
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

Pelin Yoncacı Arslan
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

Selim Tezcan
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

Filip Maleseviç
Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

Refet S. Gürkaynak
Director

ABSTRACT

THE HISTORY OF BYZANTINE DUCHIES OF SOUTHERN ITALY: NAPLES AND AMALFI FROM LATE ANTIQUITY TO THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

Gülsevinç, Fermude

Ph. D., Department of History

Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Luca Zavagno

July 2025

This dissertation explores the historical trajectories of two Byzantine duchies, Naples and Amalfi, situated along the Tyrrhenian coastline of Byzantine Italy. Chronologically, it focuses on the transitional period between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, from the arrival of the Byzantine forces under the command of Belisarius on the Italian peninsula (6th century) to the establishment of the Catepanate of Italy in 965, which marked a new phase of Byzantine hegemony in the region. Geographically, the study concentrates on the urban centres of Naples and Amalfi and their respective hinterlands, extending northwards to Gaeta, another prominent Byzantine duchy, and southwards to the borders of the Principality of Salerno. By analysing these interconnected territories, this dissertation aims to shed light on the political, social, and economic, as well as religious dynamics and features that defined the Byzantine presence in southern Italy during the transformative period in relation to a wider coastal and insular system, the Byzantine *koine*.

Keywords: Byzantine *koine*, Naples, Amalfi, Tyrrhenian, Mediterranean.

ÖZET

GÜNEY İTALYA BİZANS DUKALIKLARI'NIN TARİHİ: GEÇ ANTİKÇAĞ VE ERKEN ORTAÇAĞ'DA NAPOLİ VE AMALFİ

Gülsevinç, Fermude

Doktora, Tarih Bölümü

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Luca Zavagno

Temmuz 2025

Bu doktora tezi, Bizans İtalyası'nın Tiren kıyılarında yer alan iki Bizans dükalığının, Napoli ve Amalfi, tarihsel gelişimleri üzerine odaklanmaktadır. Çalışma, kronolojik olarak Geç Antik Çağ'dan Erken Orta Çağ'a geçiş sürecini kapsamakta, 6. yüzyılda Belisarius komutasındaki Bizans kuvvetlerinin İtalya yarımadasına çıkışıyla başlayarak, 965 yılında İtalya Katepanlığı'nın kurulmasına kadar olan dönemi incelemektedir. Coğrafi olarak araştırma, Napoli ve Amalfi dükalıklarının merkez ve çevrelerine, söz konusu dükalıklar kuzeyde bir diğer Bizans dükalığı olarak Gaeta Dukalığı'na, güneyde ise bir Lombard bölgesi olan Salerno Prenslığı'ne kadar uzanmaktadır, odaklanmaktadır. Bu tezin amacı birbiriyle ilişkili dükalıkların tarihsel ve kentsel değişim ve dönüşümlerinin analiziyle beraber işbu dükalıkların siyasi, sosyal, ekonomik ve dini yapılanmasını Bizans *koine*'si olarak adlandırılan geniş kıyılar ve adalar sistemi içinde incelemektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bizans *koine* sistemi, Napoli, Amalfi, Tiren Denizi, Akdeniz.

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Writing a dissertation is always an immensely challenging task; however, writing a doctoral dissertation has truly been an excruciating endeavour. Considering that I underwent a major brain surgery five months ago, lost half of my vision, and have since continued my life almost as a spiritual daughter of Enrico Dandolo, I am able to assure everyone that my perception of difficulty is not to be taken lightly. This dissertation was, without question, the most difficult task I have ever undertaken in my life, moreover, the outcome is neither what I have in mind nor what I want, yet here I am to write my acknowledgement. And believe me a Ph.D. is *a very long journey*.

Before anyone else, I must thank my supervisor. This is not a perfunctory or purely formal expression of gratitude, but one that comes deeply from the heart. From the very first day I attended his class, Dr. Luca Zavagno has been my idol, even though I am perfectly aware that he would object to be called as an idol by anyone, yet this is my acknowledgement which is the only part that the students do not receive feedback on, so I will use this rare opportunity as I speak freely. From the day we met, he has never once disappointed me; he has always supported me, and he has been both my supervisor and mentor. I would like to thank Dr. Zavagno for accepting me as his student, furthermore, without his invaluable supervision and mentorship, this doctoral journey could never have been completed in this way. I am grateful to Dr. Zavagno for everything he has taught me during my Ph. D, including the fiscal system, globular amphorae and the rich variety of Italian cuisine and Venetian dialect, as well as his extensive vocabulary and incredible ability to

use the language of English, even Shakespeare might have picked up a few words from him. I will, indeed, remain grateful to him throughout my life. *Grazie de core par averme impara' cossa vol dir far parte de 'na squadra, Captain Clutch. E par carità divina, sì, te ga rasòn: go capìo che anca i formaggi italiani, sì, ANCHE quei, xe più de quei che podarò mai contar in tutta la me vita. Va ben, gavì vinto, la cucina italiana xe la mejo al mondo. Ma dai, prova ogni tanto anca qualcosa de diverso, no te crèdi? No te fa' mal, campion!*

A doctoral dissertation cannot be written without support. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Paul Latimer and Dr. Pelin Yoncacı Arslan, whose valuable insights greatly assisted me throughout my doctoral journey. Although I struggled through Dr. Latimer's Latin examinations, I must thank him once more for the joy I felt the day I realized I could actually read Latin while writing this dissertation.

My third thank you goes to my family. To my late father Özden Gülsevinç, whose dream was me as an architect, I sincerely apologize Dad but hey, I can still draw Hagia Sophia in AutoCAD, just like you taught me. My mother Nuriye Gülsevinç, who has supported me every second of my life since the day I declared at age six that I would become a historian, and yes mum there will be more books, it is your fault, you really should have kept me away from those Greek myths and books. Actually, both of you should have kept me away from *Indiana Jones*, *The Mummy* series, Disney encyclopaedia, Homer and Herodotus, but I am sincerely grateful you never did! And to my beloved brother Özgün Gülsevinç, whom I love more than life itself; I could not have written a single word without you! You are my

partner in crime and buddy I am grateful that you never laugh at my Frankenstein staples. I do not know how one promises lifelong support to one's family, but I will always be here. I love you guys; believe me this thesis could be finished if you were not supporting me and providing me with a safe haven to hide when life is upside down.

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Finally... There is only one person who truly knows how this dissertation was written and what was experienced throughout its preparation. The one who got angry at every sentence, who collapsed in tears at the end of each page because the words would not come out as intended yet knew wiping the tears and continue. For a historian, the two most crucial abilities are to read and to write. For most people, losing half of their vision unexpectedly during the final year of their dissertation would have devastating effects, unless they possessed exceptional resilience. For me, clearly not resilient as Byzantine Naples and Amalfi, this dissertation was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life, but somehow, I still do not give up. Now, I am a doctor of philosophy, and it is incredible, magical and breathtaking.

For the first and probably last time, I would like to thank myself. To anyone reading, please do not misunderstand this as arrogance. This is not a matter of confidence, , but of gratitude for not giving up and for being here today. I do not love drama, but it loves me, so I thank myself to be still here, still fighting. In the end, as Eco says we live for books. A sweet mission in this world dominated by disorder and decay.

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INTRODUCTION: Byzantine Naples and Amalfi

Umberto Eco, one of the most renowned Italian medievalists and most probably the only well-known semiotician, concludes his novel *The Name of the Rose* with an enigmatic phrase: *Stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus*.¹ While I was doing an annual re-reading session of his novel, I realized that there is no better way to start my thesis. The notion of Byzantine Italy, more importantly, the Byzantine Tyrrhenian, evokes a similar sense of elusive identity. Naples and Amalfi belonged to the orbit of the Byzantine imperial *oikumene* between sixth and tenth centuries, as this timespan includes the period between the infamous Gothic Wars (535–554) and the creation of Catepanate of Italy by the end of tenth century.² Yet, what does this mean? To what extent were these Tyrrhenian Duchies governed by Constantinople? What do we mean when we place Naples and Amalfi under the gravitational pull of imperial power? How should we define their boundaries, dynamics and historical trajectories occurring in a wider world which is the Byzantine Mediterranean itself?

This dissertation starts with a suggestion that will be followed throughout this thesis: even though Byzantine Naples and Amalfi, gained independence at different times, they never lost their strong relationship with the Byzantines, and must be perceived not only as two Tyrrhenian coastal settlements. Rather, they have to be woven into a wider system, into the coastal and insular world of the

¹ “The former rose remains only in name; we possess mere names.” (After Umberto Eco, *Gülün Adı*, Can Yayınları, 1981).

² Salvatore Cosentino, “Politics and Society” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino, Leiden: Brill, 2021, pp. 29–63, pp. 32–27.

Mediterranean, as “coined” in the Byzantine *koine*.³ As the history of Byzantine Italy is the history of the Mediterranean, Byzantine Naples and Amalfi were not immune to the gravitation of the Byzantine Mediterranean.⁴ On the one hand, reconstructing the Byzantine past of Naples and Amalfi in the passage from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages is not an easy task, mainly due to the lack of documentation, as well-written documentation usually harkens back to the mid-tenth or eleventh century.⁵ On the other hand, the archaeological excavations have gradually been improving in Naples and Amalfi over the last decades, especially after the 1980s for Naples⁶ and the 1960s for Amalfi.⁷

Nevertheless, a considerable amount of research has been devoted to Apulia⁸, Calabria⁹, and most obviously Sicily,¹⁰ and one can say that the popularity of Sardinia¹¹ has also been rising among scholars. Byzantine Campania may not seem to be receiving the same enthusiasm from scholars, but one can safely mention that the scholarly interest towards Naples and Amalfi has gradually been increasing, especially with the help of better archaeology and the constant efforts of *Museo Archaeologico Nazionale di Napoli* and *Centro di Cultura e Storico Amalfitana* as

³ Luca Zavagno, “‘The sublime objects of liminality’: the Byzantine insular-coastal *koine* and its administration in the passage from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages” in *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 48 (1), 2024, pp. 22–41.

⁴ See *Byzantium in Dialogue with the Mediterranean*, ed. Danielle Slootjes & Mariette Verhoeven, Leiden: Brill, 2019.

⁵ Vera von Falkenhausen, “Greek and Latin in Byzantine Italy”, in *A Companion to the Byzantine Italy*, (ed.) Salvatore Cosentino, Leiden: Brill, 2021, pp. 541–582, pp. 555–557.

⁶ Paul Arthur, *Naples from Roman Town to City-State: An Archaeological Perspective* (British School at Rome, 2002), iii.

⁷ Matthew Harpster, “Modelling the Maritime Cultural Landscape of the Costiera Amalfitana: The First Three Seasons of Research (2016–2018)” in *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology*, 50, 2021, 65.

⁸ See Paul Arthur, “Byzantine Apulia” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 453–472.

⁹ See Ghislaine Noye, “Byzantine Calabria” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 434–453.

¹⁰ See Lucia Arcifa, “Byzantine Sicily” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 472–496.

¹¹ See Pier Giorgio Spanu, “Byzantine Sardinia” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, (ed.) Salvatore Cosentino, (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 406–522.

they have been engaging with Byzantine exhibitions, conferences and seminars. Also, the rival Lombard Duchies of Salerno and Benevento provide us with documents regarding Naples and Amalfi, and in this sense, we are able to draw a picture of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi.¹² This is not to deny the fact that the work has been done on Naples and Amalfi during the period under scrutiny is mainly in Italian, an understandable preference of the Italian scholars; however, they also have preferred to keep their work less accessible and visible. For instance, one of the incredible works on the region of Campania during Late Antiquity, Eliodoro Savino's *Campania tardoantica* is partially available in an online version¹³; Teresa Colletta's *Napoli città portuale e mercantile: la città bassa di porto e il mercato dall'VIII al XVII secolo* calls for a researcher to get in touch with all of her Italian friends¹⁴; a researcher may need to make a visit to the *Centro di Cultura e Storico Amalfitana* to read Giuseppe Gargano's monumental work on medieval Amalfi.¹⁵

In this light, in the English-speaking academic environment has little awareness of the considerable scholarship, presenting us with scholars like Mario del Treppo, Alfonse Leone, Amedeo Feniello or Bartolommeo Capasso, who provide us with insights on the Duchy of Naples and the Duchy of Amalfi. Even the works of the prominent scholars who work on Southern Italy and present general portrayals of Naples and Amalfi, there are fewer on the latter than on the

¹² For instance *Chronicon Salernitum* gives rare insights to the earlier periods of Amalfitan duchy while Erchembert illuminates the Beneventan and Neapolitan relationship, as will be seen in the following chapters.

¹³ See Eliodoro Savino, *Campania tardoantica* (284–604 d.C.) (Edipuglia), 2005.

¹⁴ See Teresa Colletta, *Napoli città portuale e mercantile: la città bassa di porto e il mercato dall'VIII al XVII* (Kappa), 2006.

¹⁵ See Giuseppe Gargano, *L'Arsenale di Amalfi, Il Cantiere Navale della Repubblica Marinara* (Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana), 2010.

former. Consulting works such as those of Jean-Marie Martin, Federico Marazzi or Vera von Falkenhausen can be problematic due to their limited accessibility.¹⁶

What, then, does this dissertation delve into? An examination, written in English, of generally Italian, sometimes French and German sources about Byzantine Naples and Amalfi? I sincerely hope not. This is not to deny that my dissertation endeavours a comprehensive overview of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi, draws on both literary and material sources, particularly archival documents, excavation reports, and scholarly research. But presenting historical narrative of the Duchy of Naples and the Duchy of Amalfi is not the only aim of this dissertation, as the main question of this thesis materializes on presenting two maritime cities, highly interactive and playing important roles along the coastline of Tyrrhenian Sea. More significantly, they were part and parcel of a wider coastal and insular system — an idea captured particularly well by the Byzantine-coined phrase *koine*. In my opinion, the history of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi must be viewed within the broader context of the Mediterranean, as Wickham indicates the very fact that the Roman administrative and economic structures were anchored at a Mediterranean level.¹⁷ Following the collapse of the so-called Roman tax spine in the sixth century, the Mediterranean became a more fragmented and diversified space.¹⁸ This fragmentation, however, should not obscure the broader interconnections between regions beyond the traditional Byzantine heartlands of Anatolia and the Aegean. A wider geographic perspective allows us to make a

¹⁶ In this light, one can check *Persée* to obtain access to some articles by Jean-Marie Martin as well as Vera von Falkenhausen. On the other hand, *Regesta Imperii (RI OPAC)* provides a safe haven for further readings and analyses of the literature.

¹⁷ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 136–144.

¹⁸ Luca Zavagno, *The Byzantine City from Heraclius to the Fourth Crusade, 610–1204*, Urban Life after Antiquity, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, 32–33.

deeper analysis of urban centres, emphasizing gradual transformation, connectivity and the importance of a *longue durée* approach to understand the transformation of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi.¹⁹ Indeed, the early Medieval Mediterranean, despite its less complex economy compared to the *Mare Nostrum*, maintained strong connectivity from the Tyrrhenian to the Black Sea.²⁰ This in turn led us to rethink and reassess the importance of shared culture and customs through the this coastal and insular world, more or less mutual understanding of the same imperial norms. In this sense, my dissertation seeks the answers of the relationship between Byzantine Naples and Amalfi with the Byzantine *koine* by placing them into a Mediterranean perspective and by interpreting the sources stemming from history and archaeology in relation to this coastal and insular world.

This dissertation is organized into five chapters, progressing from theoretical foundations to detailed case studies and broader synthesis. Chapter I establishes the theoretical and methodological framework, introducing concepts such as connectivity, interactions between micro-regions, and the wider coastal and insular world defined as the Byzantine *koine*. It also examines the transformation of exchange networks and the role of Christianization in reshaping both the landscape and mindscape of the society. Chapter II provides a concise historical overview of Byzantine Italy, focusing not only on Byzantines but also Lombards and Arabs and the evolving dynamics of Southern Italy, thus setting the essential

¹⁹ Jim Crow, "Introduction & Conclusion." In *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies (Belgrade, 22–27 August 2016), Plenary Papers* (ed.) Marjanovic Dusanic 2016, pp. 64–57, 141–143, 66

²⁰ Paul Arthur, "From Italy to the Aegean and back again: Notes on the archaeology on Byzantine maritime trade." In *Da un mare all'altro. Luoghi di scambio nell'Alto Medioevo europeo e mediterraneo. Atti del Seminario Internazionale Commacchio 27–29 marzo 2009*, ed. S. Gelichi and R. Hodges 2012, pp. 336–351, esp. 347–49, Eugenia Gerousi, "The commercial relations between the Aegean and the Black Sea on the basis of early Christian amphoras." In *Proceedings of the Symposium on City Ports from the Aegean to the Black Sea: Medieval-Modern Networks*, 22–29 August 2015, edited by F. Karagianni and U. Kocabaş. Ege Yayınları. 127–137, 131–133.

context for the urban analyses that follow. Chapter III focuses on Naples, tracing its historical trajectory and urban transformation from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages. Chapter IV applies a similar approach to Amalfi, exploring its development and adaptation during the same transitional period. Chapter V examines the interactions of Naples and Amalfi within the wider Byzantine *koine*, emphasizing their roles as interconnected urban centres in the Mediterranean, rather than being peripheral settlements to which Byzantines did not pay much attention, or whose societies were destined to diminish. The conclusion synthesizes these findings, offering a nuanced understanding of the resilience and adaptability of these coastal duchies within the Byzantine *koine*.

In this light, one may close this brief introduction by quoting another Italian author, Italo Calvino, as he writes in the following: “The sea where living creatures were at one time immersed is now enclosed within their bodies.”²¹ This line struck me when I read it for the first time and reminded me of the history of Naples and Amalfi and the bond they forged in the sea. In my opinion, there is no better line to highlight the mutual relationship between Neapolitans and Amalfitans and their constant engagement with the Byzantine Mediterranean Sea, as it presents the topic of my thesis.

²¹ Italo Calvino, *Bütün Kozmokokmik Öyküler*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2024

CHAPTER I: The Elements of the Byzantine *koine*, Naples and Amalfi

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding the historical trajectories of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi in the broader context of the Byzantine Mediterranean. Rather than interpreting these urban centres as peripheral or passive recipients of imperial pressure, this chapter foregrounds their active roles as adaptive, resilient and interconnected nodes. By integrating connectivity, micro-regionality, and adaptive systems, this chapter presents the theoretical framework, analytical examination of the literary sources and the methodology of the dissertation, to situate Byzantine Naples and Amalfi as dynamic participants in the transformation of the Byzantine Mediterranean from the Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages.²²

1.1. The Historiography of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi: Interpretations, Methodology and Sources

Both doth suffer a sea change,

Into something rich and strange

Sea nymphs hourly ring his knell

(Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act I, Scene II)

Shakespeare, the renowned playwright and poet, writes one of the most beautiful lines dedicated to the nature of the sea in *The Tempest*. These lines aptly frame the story of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi, whose histories are marked by profound transformations under the gravitational pull of Constantinople. These

²² *Byzantium in Dialogue with the Mediterranean*, (ed.) Danielle Sloomjes & Mariette Verhoeven, Leiden: Brill, 2019

cases illuminate the complex nature of change and adaptive skills required to navigate shifting political, social and religious landscapes. While the Byzantine Empire faced the dynamic realities of the medieval Mediterranean, and continuously reconfigured their administrative, socio-economic and ecclesiastical frameworks, in this ever-evolving world shaped by emerging powers such as the Arabs or the Carolingians, Byzantine Naples and Amalfi exemplify how urban centres could both absorb and reinterpret external influences, ultimately creating something ‘rich and strange’ in their own historical trajectories in transformation.²³

By the sixth century, the unified *Mare Nostrum* had effectively transformed into a fragmented world which was composed of interconnected but distinct regions.²⁴ In the case of Byzantine Italy, Byzantines had been in constant fights with the Ostrogoths²⁵, Visigoths²⁶, Vandals²⁷ and later the Lombards.²⁸ On the other hand, multiple, recurrent problems such as natural disasters²⁹ or plague,³⁰ as well as the decreasing power of imperial authority shattered the *Mare Nostrum*, but the

²³ Lars Brownworth, *Lost to the West: The Forgotten Byzantine Empire that Rescued Western Civilization*, Crown, 2010.

²⁴ Peter Heather, *The Restoration of Rome: Barbarian Popes and Imperial Pretenders*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

²⁵ Thomas S. Burns, *A History of the Ostrogoths*, Indiana University Press, 1984.

²⁶ Lars Brownworth, *Lost to the West: The Forgotten Byzantine Empire that Rescued Western Civilization*, Crown, 2010, Norman Davies, *Avrupa Tarihi*, İmge, 2011.

²⁷ Walter Pohl, “Invasions and Ethnic Identity” in *Italy in the Early Middle Ages 476–1000*, ed. Cristina La Rocca, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 11–30, pp. 25–26.

²⁸ Paolo Delogu, “Devozione langobardi” in *Italy and Early Medieval Europe, Papers for Chris Wickham*, (ed.) Ross Balzeretti, Julia Barrow & Patricia Skinner, 2018, Oxford, 444–450.

²⁹ Michael Angold, “Kriz Zamanlarında Bizans Siyasal Süreci” in *Bizans Dünyası*, (eds.) Paul Stephenson, Alfa, c2023, pp. 31–53, 41–43, A.D. Lee, “The Empire at War”, *The Cambridge Companion to Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Mass (Cambridge, 2005).

³⁰ William Rosen, *Justinian’s Flea: Plague, Empire and the Birth of Europe* (Penguin Books, 2007);, Peregrine Horden, “Mediterranean Plague in the Age of Justinian,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Mass, Cambridge, 2005, pp. 134–160. However, Harper believes that the epidemic took lives of almost half of the population. (See Kyle Harper, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2017); Lee Mordechai, “Rejecting Catastrophe: The Case of Justinianic Plague” in *Past & Present*, vol. 24, n. 1 (2019): pp. 3–50

Mediterranean remained a vital conduit and the idea of imperial *oikumene* even after the Early Muslim Conquests.³¹

The imperial reach of Byzantium was wide, stretching all around the Mediterranean, to the east and Islamic world, and to the north and to the Caucasus. Its rule and its influence were exercised militarily, diplomatically, politically and economically.³²

As Cameron claims, the Byzantine Mediterranean did not simply fall into disconnected pieces; rather, local transformations gave rise to the new patterns of connectivity and adaptation as the archaeological surveys emphasize. Instead of the traditional perception of decline, we see a fragmented topography overlaid by resilient maritime routes and a coastal and insular world that linked communities across socio-political, economic or cultural differences.³³ Indeed, the transformation of the Byzantine Mediterranean, especially in the aftermath of Justinian's reconquest of North Africa and Italy and at the dawn of the rise of Islam, reshaped the sea in a sort of fragmentation between regional communities.³⁴ In this sense, this chapter adopts a set of concepts to explain this transformation by putting on glasses with coastal and insular lenses. These lenses in turn allow me to present optimally the coastal and insular world, generally labelled as exceptional or even marginal, and provide us with the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the transformation, adaptation, and connectivity which bolstered the Byzantine Mediterranean. This therefore presents the theoretical discussion of my dissertation

³¹ Walter E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and Early Islamic Conquest* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³² Averil Cameron, *Byzantine Matters* (Princeton University Press, 2014).

³³ Luca Zavagno, "No Island is an Island": The Byzantine Mediterranean in the Early Middle Ages, (600s–850), *The Legends Journal of European History Studies*, v. 1 (2020): pp. 57–80.

³⁴ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages, Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford University Press, 2005); Stephen O'Shea, *Sea of Faith: Islam and Christianity in the Medieval Mediterranean World* (Walker Books, 2007).

by applying this model to the Tyrrhenian world of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi in relation to the Byzantine Mediterranean.³⁵

This transformation, as expected, occurred in various layers, and so it does not present us with uniform and solid proofs to trace them. On the contrary, this transformation has tangible features, such as changing settlement patterns both in urban and rural aspects, the creation of themes or exarchates, changing trade routes as well as intangible ones like new religious practices, liturgies or the religious cults for Byzantine Naples and Amalfi as well as the other regions and cities of the Byzantine Empire during the period under scrutiny.³⁶ It is a well-known fact that the historiography concerning the Byzantine Mediterranean³⁷, Byzantine Italy³⁸ and Byzantine Naples and Amalfi have been characterized by bifurcation, discontinuity, and continuity. However, with the help of archaeology and careful reconstructions of historical narratives, now we are confronted with different models to narrate this in terms of transformation, connectivity, adaptation, and

³⁵ M. A. Ontiveros & C. M. Florit, “Islands, Change and late Antiquity” in *Change and Resilience: The Occupation of the Mediterranean Islands in Late Antiquity*, ed. Miguel Ángel Cau Ontiveros & Catalina Mas Florit (Oxford, 2019), pp. XXI–XXVI.

³⁶ Salvatore Cosentino, “Politics and Society,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino (Brill, 2021), 30–36.

³⁷ *The Cambridge History of Byzantine Empire* ed. Jonathan Shepard (Cambridge, 2009); Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome, A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (Viking, 2009); William Rosen, *Justinian's Flea: Plague, Empire and the Birth of Europe* (Penguin, 2007); *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Mass (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 113–133; Judith Herrin, *Bizans: Bir Ortaçağ İmparatorluğunun Şaşırtıcı Yaşamı* (İletişim Yayınları, 2013); John F. Haldon, *Bizans Tarih Atlası*, Alfa, 2021.

³⁸ J.M. Martin & A. Peters-Custos & V. Prigent (eds.) *L'heritage byzantin en Italie (VIII–XII siècle)* vol. 2, *Les cadres juridiques et sociaux et les institutions publiques* (Collection de l'Ecole française de Rome, 2012), 461; M. Matheau (eds.), *Italy and the East Roman World in the Medieval Mediterranean: Empire, Cities and Elites, 476–1204* (Routledge, 2021); Salvatore Cosentino, *Storia dell'Italia bizantina (VI–XI secolo) Da Giustiniano ai Normanni* (Bononia University Press, 2008); Vera von Falkenhausen, Marco di Branco (ed.) & Luca Farina (ed.), *Studi sull'Italia bizantina*, (Vielia, 2022); Vera von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina nell'Italia meridionale IX–XII secolo* (Ecumenica Editrice, 1978); Chris Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society 400–1000* (Ann Harbour Paperbacks, 1981); Claudio Azzara, *L'Italia dei barbari* (Il Mulino, 2002); Giorgio Ravennati, *I Bizantini in Italia* (Il Mulino, 2018); Thomas S. Brown, “Settlement and Military Policy in Byzantine Italy”, in *Papers in Italian Archaeology*, Lancaster Seminar, ed. H. Blake, T. Potter, D. Whitehouse (Oxford, 1978), pp. 323–338; T. S. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers. Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy AD 554–800* (British School at Rome, 1984).

resilience. In spite of the historiography evolving around the idea of decline, the agency of local networks and system of exchanges boasted the vitality of the Byzantine Mediterranean through the early Middle Ages, instead of the traditionally accepted revival of the cities, trade and connectivity after eleventh century.³⁹ Moreover, the idea of the people on the move alongside the objects on the move has paved the way of rethinking the trade routes and connections during the early Middle Ages, led us to reassess the level of communication throughout the Byzantine Mediterranean. As McCormick accurately shows, there was an intensive reconstruction of the movement of people and a vast range of objects, from relics to ornaments, from coins to textiles or bulk goods. He argues that there were continued, even expanding trade networks, well into the early Middle Ages, and the role of urban or ecclesiastical elites on the commerce and communications persisted.⁴⁰ In this light, one may immediately note that the Byzantine Mediterranean, Byzantine Italy and Byzantine Duchies of Tyrrhenian Sea, all of them were notions that functioned like cauldrons to produce potions, but also acted like the potion itself, just like them these terms were composed of diverse administrative, military, socio-economic, cultural practices that were performed by different communities in different spaces and times.

In a nutshell, the Byzantine Mediterranean during the period under scrutiny is defined by fragmentation and connectivity. The seventh and eighth centuries witnessed a profound reorganization of the Byzantine world. Not only did Byzantine Naples and Amalfi have to keep up with these significant changes, the

³⁹ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford, 2003).

⁴⁰ Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, AD 300–900* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

whole imperial administrative, military and fiscal system had been changing and adopting new sets of skills. For instance, the creation of the thematic system stemmed from the need to defend the empire more effectively and to organize the provinces after facing a great loss of territory in the 7th century, to adapt to the new world and face the challenges of external invasions, fiscal disintegration, plague or climatic crises as well as political disturbances.⁴¹ It is true that these centuries did not constitute a period of particular prosperity and stability for the Byzantine Empire, yet I find myself resistant to the traditional explanations of decline and disintegration, as instead it seems that ‘the empire that would not die’ calls attention to its high level of adaptation and resilience.⁴² Also, I find myself reluctant to accept another traditional explanation that Naples and Amalfi were just peripheral places in far-flung provinces. On the contrary, the archaeological record, including ceramics, seals, and coins, provide us with evidence of the vibrant communication and connectedness of even the extremes of the empire., For instance, Naples and Cherson exhibited many similarities and presented similar types of material evidence (as exemplified by the production of distinctive types of globular amphorae). In fact, the system of exchanges during the period under scrutiny reveals a resilient maritime corridor stretching from Rome to Constantinople, arching through the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Straits of Messina, and from the Ionian to the Aegean Sea.⁴³

⁴¹ John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁴² John Haldon, *The Empire that would not die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640–740* (Harvard University Press, 2016), pp. 34–53.

⁴³ Paul Arthur, “Pots and Boundaries. On Cultural and Economic Areas between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages” in *LRCW 2: Late Roman Coarse Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean, vol. I*, BAR International Series 1662 (1) (Archaeopress, 2007), pp. 15–28.

With these preliminary caveats in mind, I would like to move on to the concepts and notions which will present the main pillars of my dissertation; transformation, adaptation and resilience as related to connectivity, the Byzantine *koine* and Christianization as a part of this complexity. Indeed, this transformation of Naples and Amalfi and their integration to the Byzantine *koine* must be understood in the context of the changing Mediterranean. It is well known that by the mid-sixth century, the Italian peninsula had been facing fragmentation in administrative, socio-cultural and ethnical aspects, and that in this sense, the Gothic Wars (535–564) did not unify the peninsula. On the contrary, the Byzantines regained and reasserted imperial control over mainly coastal and insular areas of the peninsula, while the inland was mainly controlled by the new emergent power, that of the Lombards.⁴⁴ By the ninth century, the Muslim incursions started to become more aggressive, in turn, resulting with the fall of Taormina in 902, which marked a turning point in Byzantine history. The tenth century also highlights the foundation of the Catepanate of Italy (965), in consequence of which the Mediterranean became more fragmented between two main monotheistic religions: Christianity and Islam.⁴⁵ In this light, scholars have purposed different conceptual frameworks to explain this transformation. Early models emphasize all-encompassing, overarching narratives, such as Pirenne's thesis on the rise of Islam⁴⁶, yet there are different models which tend to the ideas of adaptation, connectivity and resilience.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Giorgio Ravennati, *I Bizantini in Italia* (Il Mulino, 2018), pp. 46–68.

⁴⁵ Stephen O'Shea, *Sea of Faith: Islam and Christianity in the Medieval Mediterranean World* (Walker & Company, 2006), pp. 19–48.

⁴⁶ See Henri Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (Angelico Press, 2021).

⁴⁷ Peregrine Horden, "Knitting Together the Unconjoined: Mediterranean Connectivity Revised" in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie/Journal of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 145 (2020): pp. 197–218.

The pioneering work of Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, portrays the Mediterranean as a region, a zone, a topography which is characterized by its high level of connectivity, defined as a kind of kaleidoscope of human micro ecologies, a mosaic of small, locally integrated and interconnected communities along the Mediterranean coastlines. It might seem like an elementary theory, on the contrary it presents one of the most complex and multilayered construction which led us to rethink the importance of locality in a wider Mediterranean perspective, could be ideally paired with Wickham's fragmented societies, provided a huge number of niches to human exploitation.⁴⁸ With this perspective, change is perceived as not a revolutionary trend which can be applied to only exceptional cases like the economic success of Amalfi⁴⁹ or another emerging settlement in northern Italy, like Comacchio.⁵⁰ Instead this transformation indicates a gradual reassembly of these interconnected micro-regions, for instance the coastal and insular settlements for Byzantine Mediterranean, paved the way of shifting economic networks, maritime routes and influence.⁵¹ As Wickham stresses, to gain a better understanding of the Mediterranean, by the ninth century, one has to take regional variation and adaptive economic behaviours into consideration. In addition, he interprets this transformation in two main phases; the first is the ancient phase, which was state-driven and constantly fed the fiscal machinery, while the second cycle of the Mediterranean took shape around local production and the

⁴⁸ Peregrine Horden & Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A History of Mediterranean Sea* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 12–17.

⁴⁹ Giuseppe Coniglio, *Amalfi e il commercio Amalfitano nel medioevo*, Estratto dalla *Nuova Rivista Storica*, Anno XXVIII–XXIX (Società Anonima Editrice Dante Alighieri, 1944–1945), pp. 4–5.

⁵⁰ Sauro Gelichi et. al. "History of a forgotten town: Comacchio and its archaeology" in *From One Sea to Another: Trading Places in the European and Mediterranean Early Middle Ages*, ed. Sauro Gelichi & Richard Hodges (Brepols, 2012), pp. 169–205, 186–194.

⁵¹ Warren Treadgold, "Travel and Trade in the Dark Ages: Reviewed Work Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, AD 300–900," *The International History Review*, vol. 26, no. 1, [pp. 80–88], p. 82.

surplus of the urban elites. In fact, his argument on regionalism as the dominant feature of the second trade cycle of the Mediterranean seems crucial, as it applied to the Byzantine maritime settlements, where the coastal and insular system developed peculiar methods for communication and interaction. Yet, it is important to note that Wickham deliberately draws a line between eastern and western Mediterranean by the ninth century, as he indicates that the eastern Mediterranean, particularly Egypt and southern Levant, was wealthier, and presents us with a more coherent picture of commercial activities than the western counterpart. The Aegean and southern Tyrrhenian, although Muslim control, hosted some of the most complex maritime exchange, but after 800, the Carolingian and Muslim wealth, as these two political entities were not yet completely internal to Mediterranean world, paved the way for revival in the broader interregional trade in the western Mediterranean. In this sense, as Wickham employs the phrase, the second cycle of trade does not show us a unified Mediterranean, but rather an offspring of microregions and their interactions.⁵²

Seen through the prism of fragmentation and resilience, the histories of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi emerge not as static tales of marginality and decline, but as dynamic narratives shaped by shifting maritime geographies, local agency, and adaptative integration into a broader, evolving the Byzantine *koine*. This conceptual scaffolding, informed by connectivity, regional variation, and material exchange, not only reframes these Tyrrhenian communities within a more nuanced Mediterranean discourse, but also offers the necessary lens through which to examine how local patterns of transformation mirror, absorb and reconfigure the

⁵² Chris Wickham, "The Mediterranean around 800: On the Brink of the Second Cycle of Trade," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 58 (2004): 161–174, 166–172

imperial, economic and ecclesiastical pressures of the time. What follows builds upon the foundation, tracing the trajectories of Naples and Amalfi within these interwoven circuits of adaptation, and exploring how Christianization, administrative and fiscal structures and material culture illuminate the contours of a world far more complex than narratives of rupture alone would allow.⁵³

1.2. Adaptation and Resilience

The intricate interplay between adaptation, maritime connectivity, and local agency forms a critical foundation for understanding how Byzantine coastal and insular communities navigated the shifting dynamics of the early medieval Mediterranean. Far from being passive outposts, cities like Naples and Amalfi, actively shaped their environments through flexible responses to crisis, evolving administrative and commercial systems, and embeddedness within multi-scalar networks. This section brings into focus how political, socio-economic and ecological systems intertwined, showing how resilience was cultivated not only through institutional structures but through lived, material and transactional realities anchored in the sea itself.⁵⁴

Indeed, we are confronted with a certain level of adaptation and resilience that Byzantines had and these important skills were honed to perfection in different layers of administration, production, and exchange networks.⁵⁵ In fact, by applying Halling's ecological adaptive cycle⁵⁶ to Byzantine society, Haldon indicates that

⁵³ Eliodoro Savino, *Campania tardoantica* (284-604 d.C), Edipuglia, 2005.

⁵⁴ Vera von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina nell'Italia meridionale IX-XII secolo*, Eumenica Editrice, 1978.

⁵⁵ John Haldon & Arlene Rosen, "Society and Environment in the East Mediterranean ca. 300–1800 BCE: Problems of Resilience, Adaptation and Transformation: Introductory Essay," in *Human Ecology* 46, no. 3 (2018): 275–290.

⁵⁶ C. S. Holling, "Understanding the Complexity of Economic, Ecological and Social Systems" in *Ecosystems* 4, no. 5 (2001): 390–405.

Byzantine agrarian and more importantly fiscal reforms (seventh century) corresponded to the dire need for reorganization of the imperial fiscal machine, since this was the backbone of the empire like any pre-industrial society.⁵⁷ Furthermore, this approach integrates even the so-called catastrophic events such as plagues, climatic swings or constant wars with social agency, by underlining the fact that neither administrative, military or cultural nor ecological and natural crises turned the Mediterranean, rather acted within the complex, multilayered systems.⁵⁸ In other words, different theories on the Byzantine Mediterranean could ideally allow us to perceive the sea is an offspring of constant dialogue between the Western, Central and Eastern Mediterranean.⁵⁹

This adaptation also stems from imperial flexibility in relation to the local production. Arthur clearly connects coastal settlements like Emporio in Chios, an Aegean island located in the Northern Aegean Sea; Butrint, in the Southern Adriatic; Comacchio, in the Northern Adriatic; or Naples, in the Tyrrhenian Sea, by interpreting their interactions and commercial activities to show both the imperial and local adaptation skills during the period between seventh and ninth centuries. He cogently indicates that these coastal cities were important centres of imperial connectivity. According to him, the materials that have been yielded from these settlements which also provide us with a differentiation in size and function

⁵⁷ John Haldon, *The Empire that Would Not Die* (Harvard University Press, 2016).

⁵⁸ J. Haldon & J. Goldstone, "Ancient states, empires and exploitation: problems and perspectives" in *The Dynamics of Ancient Empires: State Power from Assyria to Byzantium*, ed. I. Morris & W. Schneidel (Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 3–29.

⁵⁹ Cyprus, Sicily and Crete in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages may serve as a historical example of the theories outlined above. For a detailed analysis of the island of Cyprus, see Luca Zavagno, *Cyprus between Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages (ca. 600–800): An Island in Transition* (Routledge, 2017); for Sicily, see, Sarah Davis-Secord, *Where the Three Worlds Met: Sicily in the Early Medieval Mediterranean* (Cornell University Press, 2017);, for Crete, see Dimitris Tsoukarakas, *Byzantine Crete from the 5th century to the Venetian Conquest* (Historical Publications St. D. Basilopoulos, 1988).

like Naples, an administrative centre and port; Comacchio, as an *emporium*; and Amalfi, as a gateway community, shed light on the hybrid nature of these settlements, their adaptation skills and also their utilization of imperial power as a source of authority. In fact, he also draws a picture of a coastal and insular world in relation to Constantinople, as these insular-coastal administrative and commercial activities do not provide us with a one-size-fits-all model. Instead, we are confronted with relatively responsive, highly adaptive, distinct power zones, acting in relation to Constantinopolitan authority but this authority was also highly adaptable and fluid in nature.⁶⁰

In this light, one can bring for a historical dispute to briefly show the adaptation skills displayed by Naples and Amalfi. Adaptation, in my opinion, is not a concept which is only related to urban transformation or to the number of amphorae, but also to the actions themselves. The ninth century century a brand-new product in commercial activities, in which Naples had a huge role to pay: the slave economy. As Muslim pirates were highly active in this slave economy, they were not the only ones targeting the Christian populations for both ransom and sale to the Muslims. This system also changed from an opportunity to a well-established branch of commercial activities. Naples was no victim to the Arab incursion: Neapolitans reaped benefits from the slave economy, as Naples was one of the cities where a slave market could be found like Palermo, Reggio di Calabria and most probably Taranto in the ninth century.⁶¹ This in turn led to Naples playing the role

⁶⁰ Paul Arthur, "From Italy to the Aegean and back notes on archaeology of Byzantine maritime trade" in *From One Sea to Another: Trading places in the European and Mediterranean Early Middle Ages*, ed. Sauro Gelichi & Richard Hodges (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), pp. 337–351, 342–344.

⁶¹ Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 777.

of intermediary between the raiding zone and inland, as well as becoming a distribution zone for Mediterranean destinations like Alexandria, Tunis, Tripoli and Baghdad in the Muslim sphere. Neapolitans, as mostly Christians, except for the Jewish community, developed a symbiotic relationship, which I will return to examining in the next chapters. In addition, the fact that the Arabs offered a port for exchange and a market for commerce of enslaved people underscores the complex nature of interactions.⁶²

On the other hand, connectivity, a concept that includes different types of connection and contact as well as movements of communities, places, and objects — is central to my discussion, since it is an integral part of the transformation and integration of the cities of Naples and Amalfi into the Byzantine Mediterranean. In fact, the relationship between micro-regions paved the way of maintaining trade and dialogue alive between the communities. In fact, Horden emphasizes the crucial role that micro-regions held on the connectivity, since communication, production and trade were related to their existence.⁶³ This network theory is improved with quantitative models that arise from mapping trade routes, ports, and harbors the administrative policies to control them, this analysis led us to rethink the early medieval Mediterranean by revealing large scale structures.⁶⁴ The connectivity of ports and harbors is another system that Byzantines inherited from Romans in the Italian peninsula. Zanini illustrates that the non-agricultural products as well as imported goods indicate the existence of markets, and the distribution of

⁶² Michael McCormick, “New Light on the ‘Dark Ages’: How the Slave Trade Fuelled the Carolingian Economy,” *Past and Present* 177, no. 1 (2002): pp. 17–64.

⁶³ Peregrine Horden, *Knitting Together the Unconjoined: Mediterranean Connectivity Revised*, 2022, 199-201

⁶⁴ Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, “Harbours and Maritime Networks as Complex Adaptive Systems – A Thematic Introduction.” In *Harbours and Maritime Networks as Complex Adaptive Systems*, ed. Preiser-Kapeller and Falko Daim. Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum in Mainz, 17.–18.10.2013 (Mainz: Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 2015), 1–24.

these was related to the roads and ports of the Italian peninsula.⁶⁵ However, one may also mention that following the production and distribution system is not an easy task due to the complex nature of consumption, which includes a vast array of products from bulk goods to ornaments, from spices to silk or from relics to amphorae.⁶⁶ This is not to ignore the fact that these objects, especially ceramics, allow us to gain a better understanding on the communication and connectivity along the maritime cities and their harbours, they must be interpreted as substantial markers of this complex matrix of connectivity.⁶⁷ Although the archaeological studies on Byzantine Italy tended to prioritize African pottery (ARSW⁶⁸) and paid less attention to the products from Central and Eastern Mediterranean, scholarship had gradually been adopting new perspectives over the last decades. Scholars such as Vittoria Carsana, Paul Arthur and Enrico Zanini have revealed the significant role of harbors, ports, coastal proximity, navigable rivers in the circulation of pottery and amphorae, and therefore on their connectivity with the sea as this fluid element present the over-arching complex system.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Enrico Zanini, *Le Italie Bizantine: territorio, insediamenti ed economia nella provincia bizantina d'Italia: 6.-8. secolo* (Edipuglia, 1998), 20–28.

⁶⁶ Paul Arthur, “Pots and Boundaries” (2007), generally.

⁶⁷ Enrico Zanini, “Non-Agricultural Items: Local Production, Importation and Redistribution,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino (Brill, 2021), p. 300.

⁶⁸ African Red Slip Ware (ARSW), a fine, red-slipped tableware mass-produced in North Africa (especially modern Tunisia) from the 1st to 7th centuries AD, circulated widely across the Late Roman and early Byzantine Mediterranean. Archaeological finds from Naples attest to a substantial presence of ARSW from the 5th to 7th centuries, reflecting the city’s enduring commercial ties to North African production centers and its active participation in interregional trade networks. Remarkably, Naples preserves some of the latest ARSW types discovered in Italy, indicating imports persisted even as they dwindled elsewhere. This continued influx highlights Naples’ strategic maritime position and Byzantine orientation during Late Antiquity. By the late 7th century, however, the Arab conquest of North Africa disrupted these supply lines, ending the importation of African ceramics and marking a transition toward more regional ceramic consumption between the 8th and 10th centuries, mirroring Naples’ gradual reconfiguration within Mediterranean economic cycles. (Paul Arthur 2007, 17–19.

⁶⁹ Enrico Zanini, “La ceramica bizantina in Italia tra VI e VIII secolo. Un Sistema informativo territoriale per lo studio della distribuzione e del consumo,” in *Vile Congres International sdur la Cermique Medievale en Mediterranee*, Thessoniki, 2002, 381-394

Indeed, the sea could shape individual and social identities, for it could be classified as an hyperobject / hyperfact, and the sea or the water functions as an agential power, much as people or things do. As Harpster indicates that “the sheer scale of water, its multiple dates of existence, extensive chronology, and our continual interaction with water make it more than we can perceptually contain.”⁷⁰ And his conclusion could be ideally paired with Morton’s brief but striking claim: “hyperobjects defy human time and spatial scales, yet, like other thing in human-thing relationships, they still compel our actions.”⁷¹ In this sense, the sea reveals itself as a centre of attention, reminding us of Harpster’s conclusion: “Considerations of the sea’s relationship with human activities are also a reminder that, as stated previously, this was not a human-centred world.”⁷²

In this light, maritime connectivity of people and objects, definitions of the relationship between sea and land, ideological values, and coastal identities are crucial to understand how the world around the maritime societies was molded, and therefore controlled, reorganized, or sometimes abandoned.⁷³ Even though Broadbank makes this observation for the islands and insularity, in my opinion, this could ideally allow us to make further observations concerning the coastal and insular connectivity of the Byzantine Mediterranean in a wider perspective, by considering the sea as an independent element in itself. In this light, as the specific agents or kinds of pathways of connectivity have been pointed out and formalized, the coastal and insular world presents the conceptual pillar of my dissertation. In fact, a growing body of work treats that Byzantine littoral and islands as an

⁷⁰ Matthew Harpster, *Reconstructing Maritime*, 225.

⁷¹ After Matthew Harpster, *ibid.*, 225.

⁷² Matthew Harpster, *ibid.*, 225.

⁷³ Cyprian Broadbank, *An Island Archaeology of the Early Cyclades* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 7–8.

interconnected subsystem.⁷⁴ For instance, Cosentino emphasizes on that Mediterranean islands could manage to maintain commercial ties with also Carolingians and Islamic markets by arguing that they remained part and parcel of the Byzantine *koine* well into the early Middle Ages. Yet, more importantly he points to the fact that both regionalism, reminding us of Horden and Purcell's micro-regionality based connectivity, and globalism, can ideally be paired with Preiser-Kapeller's long-distance connectivity, and these were offspring of the maritime environment in the passage from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages.⁷⁵ In fact, he notes that Byzantium was shaped by its waters; furthermore, Byzantines managed to survive because of the waters and obviously the insular system from the Balearics to Cyprus, due to the fact that this connected system allowed Byzantines to operate large-scale movements between the Western, Central, and Eastern Mediterranean in administrative, military, and commercial aspects.⁷⁶ One may recall the moment of the *strategos* of Kibyrrhaiotai,⁷⁷ when a certain Manos⁷⁸ was sent to the Italian peninsula by Leo III (675–741) on a naval

⁷⁴ See, *The Insular System of the Early Byzantine Mediterranean, Archaeology and History*, ed. Demetrios Michaelides, Philippe Pergola, Enrico Zanini, BAR International Series 2523 (Oxford: Bar Publishing, 2013); *Windows into the Medieval Mediterranean*, ed. Jeanette M. Fregulla (Routledge, 2025).

⁷⁵ Salvatore Cosentino, "Pillars of the Empire: The Economic Role of Large Islands in the Mediterranean from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages" in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 76 (2022): pp. 245–286.

⁷⁶ Salvatore Cosentino, "Insularity, economy and social landscape in the early Byzantine period" in *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e NeoEllenici*, vol. 55 (2018): pp. 89–104.

⁷⁷ *Kibyrrhaiotai* was originated from *Karabisiano*i and its territory was a kind of patchwork, including the southern coastline of Anatolia and the Aegean islands with its *strategos* being located in Samos, rather than being a formal theme. During the middle of seventh century, *Karabisiano*i was literally induced by *Kibyrrhaiotai* as it was constructed as a naval theme with its capital, Attaleia, surrounding more or less the same area of *Karabisiano*i, encompassing the southern Anatolia, including Caria, Lycia and Pamphylia as well as the Dodecanese (Jean-Claude Cheynet, *The Byzantine Aristocracy and Its Military Function*, Ashgate, 2006, p. 115).

⁷⁸ There is debate on the event, as Bertolini says that this was not directed to Rome but to the Lombards, while Brandes questions the existence of Manes and this event. (See Ottorino Bertolini, "Quale fu il vero obbiettivo assegnato in Italia da Leone III Osaurico all'armata di Manes, stratego dei Cinyrreoti?" in *Byzantinische Forschungen*, vol. 2, 1967, pp. 15–49, Wolfram Brandes, "Pejorative Phantomnamen im 8. Jahrhundert: Ein Beitrag zur Quellenkritik des Theophanes und deren Konsequenzen für die historische Forschung" in *Zwischen Polis, Provinz und Periferie. Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. L.M. Hoffmann & A. Monchizadeh,

expedition to the Italian peninsula, to resolve an intrigue between Constantinople and Rome.⁷⁹ The naval expedition failed due to sinkage in the Adriatic, but Byzantine claims on both sides of Mediterranean never ceased. Another example stemming from the Tyrrhenian world is related to Sicily, as the Sicilian *strategos* also had the crucial role of maintaining imperial power across the Tyrrhenian and Ionian coastlines, adopting the skills necessary to exert a kind of soft power along the central Mediterranean ports and harbours.⁸⁰

What emerges, then, is a portrait of a world constantly in motion, not only geographically, but ideologically and structurally, where adaptation was not simply a response to crisis, but a defining characteristic of interaction with imperial power, local production, and maritime space. The sea, acting both as a connective medium and an independent agent, framed the identities and functions of Byzantine littoral communities. Whether through the movements of people and objects, circulation of ceramics and slaves, or the deployment of naval forces to mediate regional disputes, the maritime system provided the stage on which resilience was performed, and imperial influence was rearticulated. In this setting, the coastal and insular zones of the Tyrrhenian world did not just mirror change, they helped shape it.⁸¹

Wiesbaden, 2005, pp. 93–125). On the contrary Demirer and Elam raise concern on the historical reality of Manes as the *strategos* of Kibyrrhaiotai due to the lead seal which is found in the excavations of Kibyra. (Ünal Demirer & Nilgün Elam, “Lead Seals of the Kibyra Excavations” in *ADALYA*, vol. 21, 2018, pp. 245–276).

⁷⁹ Salvatore Cosentino, “Politics and Society,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), p. 46.

⁸⁰ Luca Zavagno, ‘The sublime objects of liminality’: the Byzantine insular-coastal *koine* and its administration in the passage from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages, (ca. 600–ca. 850)” in *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 48, no. 1 (2024): 22–41.

⁸¹ Salvatore Cosentino, “Politics and Society,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 46–48.

1.3. The Byzantine *koine* and Connectivity

The maritime world of the Byzantine Mediterranean, framed by the fluid interplay of ports, islands, and coastal cities, reveals a landscape in which connectivity, resilience, and adaptation formed the core principles of survival and exchange. Moving beyond simplistic binaries of center and periphery, this section examines the coastal and insular system not merely as marginal zones but as dynamic thresholds, liminal spaces where imperial authority, local agency and environmental conditions converged. Drawing on both conceptual frameworks and material evidence, I explore how ports, harbours, and urban elites collectively shaped a networked system that was not only reactive to change but also instrumental in driving transformation across the Mediterranean basin.⁸²

Indeed, islands and coastlines functioned as nodes in a resilient maritime system and bolstered the connectivity of the Byzantine *koine*. Zavagno cogently points to the fact that large islands such as Sicily, Crete, and Cyprus played the role of spaces where the world met due to the strategic locations they occupied on the maritime routes⁸³ and their high level of adaptation, which enabled them to continue to retain their bonds to Constantinople, the neighbouring regions, and vice versa. But it is not only islands that Zavagno presents as part and parcel of the Byzantine *koine*; he also merges the coastal cities into this system by presenting the coastal cities as the backcloth of the coastal and archipelagic world.⁸⁴ His

⁸² See M. Matheau (eds.), *Italy and the East Roman World in the Medieval Mediterranean: Empire, Cities and Elites*, 476-1204, Routledge, 2021.

⁸³ See Lucia Arcifa & Annliese Nef & Vivien Prigent, “Sicily in a Mediterranean context: imperialism, Mediterranean polycentrism and internal diversity (6th–10th) century)” in *Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome*, 133-2, 2021.

⁸⁴ Zavagno, *The Byzantine City from Heraclius to the Fourth Crusade* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 129–130.

contribution is important because he illustrates the notion of coastal and insular *koine* as a constellation of liminal spaces. He thus defines the liminality as spatial and functional in character by highlighting its power to mark zones of threshold, ambiguity, and transformative potential. Liminality does not equate to marginality. These liminal spaces, such as coastal and insular settlements, act as connectors, intermediaries, by no means where they fringe, and they themselves shaped imperial dynamics rather than only being recipients⁸⁵, as he summarizes:

My definition of liminal concerning the insular and coastal *koine* hinges on three foundational characteristics. The first is the notion of the transitional (between an inside and an outside) as intrinsic to the creation of spaces of hybridity in the Mediterranean, compounded by frequent peddler/cabotage movements. The second relates to the quintessential ‘instability’ (or, more accurately, temporariness) which dictates the tempo and the unique conceptualizations of cultural and social life in liminal spaces. (...) My third and last characteristic relates to the concept of islandness as opposed to that of insularity. Islandness is a linguistically neutral term that has socio-identitarian connotations (defining all that concerns islands) as well as spatial associations (for it may be regarded as a constitutive part of the triad of heterotopic spaces together with the sea and the ship).⁸⁶

In fact, one may bring an example into consideration by indicating that this relationship between coastal cities was strong enough to maintain commercial activities vital since the contemporary (ninth-century) pottery has been unearthed

⁸⁵Zavagno 2024, 26–27.

⁸⁶ Zavagno 2024, 28.

from Naples, which is located on the southwest of Tyrrhenian Sea; and from Cherson, another coastal settlement that is located in the Black Sea.⁸⁷ On the other hand, Amalfi, sharing the same location, was an active part of seaborne activities since the earliest centuries of its foundation.⁸⁸

The concepts of adaptation and resilience have become crucial and influential in framing how Byzantine *koine* and its societies coped with changing dynamics and features. One may recall Holling's theory once again as his adaptive circle⁸⁹, growth-collapse-reorganization, was applied to Byzantium by Haldon and Doonan as they show how the imperial fiscal system coped with the decreasing sources both in agrarian and economic senses. This in turn led the imperial policies to reorganize agrarian activities by favoring grain production for export to stabilize the empire after a crisis.⁹⁰

It is significant to note that environmental issues were not the sole driving forces for such a change. Rather, so-called disasters like earthquakes, climate shifts or invasions always quickly interacted with social structure and urban or ecclesiastical elites, if not both, during the early Middle Ages.⁹¹ Here, one can also mention that the high level of adaptation is constantly emphasized by the scholars who work on coastal and insular system. The latter group has shown higher

⁸⁷ Chris Wickham, "Comacchio and the Central Mediterranean" in *From one sea to another: trading places in the European and Mediterranean Early Middle Ages: Proceedings of the International Conference, Comacchio, 27th–29th March 2009 = Da un mare all'altro: luoghi di scambio nell'Alto Medioevo europeo e mediterraneo: atti del seminario internazionale, Comacchio, 27–29 marzo 2009*, ed. S. Gelichi & R. Hodges, 2012, 609.

⁸⁸ Arthur, "From Italy to the Aegean ...," 342.

⁸⁹ C. S. Holling, "Understanding the Complexity of Economic, Ecological and Social Systems" in *Ecosystems*, vol. 4, no. 5, pp. 330–405.

⁹⁰ John Haldon et. al, "The Climate and Environment of Byzantine Anatolia: Integrating Science, History and Archaeology" in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XLV, vol. 2 (2014): 113–161.

⁹¹ See Haldon, "Cappadocia will be given over to ruin and become a desert. Environmental evidence for historically attested events in the 7th and 10th centuries," in *Byzantina Mediterranea: Festschrift für Johannes Koder zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Klaus Belke and Johannes Koder, 215–230 (Vienna: Böhlau, 2007).

performance on adaptive skills. These include case studies on Sicily,⁹² Crete,⁹³ and Cyprus⁹⁴; or on a smaller scale, studies on Aegean islands such as Rhodes,⁹⁵ Chios,⁹⁶ or Naxos⁹⁷ have shown, as well as those on coastal cities such as Butrint,⁹⁸ Comacchio,⁹⁹ Venice,¹⁰⁰ Cherson,¹⁰¹ or Attaleia,¹⁰² during the period between the sixth and tenth centuries, could have performed. In this regard, the Duchy of Naples, enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy as well as the *strategos* of Sicily or the Exarch of Ravenna.¹⁰³ The fluid nature of Byzantine imperial authority allowed the themes, duchies or exarchate to maintain their own relationship with surroundings as well as corresponding the imperial needs throughout the Mediterranean, rather a strict imperial governance.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, the

⁹² Alessandra Molinari, "Sicily from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages: Resilience and Disruption" in *Change and Resilience, the Occupation of Mediterranean Islands of Late Antiquity*, ed. Miguel Ángel Cau Ontiveros & Catalina Mas Florit, pp. 87–110 (Oxbow Books, 2019).

⁹³ Enrico Zanini, "Macro-Economy, Micro-Ecology, and the Fate of Urbanized Landscape in Late Antique and Early Byzantine City" *Change and Resilience, the Occupation of Mediterranean Islands of Late Antiquity*, ed. Miguel Ángel Cau Ontiveros & Catalina Mas Florit, pp. 138–162 (Oxbow Books, 2019).

⁹⁴ David M. Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus, 491–1191*, Cyprus Research Centre, 2009.

⁹⁵ Georgios Deligiannakis, *The Dodecanese and the Eastern Aegean Islands in Late Antiquity*, AD 300–700 (Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁹⁶ Nikolas Bakirtzis and Xenophon Moniaros, "Mastic Production in Medieval Chios: Economic Flows and Transitions in an Insular Setting," *Al-Masāq* 31, no. 2 (2019): 171–195; John Boardman, "The Island of Chios Recent Discoveries," *Archaeology* 8, no. 4 (1955): 250.

⁹⁷ Sam Turner and Jim Crow, "The Christianization of Island Landscapes in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: New Perspectives from Naxos in the Aegean," in *Change and Resilience: The Occupation of Mediterranean Islands in Late Antiquity*, ed. Miguel Ángel Cau Ontiveros & Catalina Mas Florit, 217–234 (Oxbow Books, 2019).

⁹⁸ Richard Hodges, William Bowden, Kosta Lako, and R. D. Andrews, *Byzantine Butrint: excavations and surveys 1994–1999* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2004).

⁹⁹ Diego Calao & Sauro Gelichi, "Sailing the Early Medieval European Trade: the Medieval Emporium of Comacchio (6th–10th Century)," in *EAA European Archaeology Association, 13th Annual Meeting ZADAR*, 2007, ed. Rossi, Irena Radić, Andrej Gaspari, and Andrzej Pydyn (Zagreb: Hrvatsko arheološko društvo, 2008).

https://www.academia.edu/1072747/Sailing_the_Early_Medieval_European_Trade_the_Mediterranean_Emporium_of_Comacchio_6th_10th_Century_AD.

¹⁰⁰ Luigi Andrea Berto, *Early Medieval Venice: Cultural Memory and History* (Routledge, 2020).

¹⁰¹ Alia Romanchuk, *Studien zur Geschichte und Archäologie des byzantinischen Cherson* (Brill, 2005).

¹⁰² Fermude Gülsevinç, "Two Sides of the Medallion: Byzantine Attaleia and Naples during the passage between the Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages (6th and 10th centuries)" *ADALYA*, 2025, pp. 13–18 (Forthcoming).

¹⁰³ Deborah M. Deligiannakis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁰⁴ Gian Pietro Brogiolo 'Il popolamento e l'organizzazione del territorio tra età romana e Alto Medioevo,' in *Atlante del Garda. Uomini, vicende, paesi, vol. I*, ed. Carlo Simoni, 143–165 (Brescia, Lombardy: Grafo, 1991).

network of ports and harbours could ideally be paired with the archaeological data, coins, seals, ceramics, has been yielded from coastal and insular cities, led us to reconstruct the level of economic prosperity and constant dialogue with.¹⁰⁵

Another aspect which needs to be taken into consideration concerns the urban elites since they have continued to become patrons of the urban buildings' activities, not in Classical sense but in a Christian penchant, as I will be discussing later in this chapter. Moreover, they sustained demand and long-distance contacts. This in turn helped the resilient coastal-insular economy to persist, buoyed by regular trade with the eastern and southern Islamic Mediterranean world, Carolingian economic system and the outpost of the Byzantine *koine*.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, material culture underscores the networks in question, especially imported pottery findings such as amphorae from Butrint decorated with reddish-brown spiral bands, an import likely from Southern Italy, which finds close counterparts at Campanian sites and even at Cherson on the Crimean coast, such as in coastal sites show how they were integrated in the exchange systems of the so-called Dark Ages.

In fact, amphorae and tableware from North Africa, the Levant, and Italy found in southern Italy, the eastern Adriatic, the Black Sea or the Aegean islands, testify to interregional cabotage. At the same time, one has to mention that the hinterlands of these coastal cities, the rural sites receded from this large-scale trade

¹⁰⁵ Michael McCormick, "Movements and Markets in the First Millenium Information, Containers and Shipwrecks," in *Trade and Markets in Byzantium*, ed. Cécile Morrisson, 51–98 (Dumbarton Oaks, 2012).

¹⁰⁶ Peter Sarris, *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

as Horden and Purcell would describe the peninsulas and mountain valleys as fragile mosaics of agricultural problems to supply the coast.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, harbours are fundamental, presenting the core structural element of my dissertation, in the very basic sense, without ports and harbours discussing Byzantine *koine* could not be possible, as ports and harbours were the places where the interactions, communications, trade have been done, therefore, the ports are the places where the land meets the sea. In fact, Karmon indicates as the following “A port cannot be regarded as an isolated phenomenon, but as part of political, social, and economic life of a region.”¹⁰⁸, therefore it seems very useful to point out to the fact that this connectivity can be understood only if we carefully deal with the ports and harbours of the Byzantine *koine* as one can fully begin to grasp a better understanding. Basically, a port or harbour, either constructed to cted to corres local/regional demand or long-distance trade, is a space, a hub, therefore, its development is generally related to the level of interactions occurring on this in between area.¹⁰⁹ Several factors are embedded in the progress of the ports but two remain as vital: first one is related to natural conditions as natural harbour facilities present, the second is related to the geographical location proving the harbour with a certain level of traffic.¹¹⁰ Byzantines quickly focused on the coastlines, rather than relying on only agricultural surplus and rural production, maritime routes, sea trade, port and harbours and imperial taxes on goods or ports. For instance, the popularity of the ports and harbours quickly increased between 6th and 7th century, as Sami

¹⁰⁷ Joanita Vroom, “The Byzantine Web: Pottery and Connectivity Between the Southern Adriatic and the Eastern Mediterranean” in *Adriatico altomedievale (VI–XI secolo): Scambi, porti, produzioni*, ed. Sauro Gelichi and Claudio Negrèlli, 285–310 (Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2017).

¹⁰⁸ Yehuda Karmon, “Geographical Components in the Study of Ancient Mediterranean Ports” in *Harbour Archaeology: Proceedings of the First International Workshop on Ancient Mediterranean Harbours, Caesarea Maritima*, BAR International Series, ed. A. Raban, 105–114 (Oxford, 1985).

¹⁰⁹ Karmon 1985, 106–108.

¹¹⁰ Karmon 1985, 107.

delivers a careful examination of Late Roman/Byzantine ports of Byzantine Italy, in fact, Byzantines inherited a vast interregional network of land and sea which was constructed on a large territory from Spain to Anatolia, from North Africa to Italian peninsula. The conception of space and time, imperial ideas and solutions to maintain and to master the space, to control the communication and territory. Here, it is important to notice that the roads allowed Romans to act throughout the imperial regions, as an indicator of collective memory, everyone knows the meaning of “All roads lead to Rome”, yet during the transitional period in question, all roads may not lead to Rome anymore, but the sea routes, therefore ports and harbours, became more crucial to the Byzantines¹¹¹

Particularly, we are confronted with careful construction, the set of strategies to utilize ports and harbours, maintenances or abandonment of a maritime site depended on the interactions of multiplicity of players such as sailors, merchants, imperial officers, regional administrators, locals in a wide range one could be a peasant the other could be a cleric or another one could be a harlot. In this sense, harbours are not only the place where the concrete meets the fluid, but also where different social circles come together in a limited space.¹¹² On the other hand, one may safely mention that these transactions between different players had been occurring on an equally complex interaction between community and environment, as the sea requires special skills to navigate, to survive, in other words, the maritime communities had to play along the dynamics of the waves and wind, sun and salt.¹¹³ Moreover, these tangible interactions between humans and

¹¹¹ Denis Sami, “The Network of Interregional Roads and Harbours” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino, 255–278, 255 (Routledge, 2021).

¹¹² Sami 2021, 257.

¹¹³ Sami 2021, 258.

environment as well as between communities paved the way of leaving traces on both the landscape and seascape. Constant actions tend to build bonds between groups as well as boasting them, in this light, these groups had gradually transformed their environment by systematic activity. As Preiser-Kapeller indicates:

The usage of routes and the encounter of spatial features (landmarks) as well as communities (with their commercial opportunities, for instance) were combined into “mental maps” which were communicated and passed on within “communities” of navigators, seamen and traders and later maybe also visualised in the form of maps or written down and then used by others in an attempt to follow the traces of their ancestors.¹¹⁴

In this sense, the mental maps formed through routes, landmarks and shared community knowledge one can evoke the collective memory of Amalfitans as their activities materialized in the form of *Codex Amalfitanus* by the twelfth century. This embodies the idea of a textual crystallization of maritime practices that reflected and reinforced shared navigational and connectional knowledge.¹¹⁵ To my knowledge, Naples, while lacking a comparable codex or literary documentation, relied on a similarly rich set of mental maps shaped by its port, ecclesiastical landmarks and strong diplomatic and commercial ties.¹¹⁶ Together, these duchies

¹¹⁴ Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, “A Thematic Introduction,” in *Harbours and Maritime Networks as Complex Adaptive Systems (Interdisziplinäre Forschungen zu den Hafen von der Römischen Kaiserzeit bis zum Mittelalter in Europa)*, ed. Johannes Preiser-Kapeller & Falko Daim, 6 (RGZM Tagungen, 2015).

¹¹⁵ Maria Andaloro, “Amalfi fra Bisanzio e l’Occidente” in *La Chiesa di Amalfi nel medioevo*, ed. Nicola Cilento, 281–300, 286–287 (Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana, 1996).

¹¹⁶ Antonio Vito Boccia & Gennaro de Crescenzo, *Il ducato e Napoli medievale, le origini di una grande capitale* (ABE, 2024), pp. 51–56.

illustrate how local actors actively constructed and transmitted spatial knowledge, sustaining their integration into the wider networks of Byzantine *koine*.

In fact, the landmarks in question have the ability to draw a picture of the culture of the community who lived on the land, their strategies in making the land function for them, the tradition and changes they made on earth — in other words, their practices of daily life. Landmarks, in the cases of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi, are mainly religious buildings such as churches, chapels or burial places, mosaics, and relics, which I will discuss in the following paragraphs, but it is crucial to briefly mention that these landmarks give us the strongest opportunity to obtain a better understanding of the communities, as they have greater power to illuminate the mentality of their builders than any other source.¹¹⁷ As I will return to this later, I will give only one example here, as buildings, in particular ecclesiastical ones, could project a communal identity towards the sea.¹¹⁸

Here, one may also add another point to the discussion, as the ports and harbors were mainly integrated in two different spheres: first, they functioned in the local/regional system by interacting with their hinterland, as the case of Naples shows, and they played a role in the distribution of products. On the other hand, ports and harbours constituted key elements in the wider sea routes, as the sea routes of the Byzantine *koine* testified, by linking the ports and harbours of different sizes, functions, and importance.¹¹⁹ This in turn led us to rethink the complex

¹¹⁷ Donald W. Meinig, “The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene,” in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, ed. Meinig (Oxford University Press, 1979), 44.

¹¹⁸ San Costanzo di Capri, near Marina Grande, also projects Christian identity toward the Tyrrhenian Sea. But what is striking about these two examples is that they are the only Greek-cross churches in all of Campania, built under Byzantine influence (Bergman, “Byzantine Influence and Private Patronage in a Newly Discovered Medieval Church in San Michele Archangelo in Pogerola,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 50, no. 4 (1991): 438.

¹¹⁹ See *Le porte del Paradiso, arte e tecnologia bizantina tra Italia e Mediterraneo*, (ed.) Antonio Iacobini, Roma: Campisano Editore, 2009.

nature of maritime societies and hierarchies of harbours, as well the complex nature of social networks which were molded by political, commercial, religious and cultural interactions.¹²⁰ As McCormick argues, the mobility of the people and the goods deserves the utmost level of attention to illustrate the dynamics and features of the Byzantine *koine*.¹²¹ Indeed, Veikou remarks on the relation between the ports and harbours and the Byzantine *koine*:

Throughout the history of Byzantium, ports and harbours provided a frontline service in the administrative, military and economic chain which linked the different parts of the empire as well as linking the empire with rest of the known world. Whether for levying taxes, military dispatches, private and official state correspondence or staple commodities, the most efficient form of long-distance communication – from as far back as antiquity – involved passage through coastal gateways.¹²²

Unfortunately, Byzantine Italy's ports and harbors have not yet been sufficiently studied, except for Giulio Schmiedt's work,¹²³ but there has been a renewal of interest in the harbours of Ostia, Ravenna, Venice, Comacchio, and Naples. It is important to note that the coastline of Campania is extremely suitable

¹²⁰ Katia Schörle, "Constructing Port Hierarchies: Harbours of the central Tyrrhenian Coast" in *Maritime Archaeology and Ancient Trade in the Mediterranean*, Oxford Centre for Maritime Archaeology Monograph 6, ed. Damian Robinson & Andrew Wilson, 93–106 (Oxford, 2011).

¹²¹ Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 102–106.

¹²² Myrto Veikou, "Mediterranean Byzantine Ports and Harbours in the Complex Interplay between Environment and Society. Spatial, Socio-Economic and Cultural Consideration Based on Archaeological Evidence from Greece, Cyprus and Asia Minor" in *Harbours and Maritime Networks as Complex Adaptive Systems (Interdisziplinäre Forschungen zu den Häfen von der Römischen Kaiserzeit bis zum Mittelalter in Europa)*, (eds.) Johannes Preiser-Kapeller & Falko Daim RGZM Tagungen, 39.

¹²³ See Giulio Schmiedt, "I porti italiani nell'alto medioevo" in *La navigazione mediterranea nell'alto medioevo, CISAM, vol. 25*, 1978, pp. 129–254. This study is ground-breaking, especially for the aerial photoshoots of the harbours.

for harbors, and the major Roman fleet nestled in Portus Miseni (modern day Miseno) was still in use during the fifth century as a crucial naval base.¹²⁴ Essentially, first Puteoli, then Naples, became a frontline for Byzantine maritime activities, as well as for the defence of the duchy of Naples and also to supply Capua, Nola, and Suessola, as I will discuss.¹²⁵

The above concepts all intersect with networks of trade. Indeed, the early Middle Ages saw notable shifts in major shipping routes and ports, driven by politics as much as by economic pattern. For instance, after the Muslim Conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries, the traditional Mediterranean routes changed their focus. Western Mediterranean trade significantly moved through Italian cities such as Amalfi, Naples, Sicily, and Venice. Byzantine-controlled sea routes adopted these changes too, and the Aegean islands, the Levant and the Black Sea played an active role in seaborne activities.¹²⁶ Obviously, this transformation of the trade network is not easy to define, especially as the literary sources and material evidence diverge significantly. Not only this, we are also confronted by the fact that the trade networks were embedded between different regions, and as a natural result, in their peculiar trajectories. This is not to deny that the theory of complexity and multilayered systems and models was extensively studied and discussed in relation to archaeology,¹²⁷ but it has received much less attention in history, both

¹²⁴ Sami, “The network ...,” 2021, 265.

¹²⁵ Eliodoro Savino, *Campania tardoantica*, 140–144.

¹²⁶ Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (Penguin, 2010).

¹²⁷ Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, *Thematic Introduction*, in *Harbours and Maritime Networks as Complex Adaptive Systems*, ed. Preiser-Kapeller and Falko Daim (Mainz: Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 2015), 5.

in Byzantine and maritime studies.¹²⁸ Here, one can bring forth Preiser-Kapeller's definition of the complex systems:

Complex systems can be conceptualized as networks of individual components whose interactions at the microscopic level produce “complex” changing patterns of behavior of the entire system on the macroscopic level (“emergence”). In the field of social systems, these patterns stem from the actions and interactions of individuals, families, communities, etc. up to the globalized society of today. These systems show a nonlinear character, which means that they answer to certain stimuli (actions of individuals on different scales and external influences and events, for instance) (...) Complex systems are often “path-dependent”; their trajectory does not only depend on current conditions but also on the “history” of the system. (...) Change within complex systems is described as transitions between alternative (more or less) stable states or “attractors” At the same time, complex systems are typically open system, which are entangled with their environment in equally complex interrelations.¹²⁹

Indeed, the transformation of the trade networks often linked to the connectivity and interactions between micro-regions in an over-arching Mediterranean system, as coined Byzantine *koine*, islands and coastal settlements

¹²⁸ There are exceptional studies and projects offering new perspectives on the Byzantine and maritime history, by differing naval and maritime histories from each other. See: Antonio Carille & Salvatore Cosentino, *Storia della marineria bizantina*, La Scarabeo, 2010, Helene Ahrweiler, “Les ports byzantines (VII–IX siècles)” in *La navigazione mediterranea nell’alto medioevo*, CISAM 25 (1978): 259–283.

¹²⁹ Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, *Harbours and Maritime Networks as Complex Adaptive Systems* (Interdisziplinäre Forschungen zu den Hafen von der Römischen Kaiserzeit bis zum Mittelalter in Europa, ed. Johannes Preiser-Kapeller & Falko Daim (RGZM Tagungen, 2015), 6–7.

and their ports and harbors remained as crucial foci of this transformation. Wickham applies the theory to historical reality by pointing to the fact that regional and micro-regional nodes continued to interact in a fragmented world, as he claims that the Mediterranean has always been characterized by continuous communication and unbroken microregional connectivity, and maritime exchanges persistently linked the western and eastern Mediterranean.¹³⁰

With these preliminary caveats in mind, the Byzantine *koine* appears as an open system, composed of various micro-regions that present their own peculiar features and characteristics. By communication, wherein the form and method of communication manifesting in various ways, trade constitutes the first method, but liturgical and religious interactions also made up a huge part of early Medieval connectivity. In this sense, the customs and habits shared between the micro-regions paved the way to create hybrid, fluid identities while providing the communities with a mutually agreed-upon language through which one can trace not only dietary patterns, since food is an essential to human life, but also religious practices related to liturgy. This is because people were moving to travel to important religious sites such as Jerusalem, haunting the relics, or simply wandering about in these regions, as Greek monks did in the region of Campania in the ninth century. The Byzantine *koine*, in turn, is the liquid sphere where people were constantly on the move, with the objects and coastlines being the sites of interaction in many aspects, from the administrative to the religious, and from the social to the commercial.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800*, Oxford, 2005, 583–624.

¹³¹ Arthur, “From Italy to the Aegean and back ...,” 2012, 337–351.

In the context of this dissertation, the Byzantine *koine* is conceptualized not as a singular or static entity, but as a fluid, adaptive system of interrelated coastal and insular communities bound together by patterns of movement, exchange, and shared cultural logics. Rooted in the lived experiences of maritime societies, this *koine* represents a resilient connective cauldron that both absorbed and shaped the administrative, socio-economic and religious transformations of the Byzantine Mediterranean between the sixth and tenth centuries. It is not merely a geographic designation, but a spatial, social and ideological framework that articulates how Byzantium functioned through networks rather than through centralization. At the heart of this model lies the recognition that coastal cities and islands were not peripheral recipients of imperial directives, but liminal nodes where multiple systems of identity, authority, and economy overlapped. Drawing upon Zavagno's notion of liminality as both spatial and functional, the Byzantine *koine* emerges as a constellation of such zones, which operated at the intersection of land and sea, empire and local, sacred and profane.¹³² These spaces were marked by instability not as weakness but as a generative condition, enabling transformation and hybridity through continual negotiation with shifting political, environmental, and social pressures. This framework also places emphasis on ports and harbours as anchors of connectivity, sites where human and material mobility intersected with imperial control and local initiative. These maritime nodes were sustained by interregional cabotage, long-distance trade, and movements of people such as ambassadors, merchants or pilgrims. They formed a material and symbolic infrastructure through which the Byzantine *koine* was erected, remembered, and

¹³² Luca Zavagno, "The sublime objects of liminality": the Byzantine insular and coastal *koine* and its administration in the passage from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages, (ca. 600-850)" in *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 2024.

adopted. In this sense, the Byzantine *koine* is as much a product of intersection and circulation as it is of imperial design, it is both engineered and emergent. Moreover, the adaptability, especially in response to crisis, plague, or invasion, further shape the nature of the Byzantine *koine*.¹³³ Rather than viewing change as a collapse or rupture, this model adopts the perspective of resilience, where local actors from Neapolitan elite to the Black Sea seafarers, recalibrated their strategies and built new balances between land and sea. In this sense, adaptive cycle and resilience become useful interpretative tools, allowing the Byzantine *koine* to be seen as an open, non-linear system marked by cycles of contraction, transformation and regrowth. Crucially, the Byzantine *koine* reflects a shared mental and cultural mindscape. Local communities did not simply inhabit imperial space or adopt imperial customs and habits; they shaped, remembered, and transmitted it. Ritual practices, religious landmarks, dietary customs, and navigational knowledge served as the code of this *koine*, a mutual language of belonging, reinforced across space and time. Thus, the Byzantine *koine* is not a sort of relic of imperial ambition nor a monolithic system of control, but a dynamic field of relationships where the sea acts as both stage and actor, where trade routes mirror pilgrimage paths, and where coastal cities such as Naples and Amalfi forged their identities through a constant negotiation between fragility and cohesion. It is this complexity, spatial, social, and symbolic, that constitutes the Byzantine *koine* as a uniquely resilient and integrative Mediterranean phenomenon.¹³⁴

¹³³ Michael McCormick, "Movements and Markets in the First Millennium: Information, Containers and Shipwrecks" in *Trade and Markets in Byzantium*, Dumbarton Oaks, 2012.

¹³⁴ Joanita Vroom, "The Byzantine Web: Pottery and Connectivity Between the Southern Adriatic and the Eastern Mediterranean" in *Adriatico altomedievale (VI-XI secolo)* Scambi, porti, produzioni, (ed.) Sauro Gelichi and Claudio Negrelli

What unfolds is a vision of the Byzantine *koine* as a liquid constellation of entangled nodes, shaped by waves and wind, charted through mental maps and communal memory, and sustained by the ceaseless motion of people, goods, and ideas. Far from being static or isolated, the coastal cities of the Tyrrhenian, Adriatic and Aegean as well as Black Sea emerge as vibrant laboratories of imperial flexibility, cultural hybridity, and socio-economic negotiation. Whether through the enduring presence of amphorae across distant shores or the echoes of liturgical practices binding micro-regions together, these spaces formed the connective tissue of an empire that operated through interdependence rather than uniformity. In their complexity, they embody the very essence of the Byzantine Mediterranean: adaptative, multilayered and always in flux.¹³⁵

1.4. Pottery and Ceramics in the Byzantine *koine*

Among the most eloquent remnants of early medieval connectivity, amphorae and coarse wares offer a material vocabulary through which we may begin to decode the rhythms of production, exchange, and consumption in the Byzantine Mediterranean. These seemingly utilitarian vessels, resilient in both form and distribution, capture the spatial logic of maritime commerce while also providing rare glimpses into the domestic habits and dietary preferences of communities. Within the evolving landscape of the Byzantine *koine*, such ceramics emerge as more than archaeological points, they serve as interpretative keys to the

¹³⁵ Johannes Praiser-Kapeller, “harbours and Maritime Networks as Complex Adaptive Systems, A Thematic Introduction” in *harbours and Maritime Networks as Complex Adaptive Systems (Interdisziplinäre Forschungen zu den Häfen von der Römischen Kaiserzeit bis zum Mittelalter in Europa*, (eds.) Johannes Praiser-Kapeller & Fako Dain RGZM Tagungen, 2015.

economic and cultural negotiations that unfolded across coastal and insular regions.¹³⁶

This communication and economic transactions could be paired with one of the most distinguishable and significant materials: amphorae. These serve as one of the most resilient witnesses of the commercial activities and cultural interactions, as they are markers of the customs and habits of the communities that used them. Their standardized form, durable materialization and high level of distribution make them one of the significant indicators of the exchange system, the system of exchanges and maritime networks amongst the communities of the Byzantine *koine* and beyond.¹³⁷ In fact, amphorae are not simply containers, as they allow us to rethink the patterns of production and distribution, the changing supply chains and consumption habits, and therefore coastal and insular integration.¹³⁸ Indeed, they hold the power of illuminating the features of daily life, the trade networks and sea routes anchored in imperial or regional economies. For instance, we are confronted with a change in daily diet of Neapolitans and Romans from pork to mutton during the seventh century, as the lug-handled casserole became common; it was after this, most probably, that pork re-entered Neapolitan kitchens.¹³⁹

Indeed, cooking ware has the power to illuminate the sustainability of trade across the Mediterranean world and changing exchange routes as well as exchange systems. However, as Zanini highlights, notwithstanding the fact that these objects

¹³⁶ Enrico Zanini, "La ceramica bizantina in Italia tra VI e VIII secolo. Un Sistema informativo territoriale per lo studio della distribuzione e del consumo," in *Vile Congress International sur la Ceramique Medievale en Mediterranee*, Thessaloniki, 2002.

¹³⁷ Vroom 2017, 285–310.

¹³⁸ Arthur, "Mapping Byzantine Trade and culture: An introduction to the artefacts from Salento, Southern Italy" in *Byzantine Small Finds in Archaeological Contexts*, *BYZAS* 15, ed. Alessandra Ricci & Beate Böhlendorf-Arslan, 2012, 17–26.

¹³⁹ Paul Arthur, "Early Medieval Amphorae, the Duchy of Naples and the Food Supply of Rome" in *Papers of the British School at Rome* 61, (1993): 234–235.

can allow us to obtain a better grasp of the economic relationship and production matrix, it is also important to note that their power should not be exaggerated, and they must be perceived as substitute markers of these markets in relation to the transformation of Mediterranean.¹⁴⁰ The production of amphorae for transport, typically located near the source of transported goods, remains poorly attested across Italy, limited to areas of intensive wine or oil production. The best-known example is the Keay LII amphorae, dates to the fourth and sixth to seventh centuries, produced around the Strait of Messina.¹⁴¹ This type illustrates commercial continuity from Late Antiquity into the early Middle Ages, with kiln activities commencing in the fourth century and peaking in the sixth; these amphorae were mainly for distribution to Tyrrhenian Sea, though traces have been found across the wider Mediterranean basin.¹⁴²

In contrast, coarse ware remains far more elusive, as few kilns have been identified, and the conservative typology of form and decoration complicates efforts to establish chronological development. Most coarse ware were locally consumed, except for Pantellerian Ware, known for a limited but geographically widespread presence.¹⁴³ Found occasionally in shipwrecks, this ware may have been used for containing in maritime repairs instead of mass distribution.¹⁴⁴

Regions like Campania or Apulia, areas with long-standing pottery traditions in the

¹⁴⁰ Enrico Zanini, “Non-Agricultural Items: Local Production, Importation and Redistribution”, in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino (Brill, 2021), 300.

¹⁴¹ Isabelle Ferro, “L’Anfora Tipo Keay LII: Indicatore Archeologico nel Mediterraneo Tardoantico” in *In Calabria ... Riflessi di una storia ‘minore’ al centro del Mediterraneo*, ed. Gian Piero Civigliano (Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2006), 165–168.

¹⁴² Paul Arthur, “La produzione di anfore bizantine, in Fornaci altomedievali ad Otranto. Nota preliminare” in *Archaeologia Medievale* XIX (1992): 103–110, 104–106.

¹⁴³ Giuseppe Montana, “Pantellarian Ware: A Comprehensive Archaeometric Review,” in *Archaeometry* 49, no. 3 (July 2007): 456–464.

¹⁴⁴ Simonetta Menchelli, “Late Roman coarse ware, cooking wares and amphorae. A survey of current research in Italy” in *LRCW 5-1 Late Roman coarse wares and amphorae in the Mediterranean: Archaeology and Archaeometry*, (ed.) Delphine Dixneuf, 2017, 207–216.

Classical era, have yielded some evidence of coarse ware production as Zanini indicates that these regions have been housed the pottery tradition from Late Antiquity to modern day. In fact, large consumer sites such as urban centers have produced abundant ceramic assemblages, but no consistent distribution model has emerged. Nevertheless, the prevalence of refined, red-banded jugs and jars across Byzantine Italy in the sixth and seventh centuries suggests integration into a broader Byzantine *koine*, which Zanini calls the Mediterranean *koine*.¹⁴⁵ One may notice the near-absence of such ware in Northern Italy, where standardized ceramic production ceased after the Lombard invasion. This further emphasizes the division between Byzantine regions and the other regions, and in this sense, signals not only commercial activities but also a slow yet meaningful insertion into different societies, mirroring a shared material language.¹⁴⁶ Within this framework, one may safely conclude that the amphorae help us to draw a picture of commercial activities, sea routes, and exchange systems, as well as to obtain rare insight into the quotidian practices of the communities. Indeed, the circulation of pottery could be paired with the theory of connectivity beyond control, as pottery and ceramics present us with a web of connections that tied distant coastal cities of the Byzantine *koine*, creating a mutually understandable language.¹⁴⁷

On the other hand, globular amphorae refer to a family of transport jars characterized by their rounded bodies, relatively short necks. They emerged in the mid-seventh century and widely used until the tenth century, representing a striking

¹⁴⁵ Enrico Zanini, “Non-Agricultural Items: Local Production, Importation and Redistribution” in *A Companion to the Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 306–397.

¹⁴⁶ Sauro Gelichi, “Pottery as Inequality? Systems of Production and Distribution in North Italian Societies During the Early Middle Ages”, in *Social Inequality in Early Medieval Europe, Local Societies and Beyond*, ed. Juan Antonio Quirós Castello (Brepols, 2020), 77–81.

¹⁴⁷ Zavagno, “The Sublime Liminality” (2024).

evolution in Mediterranean transport ceramics as they were ideal for tighter packing in ship holds and easier overland transport. Wine and olive oil were the primary contents, globular amphorae also carried other goods such as fruits or sauces. Production shifted toward local and regional workshops, with areas like southern Italy, Crete or Cherson, embodying both connectivity and adaptation in trade practices. In this light, globular amphorae present critical markers of Mediterranean connectivity during the period often characterized as isolated or stagnant.¹⁴⁸

Seen through the lens of ceramic typologies and amphora distribution, the Byzantine koine reveals itself as a latticework of practical adaptation and subtle integration. From the standardized Keay LII forms to the regionally produced globular amphorae, these vessels anchor commercial continuity while also marking local shifts in economic strategy and material culture. Their presence across disparate regions, sometimes abundant, sometimes conspicuously absent, does not simply mirror trade flows but articulates a shared, if uneven, material language. These ceramics, particularly the globular amphorae of the seventh to tenth centuries, challenge narratives of rupture by illustrating how coastal communities remained tethered through patterns of exchange that were both dynamic and regionally reflected. They speak not only of what was carried, but of how interaction itself was shaped, quietly and persistently, through the vessels that moved with the waves.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Evelina Todorova, “One Amphora, different contents: The multiple purposes of Byzantine amphorae according to written and archaeological data” in *Multidisciplinary Approaches to Food and Foodways in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Sylvie Yona Waksman (Lyon: Maison de l’Orient et de la Méditerranée, 2020), 406–410.

¹⁴⁹ Todorova, 2020, 407.408.

1.5. Christianization of the Society and Landscape

Far from being a mere religious shift, the Christianization of the early medieval Mediterranean represented a profound reconfiguration of landscapes, institutions, and identities. Anchored in the mobility of relics, the rise of episcopal and monastic networks, and the transformation or construction of sacred space, Christianity became a structuring force that shaped both the tangible and intangible geographies of the Byzantine koine. This section explores how Christianity operated not only as a doctrinal or spiritual system but as a dynamic infrastructure of power, negotiation, and cultural connectivity, embedding itself within ports, harbours, mountain villages, and coastal cities alike. Through the circulation of the cult of saints, pilgrimage routes and ecclesiastical patronage, Christianization offered communities new modes of anchoring collective memory, assessing legitimacy, and participating in the wider Mediterranean world.¹⁵⁰

Here, one may safely observe that Christianity played a crucial role in the administrative, socio-economic, and religious aspects of early Medieval daily life, as the episcopal and monastic networks extended across the seas, dotting the landscape with churches, basilicas, and chapels, as well as burial places. These projected a certain image of Christianity towards the sea, creating pilgrimage sites and elevating the importance of saints and their relics, while also converting the rural interiors helped to integrate these micro-regions and communities into a shared religious and cultural framework. Yet more crucially, the episcopal and monastic networks as well as in the churches and chapels, had gradually been taken up as integral to the socio-economic and political life, and thus gradually became

¹⁵⁰ See Charles Freeman, *A New History of Early Christianity*, Yale University Press, 2011.

the centres of daily life in both administrative and economic aspects, instead of functioning as merely religious organizations.¹⁵¹ The concept of Christianization received scholarly attention perhaps more than most other topics. As a result, modern historiography provides us with a narrow focus on individual conversion or emotions, rather than a broader understanding of the religion itself, to see how Christianity changed both the identity of Mediterranean communities, the lived environments (Christian landscape) and Mediterranean itself (seascape). Christianity modified time and space; Christianity is more than a doctrine aiming to reform the religion itself, or to bring about a fundamental shift from paganism to Christianity. Instead, this so-called new religion required a Christian society with all its Christian amenities from churches to the rituals. In this light, one can safely conclude Christianity created a new type of sacred world which was not corresponding to the pagan dynamics. This is not to deny that Christianity inherited and successfully integrated the pre-existing belief systems in its ambit, but the functionality of Christianity is different.¹⁵² This in turn led us to perceive Christianization first as a very long process, second a reconfiguration of society, administrative order, and economic interactions as well as a way of consecrating space, time and collective memory by establishing ecclesiastical buildings, rituals and practices. Indeed, Christianization reinterpreted both urban and rural topography by embedding the ecclesia not only as a divine, but more importantly as an institutional, organization.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Maria Cristina La Rocca, “Un vescovo e la sua città. Le trasformazioni tardoantiche e altomedievali di Concordia (secoli V–X),” in *Concordia Sagittaria: Tremila anni di storia*, ed. Pierangela Croce da Villa and Elena di Filippo Balestrazzi (Rubano, Padova: Esedra Editrice, 2001), 287–299.

¹⁵² Udo Schnell & James W. Thompson, *The First Hundred Years of Christianity: An Introduction to Its History, Literature, and Development* (Baker Academic, 2020), 52–146.

¹⁵³ Charles Freeland, *A New History of Early Christianity* (Yale University Press, 2011), 39–78.

Christianization of the land is not merely descriptive, rather it is constructive as Brown shows, sacred space was not simply reorganized, it actively took part in a reproduction process through narrative and architecture in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages.¹⁵⁴ One of the most distinctive impacts of Christianization was the transformation of urban and rural landscapes, ecclesiastical buildings, as either a basilica or a church gradually became central to civic identity and power structures. The construction of churches often altered the urban topography not only in religious aspects but also in administrative and economic senses, either through destructuring (which was not so popular among the early Christian communities, with a few exceptions such as in the case of Serapeum in Alexandria)¹⁵⁵ or reorganization and reorientation of the sacred space (which was highly preferred, as several cases indicate, such as the Christianization of Parthenon in Athens, or of the Pantheon in Rome).¹⁵⁶ On the other hand, to borrow the phrasing of Brown, who famously referred to them as the cult of saints and the rise of holy men, we are confronted with new players who had the power of performing miracles, interceding between the profane and ethereal spheres, and thus between believers and God. They therefore turned into holy protectors, radiating a kind of sacred and supreme intermediary character.¹⁵⁷ For instance, St. Januarius of Naples became the holy protector of the city of Naples, and St. Andrew became the patron saint of Amalfi after receiving the relics from

¹⁵⁴ Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (University of Chicago Press, 1981), 56.

¹⁵⁵ Glen W. Bowersack, "Parabolani": A Terrorist Charity in Late Antiquity" in *Anabases: Traditions et réceptions de l'Antiquité* 12 (2010): 52–54.

¹⁵⁶ Mikhail Kazakov, *Christianization of the Roman Empire: Fourth Century AD* (Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012), 100–108.

¹⁵⁷ Charles Davis, "Sacrifice and Violence: New Perspectives in the Theory of Religion," *New Blackfriars* 79, no. 829 (1989): 311–328, 312–316.

Constantinople.¹⁵⁸ In this sense, one can affirm that this sacred presence anchored new social orders within the urban and rural settlements.

Moreover, Christianization was not limited to religious conversion, as the process involved the transformation of geography, from mountains to coastlines and from crossroads to harbors, and as pieces of earth were inscribed with Christian meaning by dedicating churches, chapels, or on a broader scale, episcopal sees, and through the circulation of relics. These held an enormous importance both in socio-political relationships between different regions and entities, as for instance when the people of Minori discovered the bodily remains of Saint Trofimena, a saint who was born in Sicily, in a cave. As the story goes, her body was carried in the presence of Peter of Amalfi to where they constructed and dedicated a church to Saint Trofimena.¹⁵⁹ According to the historical narratives, Sicard of Benevento (late 8th century–839) started to erect churches in his capital, and therefore sought his own collection of holy artefacts, a decision reminding us of any antagonist from the *Indiana Jones* franchise. Sicard arranged for a group of Amalfitans to bring the body of Saint Bartholomew from Lipari to him. This commercial agreement was heard of by the rest of Amalfitans, who were afraid that if the relics of Saint Trofimena would attract Sicard's attention. Yet Minori was not ready to defend itself against any Lombard attack. The story indicates that Amalfitans moved to Minori and carried the relics of Saint Trofimena to Amalfi by boat and deposited her relics in the early cathedral of Amalfi.¹⁶⁰ This story reveals three important

¹⁵⁸ Holger A. Klein, "Amalfi, Byzantium, and the Vexed Question of Artistic Influence," in *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft*, Sonderdruck aus Band 69 (2015): 143–144.

¹⁵⁹ Giovambattista D'Aflitto, *Breve racconto della Vita Martirio e Miracoli della Gloriosa V. e. M. San Trofimena della città di Minori*, (Edizioni Montalbano, 2021), 43–48.

¹⁶⁰ Giovambattista D'Aflitto, *ibid*, 2021, 43–48

points: first, the importance of the churches having relics; second, the practices of keeping them in their possession; and, last but not least, the constant dialogue between the different communities. The community of Minori supposedly found a Sicilian saint in a cave of Minori, the transportation of the relic with an ecclesiastical elite from Amalfi. An administrative officer from different political entity, Lombards, searching for relics, made an arrangement with the Amalfitans to seize and transport another relic from Lipari to Benevento, with Amalfitans travelling between Amalfi and Minori to protect the relics of Trofimena. This repurposing of her relics in the cathedral of their own city stands as an example of the complex interactions between communities and a mutual understanding of the power of relics, both in religious and economic aspects. In other words, this process draws a picture of some concepts in this discussion: connectivity, micro-regional relationships and transformations both in landscape and mindscape.¹⁶¹

In fact, local martyrs had gradually become fundamental to reorganization of the religious life, and their basilicas, churches or chapels became the new points of attraction. The veneration of saints involved not only a spiritual devotion but also indicated a strong sense of materialization of their cults as liturgies, the construction of ecclesiastical buildings, religious products such as amulets for protection, or donation to the churches to gain favour of the holy protectors became quite popular among the Christian communities.¹⁶²

In this light, the holy protectors became intermediaries of space, and this phenomenon was particularly visible in the coastal and insular Byzantine world,

¹⁶¹ Beatrice Caseau, "Sacred Landscape", in *Interpreting Late Antiquity: Essays on the Postclassical World*, (eds) G. Bowersock & Brown & Graber, HUP, 2001, p. 40.

¹⁶² See *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Cynthia Hahn & Holger A. Klein (Dumbarton Oaks, 2015).

where access to the relics became also a profitable branch of trade because of demand. The economy of relics, which also became an integral part of Byzantine strategies to maintain the imperial relationships with political entities both inside and outside of the Byzantine *koine*, illustrates the conjuncture of sanctity, movement and political power. Relics were not only bodily remains that radiated holiness to believers, they were also political and economic devices, functioning as agents of legitimacy, negotiation, and commerce, as they were highly mobilized objects.¹⁶³ Their movement, through commerce, theft, or imperial gifting, created circles of connection across the Mediterranean. Therefore, Christianization played a crucial role on the maritime routes as well as turning a practice woven into the flows of ships, merchants and bishops.¹⁶⁴ Here, one may recall McCormick's observation on the economy of relics:

Do we dare take early medieval religion seriously? John Calvin's sarcasm still stings some ears. The cult of the saints is the most abundantly documented facet of early medieval civilization, and its literary manifestations have been the subject of critical study since the seventeenth century. Two things make the study of relics inviting for the historian of communications. The first is they exist. Because relic collections were among the most jealously guarded possessions of medieval churches, those which managed to escape the furies of the Reformation, and the French Revolution survive in remarkable numbers. (...) The second advantage stems from the intimate link

¹⁶³ Robert A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 143–146.

¹⁶⁴ Maia Kotrosits, *The Lives of Objects: Material Culture, Experience, and the Real in the History of Early Christianity* (University of Chicago Press, 2020), 83–146.

between the cult of saints and particular places. A saint's cult centered first and foremost on the tomb, and the places he or she frequented.¹⁶⁵

The power of Christianization lies at the heart of its mobility, Christianity is a religion that stemming its power from its constant dialogue between profane and ethereal spheres as well as creating of landmarks. For instance, the relics in question, they were an important part of the commercial activities, therefore, they came with their tags which allows us to see the trade routes between the different regions. Another aspect I would like emphasize about the mobility of Christianization is the pilgrimage and pilgrims, as they were the sites like Ephesus, Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem, bolstered the second circle of urban transformation, infrastructural investment of elites, and artisanal production all within the backcloth of the sacred exchange.¹⁶⁶ In other words, relic trade reinforced the sea routes of Byzantine koine, binding the so-called extremes, such as Naples and Cherson as they have been accepted as peripheral, far-flung provinces to Constantinople in traditional historiography, the coastal and insular settlements were woven into the Byzantine *koinē*.¹⁶⁷

Yet, before delving into the historiography of the Duchies of Naples and Amalfi, I would like to make a very brief observation which also haunts the reader through this dissertation. In this case, following Zavagno's observation made in passing for Byzantine cities could ideally help me to sort this problem out. He indicates that living in the age of technology and conducting research by surfing the Web, with Wikipedia as an obvious launching point, the holy source of

¹⁶⁵ Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 2001, 284–285.

¹⁶⁶ Blake Leyerle, "Landscape as Cartography in Early Christian Pilgrimage Narratives," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LXIV 64, no. 1 (1996): 125–127.

¹⁶⁷ Holger A. Klein, "Eastern Objects and Western Desires: Relics and Reliquaries between Byzantium and the West" in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 58, (2004): 290–298.

knowledge, can mislead researchers and students to a couple of results.¹⁶⁸ Generally, the entries for these two political entities are short and repetitive. Byzantine Naples is usually portrayed through the testimony of Procopius in relation to his narrative of the Gothic Wars, while Byzantine Amalfi is defined in a few sentences, to indicate that Amalfi was under imperial authority once upon a time. Naples, as expected, is luckier than Amalfi, but even though Naples had more attention from the content writers, neither Naples nor Amalfi can provide good historical or archaeological information like one may find for other cities of Byzantine Italy like Ravenna,¹⁶⁹ Venice,¹⁷⁰ or on a smaller scale, Comacchio¹⁷¹ or Reggio Calabria.¹⁷²

Unfortunately, the balance of the scholarly attention towards the cities of Byzantine Italy is not so different from that in the online world. One may find an extensive body of work for the Byzantine urban centres that functioned as administrative, socio-economic and cultural foci, however the distribution of this

¹⁶⁸ Luca Zavagno, *The Byzantine City from Heraclius to the Fourth Crusade, 610–1204, Urban Life After Antiquity*, 2021, 3

¹⁶⁹ Shane Björnile, *Politics and Tradition between Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople: A Study of Cassiodorus and the Variae* (Cambridge University Press, 2013); Judith Herrin, *Ravenna: Capital of Empire, Crucible to Europe* (Princeton University Press, 2020); Deborah M. Deligiannakis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge University Press, 2010); Andre Guillou, “Demography and Culture in the Exarchate of Ravenna,” in *Studies on Byzantine Italy*, ed. Andre Guillou (Variorum Prints, 1970), 201–244; Thomas S. Brown, “Urban violence in early medieval Italy: the cases of Rome and Ravenna” in *Halsall*, 1998.

¹⁷⁰ Stefano Gasparri, “The formation of an early medieval community: Venice between provincial and urban identity” in *Three Empires, Three Cities: Identity, Material Culture and Legitimacy in Venice, Ravenna and Rome, 750–1000*, ed. Veronica West-Harling (Brepols, 2015); *Crossing the Water: Venice from the Late Antiquity throughout the Centuries*, ed. Maddalena Bassani, Giuseppe D’Accunto & Frantina Madricardo (Rome-Bristol: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 2022).

¹⁷¹ Sauro Gelichi et al. “History of a forgotten town: Comacchio and its archaeology” in *From One Sea to Another: Trading Places in the European and Mediterranean Early Middle Ages*, ed. Sauro Gelichi and Richard Hodges (Brepols, 2012), 169–205.

¹⁷² Ghislaine Noyé, “The Still Byzantine Calabria: A Case Study” in *New Directions in Early Medieval European Archaeology: Spain and Italy Compared, Essays for Riccardo Francovich*, ed. Sauro Gelichi & Richard Hodges (Brepols, 2015), 221–267; Noyé, “Les villes des provinces d’Apulie-Calabre et de Bruttium Lucanie du IV^e au VI^e Siècle” in *Early Medieval towns in the Western Mediterranean*, ed. Gian Pietro Brogiolo (Brill, 1996), 97–120.

body is not equal. Rome,¹⁷³ Ravenna,¹⁷⁴ Venice,¹⁷⁵ and Sicily¹⁷⁶ retain the lion's share of the studies on Byzantine Italy, while Bari,¹⁷⁷ Reggio, and Calabria¹⁷⁸ gradually gained more popularity among the scholars. Yet, studies on Byzantine Naples are scarcer than on other Byzantine cities, even though Naples functioned as an administrative center and as an important maritime city along the Tyrrhenian coastline. In fact, Byzantine Naples, here defined as the period covering the passage between the sixth and tenth centuries, presents a complex history. The strategic location of Naples on the Tyrrhenian coastline amplified the importance of Naples within the Mediterranean. By the early Middle Ages, Naples was tied to the imperial *oikumene* both in administrative and cultural aspects but enjoyed a certain level of autonomy as a duchy that effectively ruled its hinterland and islands in the Gulf of Naples like Ischia or Procida.¹⁷⁹ On the other hand, Naples was engaged with the surrounding Lombard political entities like Duchy of Benevento or Principality of Salerno as well as the emerging Arab presence by the ninth century. After acquiring independence and breaking its political ties to the Byzantines, Naples' status changed to that of an independent Tyrrhenian Duchy, but the city continued to reap the benefits of its cultural and economic ties with the imperial

¹⁷³ Andrew J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes: Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, AD 690–752* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

¹⁷⁴ Slavko Ciglenečki, *Between Ravenna and Constantinople: Rethinking Late Antique Settlement Patterns* (Opera Instituti Archaeologici Sloveniae, 2023).

¹⁷⁵ Luigi Andrea Berto, *In Search of the First Venetians: Prosopography of Early Medieval Venice* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

¹⁷⁶ William Tronzo, "Byzantine Sicily, from Siracusa to Palermo," in *Isole bizantine: realtà e metafora*, Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini, XV Giornata, (Roma, Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 23–24 Marzo 2018), ed. Francesco D'Aiuto, Maria Luigia Fobelli, Alessandra Guiglia, Antonio Iacobini, Santo Lucà, Andrea Luzzi, Vincenzo Ruggieri, *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* 55 (2018): 177–186.

¹⁷⁷ Claire Vernon, *From Byzantine to Norman Italy: Mediterranean Art and Architecture in Medieval Bari*, (Bloomsbury, 2023).

¹⁷⁸ Ghislaine Noyé, "The Still Byzantine Calabria: A Case Study," in *New Directions in Early Medieval European Archaeology: Spain and Italy Compared, Essays for Riccardo Francovich*, ed. Sauro Gelichi & Richard Hodges (Brepols, 2015), 226–230.

¹⁷⁹ Francesco Brandileone, *Il diritto bizantino nell'Italia meridionale, dall'VIII al XII secolo* (Jovene, 1987), 13–18.

oikumene.¹⁸⁰ On the other hand, Amalfi, as an emerging new power during the Early Middle Ages, presents us with a different trajectory. Amalfi was under the administration of the Duchy of Naples until it forged its own ties to Byzantines, even though those ties were loose. Amalfi, joining forces with neighbouring Atrani, quickly became a rising star and maritime power on the Tyrrhenian Sea, protecting its close relationship with Byzantines for centuries, even after gaining independence.¹⁸¹

Rather than simply producing converts or consecrating space, Christianization generated new circuits of exchange, legitimacy, and memory across the Byzantine Mediterranean. Saints and their relics travelled alongside goods and merchants, threading together distant communities through shared rituals, competitive patronage, and the promise of divine protection. From the catacombs of Naples to the relic-driven diplomacy of Amalfi, sacred geography became inseparable from political strategy and maritime interconnections. In this context, Christianization emerges as a structural component of the Byzantine koine, an evolving matrix where the sacred and the economic and administrative, the imperial and the local, were constantly negotiated through movements, adaptation, and presence.

1.6. Historiography and Sources

One can point to a lack of sources for conducting an all-encompassing narrative on Byzantine Naples and Amalfi. Not only were the secondary sources

¹⁸⁰ Vera von Falkenhausen, "Monte Cassino e Bisanzio dal IX al XII secolo," in *L'Età dell'abate Desiderio, Storia, arte e cultura*, vol. 3, part 1, ed. Faustino Avagliano & Oronzo Pecere (Pubblicazioni cassinesi, 1992), 79–91.

¹⁸¹ Matteo Camera, *Memorie storico-diplomatiche dell'antica città e ducato di Amalfi* (Salerno, 1876).

but also the primary sources for their peculiar histories not rich in documentation; in fact, the primary sources became more reliable by the eleventh century for Southern Italy.¹⁸² In the case of Naples, the primary sources, except for the testimonies of Procopius (c. 500–565) and Agathias (536–562), on the Gothic Wars¹⁸³, were not so generous until the Late Middle Ages when the Angevin rule started. The *Gesta Episcoporum Neapolitanorum*, a 9th–10th century chronicle including 45 Neapolitan bishops' lives, as well as those of most of the Neapolitan dukes and some events in the Byzantine trajectory, is a crucial primary source to gain rare insight into the Duchy of Naples.¹⁸⁴ The *Monumenta ad Neapolitani ducatus historiam pertinentia*, its second volume edited by Capasso, encompasses detailed tables and indexes related to the Byzantine Duchy of Naples, and therefore, provides us with the primary documents of the Byzantine period of the Duchy of Naples.¹⁸⁵

Even though Byzantine Naples and Amalfi have gradually started to receive scholarly attention, the historical or archaeological works remain fewer than the other cities of Byzantine Empire. Ernesto Pontieri's *Storia di Napoli* (1969) remains one of the comprehensive works, and its second volume includes Byzantine Naples and its surroundings.¹⁸⁶ Amedeo Feniello edits essays on urban infrastructure such as ecclesiastical buildings and fortifications, in addition to offering examples not only from Naples but also from the islands such as Ischia, Procida and Capri in the Gulf of Naples in *Napoli nel medioevo*. Indeed, these

¹⁸² Vera von Falkenhausen, 2021, 555–557.

¹⁸³ Procopius, *History of the Wars* V & VI.

¹⁸⁴ Agathias, *The Histories*, II–VIII.

¹⁸⁵ Bartolommeo Capasso, *Monumenta ad neapolitani ducatus historiam pertinentia*, vol. II (Naples, 1885). See also: Jules Gay, “Monumenta ad Neapolitani ducatus historiam pertinentia,” in *Mélanges de L'École française de Rome* 12 (1892): 609–611.

¹⁸⁶ Ernesto Pontieri, *Storia di Napoli*, vol. II (Società Editrice Storia di Napoli, 1969).

edited volumes cast light on the urban trajectory of Naples and its surroundings in relation to the transformation.¹⁸⁷ Gaglione takes a further step by providing us with a comparative essay on the relationship between Naples and Amalfi and highlighting the very fact that these two cities enjoyed socio-economic and commercial interests during the Early Middle Ages.¹⁸⁸ Another diachronic assessment on Naples is edited by Jessica Hughes and Claudio Buongiovanni, *Remembering Parthenope: The Reception of Classical Naples from Late Antiquity to the Present* significantly presents us with the opportunity of interpreting the heritage of Late Antique Naples, the use of *spolia* in urban buildings and transformations both in tangible and intangible aspects.¹⁸⁹

Francesca Luzzati Laganà narrates the history of the Duchy of Naples from its origins in the seventh century to the conquest of Naples by the Normans,¹⁹⁰ while Giuseppe Galasso compares three Byzantine Duchies of the Tyrrhenian — Naples, Amalfi and Gaeta — in the passage from the sixth to the twelfth century by focusing on the idea of urban decay and resurgence, and the ecclesiastical organization of Naples, Amalfi and Gaeta.¹⁹¹ Luigi Andrea Berto illustrates the complex relationship between the Neapolitan dukes and bishops,¹⁹² while Deborah

¹⁸⁷ Amedeo Feniello, *Napoli nel medioevo*, vol I & vol II (Congredo, 2000).

¹⁸⁸ Mario Gaglione, “Amalfi e Napoli tra alto Medioevo ed età angioina,” in *Interscambi socio-culturali ed economici fra le città marinare d’Italia e l’Occidente dagli Osservatori mediterranei*, *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi in memoria di Ezio Falcone (1938–2011)*, ed. Bruno Figliuolo & Pinuccia Franca Simbula, (Estratto, 2011).

¹⁸⁹ *Remembering Parthenope: The Reception of Classical Naples from Late Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Jessica Hughes & Claudio Buongiovanni (Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹⁹⁰ Francesca Luzzati Laganà, “Il ducato di Napoli,” in *Mezzogiorno dai Bizantini a Federico II*, ed. Andre Guillou (UTET, 1983), 328–338.

¹⁹¹ Giuseppe Galasso, “Le città campane nell’alto medioevo” *Mezzogiorno medievale e moderno* (Einaudi, 1995), 61–135.

¹⁹² Luigi Andrea Berto, *The ‘Other’ Identity and Memory in Early Medieval Italy* (Routledge, 2023).

Deliyannis argues on the nature of ecclesiastical hierarchy and its development in the Duchy of Naples.¹⁹³

One of the prominent scholars working on the urban infrastructure of Naples during the period under scrutiny is Paul Arthur. He carefully reassesses the importance of the urban transformation that Naples had gradually been undergoing, by focusing on the classical city's amenities and the adaptation of them to medieval dynamics and features.¹⁹⁴ He focuses not only on the city center but also the hinterland of Naples during the period under scrutiny, and so, this work also can be conceptually paired with his essay in which he deals with the economic activities of Naples by engaging in other Mediterranean centers, mainly by tracing the amphorae.¹⁹⁵ Urban structure is also examined by Caroline Bruzelius and William Tronzo, as their work draws a picture of Late Antique and Early Medieval Naples by proposing an analysis of urban structure while providing a brief historical background. While Bruzelius and Tronzo do not offer much on Byzantine and Ducal Naples, they still provide rare insight into some key settlements.¹⁹⁶ Urban development under the Neapolitan dukes is in the focus of De Seta as he offers his interpretation of the changes that occurred in Naples from its Greek origins to World War I.¹⁹⁷ Alfonso Leone provides us with a brief essay to bring administrative, socio-economic and urban development together during the tenth

¹⁹³ Deborah Deliyannis, "Bishops, Cities and Historical Memorial Memory of Byzantine Italy" in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino (Brill, 2021), 582–609.

¹⁹⁴ Paul Arthur, *Naples: From Roman Town to City-State: An Archaeological Perspective* (British School of Rome, 2002).

¹⁹⁵ Paul Arthur, "Naples: Notes on the Economy of a Dark Age City" in *Papers in Italian Archaeology*, vol. 4, *Classical and Medieval Archaeology*, ed. Caroline Malone & Simone Stoddart (Oxford: BAR, 1985), 247–249.

¹⁹⁶ Caroline Bruzelius & William Tronzo, *Medieval Naples: An Architectural and Urban History: 400-1000*, *Italica*, 2011

¹⁹⁷ Cesare de Seta, *Napoli* (Editori Laterza, 1981).

century¹⁹⁸ while Teresa Colletta offers one of the most extensive studies on the port of Naples, marketplace and a kind of lower city by using chronology as a separator, therefore, conducting a survey from the eighth to the seventeenth century.¹⁹⁹ The progress of the excavations of the harbour is highlighted by Vittoria Carsana and Franca del Vecchio as they also shed light on maritime trade and Naples' importance with regard to both the Tyrrhenian and Mediterranean aspects.²⁰⁰

Here, one must mention that the archaeology of Naples had gradually gained greater importance and more opportunities due to a natural disaster. It is well known fact Naples is one of oldest settlements of the Italian peninsula as well as one of the most dangerous ones due to the seismic activities. On 23 November 1980, an earthquake shook Naples, and following this earthquake, urban renewal and excavations went hand in hand, especially alongside the construction of metro line, *Metropolitana Linea 1*. Construction of the stations at the Piazza Municipio, Piazza Bovio, and Duomo (di Napoli) became the reason of altering all of Neapolitan history by turning into a boon both for history and archaeology.²⁰¹ In this light, the *Museo Archaeologico Nazionale di Naples (MANN)* published a catalogue as a result of the excavations under Piazza Bovio. These excavations revealed a significant body of Early Medieval Naples, Byzantine fortification, an artisanal quarter, a warehouse, ceramics and a necropolis.²⁰² As for fortifications, Jean-Marie

¹⁹⁸ Alfonso Leone, *Ricerche sul medioevo napoletano: Aspetti e momenti della vita economica e società Napoli tra decimo tra quindicesimo secolo* (Edizioni Athena, 1996).

¹⁹⁹ Teresa Colletta, *Napoli: città portuale e mercantile: La città bassa, il porto e il mercato dall'VIII al XVIII secolo* (Edizioni Kappa, 2006).

²⁰⁰ Vittoria Carsana & Franca del Vecchio, "Contesti ceramici da un edificio di VI–VII secolo d.C. nell'area portuale di Neapolis" in *LRCW: 6 Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry*, ed. Valentina Caminacci, Enrico Giannitrapani, Maria Concetta Parello, and Maria Serena Rizzo (Archaeopress, 2023), 77–89.

²⁰¹ Alessandro Luciano, "Stazione Neapolis: A Journey into the History of Naples from the Neolithic to the Modern Age" in *Proceedings of the 17th Symposium on Mediterranean Archaeology, SOMA 2013*, Moscow, 25–27 April 2013, ed. Sergei Fazlullin & Mazlum Mert Antika (Archaeopress, 2013), 140–141.

²⁰² MANN, Napoli, la città, e il mare: Piazza Bovio tra Romani e Bizantini, Electa, 2010

Martin provides us with an extensive work on the southern Italy, he also carefully analyses the Neapolitan fortification from the fifth century to the Early Middle Ages and beyond.²⁰³

On the other hand, Naples is a city where one can find the earliest examples of Christianization; therefore, the so-called new religion had a crucial role to play both in the socio-political and economic sphere as well as the urban transformation. In this light, Fabrizio Disconti underlines the importance of the catacombs of San Gennaro di Capodimonte by offering an iconographical analysis of the crypt of the bishops who lived between fifth and sixth centuries and also its mosaics.²⁰⁴ As the burials indicate, one of the earliest transitions that occurred on the landscape. Maria Amodio studies the Late Antique tombs in Naples, presenting their location either inside or outside of the city walls, funerary rites or typologies of the tombs.²⁰⁵ Gioanna Ferri shows that the mosaic program of Baptistry of San Giovanni in Fonte, can be paired with the mosaic program of Galla Placidia,²⁰⁶ as both Naples and Ravenna functioned in the same imperial *oikumene*.²⁰⁷ Alessio Cuccaro takes another aspect into the consideration by delivering an archaeological and architectural analysis of the Early Christian episcopal complex, which reminds us that one of the main pillars of this urban transformation was related to the ecclesiastical organizations.²⁰⁸ Vinni Lucherini presents us a careful examination

²⁰³ Jean-Marie Martin, “Le fortificazione dal secolo V al XIII” in *Napoli nel medioevo*, vol. 1, ed. Amedeo Feniello (Congredo, 2007).

²⁰⁴ Fabrizio Disconti, “Napoli. Catacombe di S. Gennaro, Cripta dei Vescovi: Restauri Ultime,” *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 91 (2015): 7–13.

²⁰⁵ Maria Amodio, *Le sepolture a Neapolis dell’età imperiale al tardo antico: Scelte insediative, tipologia sepolcrali e usi funerari tra III e VI secolo* (Gianini Editore, 2014).

²⁰⁶ Edward M. Schoolman, *Rediscovering Sainthood in Italy: Hagiography and the late antique past in medieval Ravenna* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

²⁰⁷ Giovanna Ferri, *I mosaici del battistero di San Giovanni in Fonte* (Tau Editrice, 2013).

²⁰⁸ Alessio Cuccaro, “Basilicam in Civitatem Neapolis: La vicenda architettonica della cattedrale paleocristiana nel contesto topografico dell’insula episcopalis” in *La Basilica di Santa Restituta a Napoli e il suo arredo medievale*, ed. Giorgia Corso, Alessio Cuccaro, and Claudia D’Alberto (Zip, 2012), 17–75.

of the Duomo di Napoli (Cattedrale di Santa Maria Assunta) from its Early Christian origins which is quite important for obtaining a better understanding of the urban transformation of Naples during the period under scrutiny, since the administrative and ecclesiastical powers flowing in the Duchy of Naples behaved like a two-headed dragon.²⁰⁹

On the other hand, narrating the peculiar trajectory of Amalfi with its historical and archaeological aspects also poses a challenge for the historian, since the fragmented nature of Amalfi and the scattered information impede such a work from being carried out. However, like the case of Naples, and maybe even more so, the history of Amalfi has been written because of the Mediterranean.²¹⁰ In contradistinction to Naples, where most of the documents were lost or damaged due to bombardment during Second World War, Amalfi retains an extensive body of legal charters, notary documents and ecclesiastical narratives. As to Amalfi's fragmented history and society, the first scholar who became a kind of walking testimony of Medieval Amalfi is Giuseppe Gargano, whose extensive work on Amalfi draw a picture of its history and economic relationship with Tyrrhenian as well as well the Mediterranean.²¹¹ Mario del Treppo and Alfonso Leone offer a reconstruction of medieval Amalfi, a prominent resource for the historians.²¹² Barbara M. Kreutz a pioneering scholar whose works help the researcher to navigate the complicated relationships between Naples and Amalfi and their Lombard neighbours from the Lombards' perspective. Patricia Skinner presents

²⁰⁹ Vinni Lucherini, *La cattedrale di Napoli: storia, architettura, storiografia un monumento medievale* (École Française de Rome, 2009).

²¹⁰ Daniel Waley & Trevor Dean, *İtalyan Şehir Cumhuriyetleri* (İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014), 93–95.

²¹¹ Giuseppe Gargano & Guido Loro (eds.), *Amalfi, il Mezzogiorno e il mediterraneo: Studi offerti Sangermano*, (Centro di Cultura e di Storia Amalfitana, 2013).

²¹² Mario del Treppo & Alfonso Leone, *Amalfi medioevale* (Naples: Giannini, 1977).

one of the most important and coherent works on Amalfi in *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora (800–1250)* by providing not only a careful reading of literary sources but also drawing a vivid picture to gain a better understanding of medieval Amalfi along with its interactions.²¹³ Her perspective is followed by Simeonova, who reconstructs the narrative of Amalfitans in Constantinople from the ninth century.²¹⁴ Matthew Harpster is a name worth mentioning in any work done on Amalfi, as he conducted a project to compose a model based on the maritime landscape of Costiera Amalfitana.²¹⁵

Éric Thoreau-Girault's *Une société Chrétienne: Naples, Amalfi, Gaète (VI^e–XII^e siècle)* presents a narrative of these three duchies with their particular histories and calls attention to how the Neapolitans, Amalfitans and Gaetans acted alongside external powers and influences.²¹⁶ His comparative approach could also be presented in Marazzi²¹⁷ and Marani,²¹⁸ as the first one compares Byzantine Naples and Gaeta and the latter makes a comparison between Naples and Amalfi during the period under scrutiny. Moreover, Jones and Harpster present also a comparison between Constantinople and Amalfi by comparing them in a maritime

²¹³ Patricia Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800–1250* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

²¹⁴ Liliana Simeonova, “The Amalfitans in Byzantium, Merchants, Monks and Political Figures, 9th–13th Century” in *Etudes Balkaniques* LVII, no. 2 (2021): 189–227.

²¹⁵ Matthew Harpster et.al. “Modelling the Maritime Cultural Landscapes of Costiera Amalfitana: The First Three Seasons Research (2016-2018)” in *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology*, 2021, 1-13

²¹⁶ Éric Thoreau-Girault, *Une société chrétienne: Naples, Amalfi, Gaète (VI^e–XII^e siècles)* (Peeters Publishers, 2022).

²¹⁷ Federico Marazzi, “Byzantine Naples and Gaeta” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino (Brill, 2021), 406–434.

²¹⁸ Flavia Marani, “The Circulation of Coinage in Two Byzantine Cities: Rome and Naples in Comparison” in *Perspectives on Byzantine Archaeology: From Justinian to the Abbasid Age (6th–9th centuries)*, ed. Angelo Castorao Barba & Gabriele Castiglia (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), 192–197.

perspective.²¹⁹ One may also bring Mammaso & Abate as they consider religious frescoes and Byzantine influences between Amalfi and Salerno.²²⁰

Obviously, all these contributions are valuable and allowing us to grasp different aspects of the peculiar trajectories of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi in a period lasted long for more or less four centuries or specific issues from patronage to diaspora, from commerce to administration, from mint to the religious rituals. However, there is a lack of these deliberately constructed narratives as they do not offer a reconstruction of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi within the Byzantine *koine*, therefore, my dissertation offers to fill exactly this gap.²²¹

1.7. Aims and Methodology

In the light of this summary of the historiography, the discussions on Byzantine Naples and Amalfi with their own peculiar trajectories, their administrative, economic, religious and cultural interactions with their neighbouring cities, the Tyrrhenian and then with Mediterranean Sea have gradually been materialized over the last decades. There are some prominent, related works such as those by Arthur, Skinner, Kreutz, Thoreau-Girault, Harpster, and the partial nuances in their monumental books by Wickham and McCormick, offer us either an opportunity to weave Naples and Amalfi into the history of the

²¹⁹ Michael Jones & Matthew Harpster, “Two Views of Ports and Maritime Communities in the Byzantine Mediterranean: Constantinople and Amalfi” in *The Routledge Handbook of the Byzantine City, From Justinian to Mehmet II (ca. 500–1500)*, ed. Nikolas Bakirtzis & Luca Zavagno (Routledge, 2024), 352–368.

²²⁰ Alfonso Mammato & Nicodemo Abate, “La ‘Grotta dell’affresco’: il fenomeno del monachesimo sul confine tra il Ducato di Amalfi e il Principato di Salerno,” *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 24 (2018): 199–208.

²²¹ See *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond*, (ed.) Cynthia Hahn & Holger A. Klein, Dumbarton Oaks, 2015.

Mediterranean or paint a wider picture that hints at the interactions of Naples and Amalfi, rather than treating them as peripheral areas.²²²

Yet, the silent questions I have uttered in the introduction of my dissertation remain intact. How are historians and archaeologists to prove the machinery that keeps this interaction vital, alive and constantly changing? As mentioned above, Arthur and Skinner highlighted the strong administrative, commercial and religious activities of Naples and Amalfi, del Treppo and Leone paint a picture of Amalfi while Galasso provides us with Naples' historical trajectory. From a theoretical perspective, Cosentino, Arthur, Wickham, McCormick, Veikou and Zavagno indicate the complex nature of these interactions between coastal and insular settlements of Byzantine Mediterranean, with some of these scholars labeling this system as *koine* and others not. Yet the core of all their ideas presents us with the transformation of the Mediterranean and the set of skills to adopt and adapt this transformation by the connected maritime settlements in a fragmented Mediterranean.²²³

With these preliminary caveats in mind, I argue that the transformation of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi in the passage from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages (c. 6th–10th century) needs to be perceived not from a Tyrrhenian perspective, but as part and parcel of the Byzantine *koine*. My dissertation challenges the long-standing assumptions that portray these two maritime cities as peripheral, far-flung provinces for the Byzantines as well as the portrait of unambiguous isolated coastal settlements in western Mediterranean. Instead, I argue for a reinterpretation of Naples and Amalfi as resilient urban centres deeply

²²² Wickham, *Framing the Middle Ages* (2005), 203–204.

²²³ Zavagno, “The Sublime ... ” (2024), 184.

embedded in changing Mediterranean networks of power, commerce, religion, and culture. Far from being distant, crumbling outposts, Naples and Amalfi both maintained a dynamic connection with the Byzantine *koine* while cultivating hybrid identities suited to their own changing environment both in political and cultural realities.²²⁴ On the other hand, I strongly believe that Naples and Amalfi were not basically recipients of imperial neglect or external aggression from Lombards, or later from Carolingians or the Arabs, but rather adaptive entities that forged their own relationships with their environment while actively engaging in this complex and multilayered transformation. As I will continue along the line of transformation through my dissertation, the vitality of Naples and Amalfi during the passage under scrutiny has deeply related them, as part and parcel of the Byzantine *koine*, with their active, constant navigation in the Mediterranean, literally and figuratively.²²⁵

To analyze this transformation and to place Naples and Amalfi in the Byzantine *koine*, I apply a network-based framework, drawing from the abovementioned scholars and their theories on connectivity, systems of exchange, the transformation of maritime routes of the Mediterranean during the early Middle Ages, and the Byzantine *koine*. As already mentioned, my dissertation offers a narrative of Naples and Amalfi within the Byzantine *koine*, a shared cultural and economic sphere characterized by mobility, connectivity and mutual language. This in turn could ideally allow me to present an argument that rethinks and reassesses

²²⁴ Salvatore Cosentino, *Storia dell'Italia bizantina (VI–XI secolo), Da Giustiniano ai Normanni* (Bononia University Press, 2006).

²²⁵ Paul Arthur, “Alcune considerazioni sulla natura della città bizantina” in *Le città italiane tra la tarda antichità e l’alto medioevo, Atti del convegno (Ravenna, 26–28 febbraio 2004)*, ed. Andre Augenti (All’Insegna del Giglio, 2006), 27–36.

Byzantine Naples and Amalfi not as a peripheral story, but as showing continuity through change, shaped by localized agency and interregional flows.²²⁶

Material culture has a crucial role to play in my dissertation, as the reconstruction of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi requires tracing their urban trajectories, coins, seals, pottery and maritime infrastructure, ports and harbors, and provides us with the desired evidence to integrate their histories within the Byzantine *koine*. As both regional and long-distance maritime activities, stretching to the Eastern Mediterranean, offer a significant degree of relationship between Naples and Amalfi around the gravitational pull of Constantinople, this is not only related to commerce but also to administrative and cultural aspects.²²⁷ The yield of coins and seals from Naples mirrors the administrative importance of the city; and the rise of Amalfi, although less well documented in the earliest period, reveals Amalfi's increasing entanglement with the Byzantine *koine*. Another aspect concerning material culture is related to Christianization, as religious institutions, the cult of saints, and ecclesiastical buildings further illuminate the urban resilience of Naples and Amalfi and their interactions with the Byzantine *koine*. Urban and ecclesiastical patronage played a crucial role in urban transformation as well as the importance that relics had both in transforming space and in becoming a valuable branch for trade.²²⁸ On the other hand, Christianization introduces a new layer into Neapolitan and Amalfitan identities and their skills of adaptation, since these two cities formed their religious identities, in this sense, in relation to Byzantine, Roman and Italo-Greek traditions occurring around them. Moreover, my dissertation offers

²²⁶ Michael McCormick, *Origins of European Economy* (2001), 98–136.

²²⁷ S. D. Goitein, "The Documents of the Cairo Geniza as a Source for Mediterranean Social History," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 80, no. 2 (1869): 91–100.

²²⁸ Richard W. Unger, "Commerce, Communication and Empire: Economy, Technology and Cultural Encounters" in *Speculum* 90, no. 1 (2016): 1–27.

a reading on this point, the fluid, mobile and interactive Christian identities of Amalfitans and Neapolitans stemmed from the nature of the Byzantine *koine*. This creation of hybrid Christian identities and their tangible reflections on land (churches, bishoprics, chapels or even baths for religious purposes) therefore created the mutually perceived cultural codes throughout the coastal and insular world. In other words, since my dissertation focuses on two communities and their histories, transformations and connectivity to a wider sphere, conceived as the Byzantine *koine*, it becomes clear that the pillars of the Byzantine *koine* were built on commerce and faith.²²⁹

Furthermore, my dissertation discusses the emergence of local authority, which both Naples and Amalfi had certainly enjoyed in relation to the fluid nature of Byzantine administrative power: as Naples and Amalfi were loosely tied to the capital, both sides mutually reaped benefits from this relationship. While Naples and Amalfi enjoyed a certain level of legitimacy and privileges stemming from the imperial power, once again material culture testifies its level as the mint of Naples struck Byzantine coins, both Neapolitan and Amalfitan officers used imperial titles, while simultaneously asserting a certain level of autonomy in practice through their own relationships with the Lombard, Papal and Arab spheres. The hybrid nature of these correspondences reflects a fluid spectrum of identities, which in turn, play a key role of the maintaining the interconnection between the communities of Byzantine *koine*.²³⁰

²²⁹ Richard Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe: From Paganism to Christianity 371–1386* (London: Fontana Press, 1997).

²³⁰ Paul Arthur, “Pots and Boundaries” (2007), generally.

In this light, the last point my dissertation drives home is narrating a simple fact that Byzantine Naples and Amalfi were not peripheries. Instead of making peripheral readings of their trajectories, I aim to show that these cities were interactive, robustly connected, resilient and adaptive maritime cities, playing their roles alongside more powerful entities. I find myself reluctant to present them as exceptional cases in a diminishing world where the Neapolitans and Amalfitans tried to survive or achieve exceptional success. In other words, my dissertation narrates the peculiar trajectories of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi, by carefully reading their urban transformation to place them into Byzantine *koine* and narrate their stories through Mediterranean lenses.²³¹

It is necessary to explain the methodology employed, as I adopt an interdisciplinary methodology to explore Byzantine Naples and Amalfi. Rather than completely relying on only literary sources or archaeological reports, my dissertation offers a balanced narrative based on textual and material analysis in relation to the model I propose, based on the theories. The core of methodological approach is shaped by connectivity, stemming from Preiser-Kapeller, whose model cogently theorizes the complex nature of connectivity, which I combine with Veikou's interpretation of Byzantine entangled ports and harbours. McCormick's model on the changing nature of maritime activities and long-distance trade as well as communication and Wickham's significant interpretations of economic transformation and the role of urban elites to maintain the connections in the Mediterranean complement the framework of my model. My dissertation also draws on Horden and Purcell's concept of micro-regions and adaptive coastal systems to analyse Byzantine Naples and Amalfi as case studies to show the level

²³¹ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Middle Ages*, 2004.

of adaptability and resilient maritime settlements, functioning as part and parcel of Byzantine *koine*. This brings the coastal and insular system into the picture, defined by scholars such as Zanini, Cosentino, Veikou, Michaelides and conceived as *koine* by Zavagno as my dissertation focuses on administrative, socio-economic and cultural adaptation more than environmental factors, as the cities navigated alongside the papal, Lombard and later Carolingian and obviously imperial spheres.²³²

The combination of the abovementioned research with other case studies enables my dissertation to have cross-referencing value, while written sources are read alongside the material artifacts — especially pottery, coins, and seals — to discern patterns in connectivity, adaptation, and representation of imperial influence and the *koine*. On the other hand, a major methodological component of my dissertation is that by adopting a comparative analysis, I aim to show the similarities that Naples and Amalfi shared with other maritime settlements of the Byzantine *koine*, such as Attaleia and Cherson. This comparative perspective highlights both the particular trajectories of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi and their embeddedness in sea routes of the Mediterranean and the Byzantine *koine*. Finally, my dissertation embraces a diachronic methodology to survey almost four centuries to address the problems above mentioned in a long process. Hence, this thesis offers a reconstruction of Byzantine Naples and Amalfi as both vulnerable and adaptive, both local and imperial, during the transitional period from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages.

²³² Luca Zavagno, “The sublime...”, 2024.

In conclusion, this chapter has laid out the conceptual backbone of this dissertation by presenting a model that challenges the conventional portrayal of Naples and Amalfi as marginal, declining or passive entities. Instead, it proposes that these cities were deeply integrated, adaptive and resilient actors within the Byzantine Mediterranean. Through the lens of connectivity, coastal and insular dynamics, and Christianization, the model paves the way of perceiving Byzantine Naples and Amalfi as active participants in the transformation of the Mediterranean from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages. The sea emerges not merely as a backdrop, but as a generative space, fluid, mobile and central to the shaping of hybrid identities, shifting power structures, and evolving urban landscapes. By focusing on material culture, maritime infrastructure, religious practices, and local agency, this approach emphasizes the entanglement of the local and imperial, the coastal and the central, the sacred and the profane. This chapter, then, does not simply offer a theoretical introduction, but rather a narrative reorientation: it invites the reader to view Naples and Amalfi through the prism of the Byzantine koine that was a dynamic, fluid and porous and profoundly maritime in character.

CHAPTER II: A Tapestry of Shifting Powers: Negotiating Empire, Fragmentation and Hybrid Politics in Byzantine Italy (6th–10th Centuries)

Charting the historical trajectories of the Byzantine Duchies of Naples and Amalfi, and by extension of the wider Italian peninsula between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, requires one to move beyond simple linear narratives and embrace the peninsula's profoundly fragmented, adaptive and cultural character.²³³ This period, spanning roughly the sixth to the tenth centuries, is one of the most intricate chapters of Mediterranean history, marked by a delicate interplay of continuity and rupture, local resilience and imperial intervention, as well as religious and cultural transformation.²³⁴

2.1. Byzantine Italy: A Transformative Tapestry between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages

The historiography of Byzantine Italy reflects the same complexity, fragmentation, and redefinition that characterizes the region itself. From early visions of the peninsula as a waning appendage of Roman grandeur, scholarship has gradually shifted toward more nuanced readings of local agency, regional adaptation, and cross-cultural entanglement. Building on the foundations laid by Diehl and Hartmann, and reimagined by Guillou and Brown, modern approaches emphasize not imperial uniformity, but the heterogeneous textures of daily life, governance, and connectivity, in this light, Byzantine Italy no longer appears as a peripheral holding of Constantinople, but as a dynamic mosaic of contested urban

²³³ See Jean-Marie Martin, Annick Peters-Custos, and Vivien Prigent (eds.), *L'héritage byzantin en Italie (VIII–XII siècle)* vol. 2, Les cadres juridiques et sociaux et les institutions publiques (École française de Rome, 2012).

²³⁴ Enrico Zanini, *Le Italie Bizantine, Territorio, insediamenti ed economia nella provincia bizantina d'Italia (VI–VIII secolo)* (Edipuglia, 1998).

and ecclesiastical elites, hybrid identities, and resilient structures that both shaped and responded to Mediterranean change.

Historiographically, the study of Byzantine Italy has undergone significant evolution. The pioneering works of Diehl and Hartmann established foundational frameworks in the later nineteenth century, often viewing Byzantine Italy as a mere transitional phase between Classical Roman and medieval Europe.²³⁵ This perspective persisted until the interventions of Guillou, who reframed Byzantine Italy as a distinct and dynamic historical reality, deserving of its own study. Guillou's emphasis on regional diversity, interdisciplinary methodologies, and material culture analysis paved the way for later scholars, for instance Brown, whose works illuminate the social circles of Byzantine Italy and regional differences. Their works underscore the necessity of moving beyond top-down imperial narratives to appreciate local transformations and cross-Mediterranean connections.²³⁶

In this light, the notion of Byzantine Italy defies simplistic or homogenizing definitions. It was not a static provincial appendage, but rather an adaptive and contested space where Roman, Ostrogoth, Byzantine, Lombard, Frankish and Arab as well as local Italian elements intersected and negotiated. It is a landscape best

²³⁵ Charles Diehl, *Études sur l'Administration Byzantine: L'Exarchat de Ravenne (568–751)* (Paris, 1888); L.M. Hartmann, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der byzantinische Verwaltung in Italien (540–750)* (Leipzig, 1889).

²³⁶ André Guillou, "L'Italie byzantine. Un modèle culturel de province," *MEFRM* 101, no. 2 (1989): 629–639; A. Guillou & Filippo Burgarella, *L'Italia bizantina. Dall'esarcato di Ravenna al tema di Sicilia*, Torino 1988, Thomas S. Brown, "The church of Ravenna and the imperial administration in the seventh century," *EHR* 94 (1979): 1–28; T. S. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers: Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy AD 554–800* (British School at Rome, 1984); T. S. Brown, "L'aristocrazia di Ravenna da Giustiniano a Carlo Magno," in *Felix Ravenna* 131–132 (1986): 91–98, T. S. Brown, "Byzantine Italy, c. 680–c. 876," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History II, c. 700–c. 900*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick, 320–348 (Cambridge, 1995); T. S. Brown and Neil Christie, "Was there a Byzantine Model of Settlement in Italy?," *MEFRM* 101 no. 2 (1989): 377–399.

understood as a constellation of evolving urban and rural communities, religious organizations, and maritime networks, each uniquely responsive to the shifting political and economic pressures.²³⁷

The scholarly foundation for understanding this period has been significantly enriched by key scholars such as Brown, Christie, Cosentino, Diehl, Guillou, von Falkenhausen and Zanini, each of whom has contributed to dismantling the once-prevailing image of a declining, static Italy, instead foregrounding local agency and Mediterranean connectivity.²³⁸ While certain unifying administrative elements existed, such as imperial minting practices and the use of regnal years, these shared features scarcely concealed the immense diversity of local customs and material cultures.²³⁹

With this preliminary caveat in mind, one can start with the fact that *Renovatio Imperii Romanorum* of Justinian I (527–565), which saw the reconquest of Italy by Belisarius and Narses, did not simply restore Roman hegemony, but also laid the foundation for a re-imagined Byzantine Italy composed of shifting administrative zones such as Sicily, Sardinia and key cities in the Italian peninsula

²³⁷ Enrico Zanini, *Le Italie Bizantine, Territorio, insediamenti ed economia nella provincia bizantina d'Italia (VI–VIII secolo)* (Edipuglia, 1998), 8–17.

²³⁸ See Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome, A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (Penguin, 2010); Chris Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society 400–1000* (Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1981); Claudio Azzara, *L'Italia dei barbari* (Il Mulino, 2007); Claudio Azzara, *Teodorico*, (Il Mulino, 2013); Claudio Azzara, *La Chiesa nel Medioevo*, (Il Mulino, 2010); Thomas J. MacMaster & Nicholas S. M. Matheau (eds.), *Italy and the East Roman World in the Medieval Mediterranean: Empire, Cities and Elites*, 476–1204, (Routledge, 2021); Salvatore Cosentino, *Prosopografia dell'Italia bizantina (493–804)* (Quasar, 2024); Salvatore Cosentino & Antonio Carile (eds.), *Storia della marineria Bizantina*, 2010, Salvatore Cosentino, *Storia dell'Italia bizantina (VI–XI secolo): Da Giustiniano ai Normanni* (Bononia University Press, 2008); Vera von Falkenhausen, *Studi sull'Italia bizantina*, ed. Marco di Branco & Luca Farina (Viella, 2022); Vera von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina nell'Italia meridionale IX–XII secolo* (Ecumenica Editrice, 1978).

²³⁹ Michael Mass, “Roman Questions, Byzantine Answers: Contours of the Age of Justinian” in *The Cambridge Companion to Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Mass (Cambridge, 2005), 13–17.

such as Ravenna, Rome or Naples.²⁴⁰ Even under the Exarchate of Ravenna, established in the late 6th century, imperial control was neither continuous nor uniform but rather marked by a mosaic of cities, each adapting to local pressures.²⁴¹ It is certain that the Gothic Wars (535-554) vividly illustrates these tensions as Procopius, our key contemporary witness, depicts a peninsula devastated by protracted conflict: cities ruined, populations decimated by famine and plague and local elites either killed or displaced.²⁴² Yet, while central and northern Italy suffered gravely, regions such as Apulia and Calabria experienced relative stability, revealing the heterogeneity of local experiences beneath the blanket narrative of ‘destruction’. The *Pragmatic Sanction* (554) and Justinian’s subsequent reforms aimed at restoring order and infrastructure, yet they often exacerbated local resentment and deepened social divides.²⁴³

On the other hand, one can safely mention that the social fabric of Italy had irrevocably altered before this era, the senatorial aristocracy and *curiales* saw their influence diminish drastically, with many fleeing to Constantinople or retreating to their villas in the south.²⁴⁴ Bishops rose to fill this power vacuum, becoming de facto urban leaders, in turn, figures such as Gregory the Great (540-604) or

²⁴⁰ André Guillou, *Régionalisme et indépendance dans l’empire byzantin au VI^e siècle. L’exemple de l’exarchat e de la pentapole d’Italie* (Rome: Palazzo Borromini, 1969).

²⁴¹ See George Ostrogorsky, “L’Exarchat de Ravenne et l’origine des thèmes byzantins”, in *CARB* 7, 1, 1960, p. 99-110; E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire, I, De la disparition de l’empire d’Occident à la mort de Justinien (476-565)*, Paris-Bruxelles-Amsterdam 1949,

²⁴² André Guillou, “L’Italie byzantine. Un modèle culturel de province”, *MEFRM* 101, no. 2 (1989): 629–639; William Rosen, *Justinian’s Flea: Plague, Empire and the Birth of Europe* (Penguin, 2007), 233–237; A. D. Lee, “The Empire at War,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Mass (Cambridge, 2005) 118–122; Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 93–100.

²⁴³ Thomas S. Brown, “Settlement and Military Policy in Byzantine Italy”, in *Papers in Italian Archaeology, Lancaster Seminar*, ed. Hugo M. Blake, Timothy Potter, and David Bryn Whitehouse (Oxford, 1978), 323–338; Anthony Maurice Honoré, “Justinian’s Codification,” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth, (Oxford University Press, 2003), 803–804.

²⁴⁴ Cassiodorus [c. 485–585], *Variae, The Complete Translation*, trans. M. Shane Björnile (University of California Press, 2019), 212–213.

Agnellus of Ravenna (487-570), both of senatorial lineage, epitomized this shift. Bishops had gradually gained jurisdictional powers, managed local justice and represented their cities in negotiations with imperial authorities, becoming linchpins of urban and religious life.²⁴⁵

The establishment of the Exarchate of Ravenna under the reign of Maurice (582–602) marked a pragmatic response to these challenges. By fusing urban and military authority into a single office, the exarch served as both governor and general, ensuring local defence and administration in a volatile landscape.²⁴⁶ Ravenna, already an imperial city since Justinian's campaigns, symbolized this adaptive governance. The exarch acted as a living embodiment of the imperial *oikumene* in Italy, even as Constantinople faced mounting crises elsewhere.²⁴⁷

In this sense, the reign of Heraclius (r. 610–641) saw the empire's core identity shift toward Anatolian and Aegean characteristics, moving further away from the Romanized model of Justinian. This transformation underlines the fluidity of Byzantine identity, which, rather than imposing a coherent, monolithic culture, reflected by a continual negotiation between local and imperial forces. Byzantine Italy was thus not a singular 'Byzantine' entity but a constellation of overlapping, sometimes competing, cultural, and political spaces that included Ostrogoths, Lombards, Carolingians, Arabs, and Byzantines.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ M. Shane Björnle, *Politics and Tradition between Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople: A Study of Cassiodorus and the Variae* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 18–19; Paolo Chiesa, "Traduzioni e traduttori a Roma nell'alto medioevo" in *Roma fra Oriente e Occidente, CISAM* 49 (2002): 461.

²⁴⁶ Judith Herrin, *Bizans: Bir Ortaçağ İmparatorluğunun Şaşırtıcı Yaşamı* (İletişim Yayınları, 2013), 148–154.

²⁴⁷ John F. Haldon, *Bizans Tarih Atlası* (Alfa, 2021), 95–109.

²⁴⁸ Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford University Press, 1997), 150–158.

Heraclius' reign largely maintained stability in Italy, while his successor Constans II's (630–668) dramatic intervention in 663, including his controversial stay in Rome, gave imperial confirmation to the Duchy of Naples; his subsequent assassination in Syracuse, marked a major turning point.²⁴⁹ His punitive taxation and symbolic gestures such as the removal of bronze tiles from the Pantheon, which was consecrated as a church, fueled discontent particularly among ecclesiastical elites. Yet, these measures also underscore the peninsula's enduring importance to imperial strategy, particularly following the loss of Egypt in 642 and the growing need to secure new grain sources such as in Sicily.²⁵⁰

By the eighth century, relationship between Rome and Constantinople deteriorated further. The Iconoclastic policies of Leo III (r. 717–741), combined with aggressive fiscal exactions, led to an open ecclesiastical and political rift. Pope Gregory III's (r. 731–741) convocation of a synod in 731 to reaffirm the veneration of icons, and its conspicuous avoidance of imperial dating formulas, highlights a decisive ideological shift.²⁵¹ Meanwhile, Leo III's confiscation of papal estates and transfer of diocesan jurisdictions to the Patriarchate of Constantinople intensified the breach as the popes' growing alignment with the Franks, culminating in Charlemagne's coronation in 800, marked the emergence of a new Western imperial order.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Filippo Donvito, "The Lure of the West: The Italian Campaign of Constans II" in *Medieval Warfare* 4, no. 6 (2014): 31.

²⁵⁰ P.A.B. Llewellyn, "Constans II and the Roman Church: A Possible Instance of Imperial Pressure" in *Byzantion* 46, no. 1, (1978): 120–126, 123–124.

²⁵¹ Federico Marazzi, "Il conflitto fra Leone III Isaurico e il papato tra il 725 e il 733 e il 'definitivo' inizio del medioevo a Roma: un'ipotesi in discussione," *Papers of the British School of Rome* 59 (1991): 225–231.

²⁵² Andrew Louth, "Relations with Constantinople" in *A Companion to the Medieval Papacy*, ed. Keith Sisson and Atria A. Larson, (Brill, 2016), 305–306.

Before the coronation of Charlemagne, the Fall of Ravenna to the Lombards in 751 traditionally symbolized the collapse of Byzantine authority in northern Italy and catalyzed Rome's search for powerful alliances. Indeed, the papacy increasingly portrayed itself as the protector of the Italian flock, appropriating both spiritual and secular leadership.²⁵³ This ideological shift is vividly captured in *Liber Pontificalis*, which describes local populations as 'lost sheep' entrusted to the care of St. Peter's successor. By invoking the notion of a *res publica Romanorum*, the popes attempted to reshape Roman identity to legitimize their temporal power, yet this attempt did not last long.²⁵⁴

While northern and central Italy gravitated towards Frankish and Lombard influence, southern Italy experienced a phase of renewal of Byzantine engagement. After the settlement between Michael I and Charlemagne in 812, which acknowledged Byzantine sovereignty over Venice and Dalmatia in exchange for recognizing Charlemagne as the Emperor of the West, Byzantine influence intensified in the regions of Calabria and Apulia as well as the Duchies of Naples and Amalfi.²⁵⁵ These areas became crucial nodes in maintaining Mediterranean maritime networks, supplying resources and sustaining diplomatic relations.²⁵⁶

Ultimately, Byzantine Italy emerges as a resilient, multifaceted tapestry: a place where local communities simultaneously resisted and appropriated imperial influence, where bishops supplanted senatorial elites as urban leaders, and where

²⁵³ David Harry Miller, "The Roman Revolution of the Eighth Century: A Study of the Ideological Background of the Papal Separation from Byzantium and Alliance with the Franks," *Medieval Studies* 36 (1974): 93–99.

²⁵⁴ Janet L. Nelson, *King and Emperor: A New Life of Charlemagne* (University of California Press, 2019), 59–87.

²⁵⁵ Rosamund McKitterink, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity*, (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 43–65.

²⁵⁶ Vera von Falkenhausen, "I Greci in Calabria fra XIII e XIV secolo," *Quaderni Petrarqueschi* 12–13 (2003): 36–41.

maritime duchies such as Naples and Amalfi forged hybrid identities that straddled East and West. Instead of viewing the peninsula through the lens of decline, it is more apt to perceive it as a laboratory of transformation and adaptation, constantly negotiating its place within the broader Byzantine *koine*.²⁵⁷

Byzantine Italy must be understood not as a monolithic or declining frontier, but as a shifting, adaptive landscape, at once shaped by imperial designs and defined by regional responses. From Justinian's reconquest to the aftermath of Iconoclasm, the peninsula hosted overlapping groups and competing tensions of order, producing a rich palimpsest of political, religious and socio-economic forms. It is within the context that duchies such as Naples and Amalfi emerge as case studies par excellence: simultaneously bound to imperial oikumene and embedded in localized micro-regional systems. Indeed, they embody the vitality of the Byzantine *koine* forged not through central control, but through negotiation, hybridity, and the rhythms of the sea.

2.2. Invaders, Settlers and Mercenaries: Negotiating Power with Ostrogoths, Lombards, Franks, and Arabs

The transformation of the Italian peninsula between the sixth and tenth centuries cannot be captured through a linear narrative of conquest or decline, nor by a binary opposition between imperial centre and peripheral outposts. Rather, this period reflects a nuanced process of hybridization, negotiation, and regional resilience. From the Ostrogothic rule of Theodoric to the establishment of the Byzantine Catepanate of Italy, southern Italy emerged as a crucible of shifting

²⁵⁷ Salvatore Cosentino, *Storia dell'Italia bizantina: Da Giustiano ai Normanni*, (Bononia, 2008).

power structures where imperial ambitions, local agency, and external pressures continuously interacted. The transition from Gothic to Byzantine and later Lombard and Arab dominions was not marked by sharp ruptures but by overlapping political entities, and adaptive strategies. Within this entangled landscape, southern Italian duchies, including Naples, Amalfi, Gaeta and Benevento or Salerno, evolved as hybrid polities, navigating the tides of imperial realignments while cultivating their own forms of autonomy and connectivity.²⁵⁸

The shifting dynamics of the Italian peninsula from the Ostrogothic kingdom to Lombard domination set the stage for the emergence of hybrid polities in Byzantine Italy, and therefore in southern Italy. This complex period cannot be reduced to a simple narrative of decline or conquest. Instead, it reflects deep processes of adaptation, local resilience, and continuous negotiation between regional agency and imperial officers as well as newcomers.²⁵⁹

The Ostrogothic kingdom under Theodoric the Great represented the first major post-Roman power structure in the peninsula, after the deposition of Romulus Augustulus by Odoacer in 476.²⁶⁰ Theodoric's rule, though formally recognizing Byzantine imperial supremacy, was deductively autonomous, blending Roman administrative practices with Gothic military power. Clearly, these times were not peaceful: for instance, Cassiodorus, serving as Theodoric's minister, famously described Rome as a city designed not merely be admired but to be used actively, on the one hand echoing urban pride and pragmatic urbanism inherited from antiquity, but on the other hand revealing the turbulent times Rome had gone

²⁵⁸ Salvatore Cosentino, *Storia dell'Italia bizantina: Da Giustiano ai Normanni*, (Bononia, 2008).

²⁵⁹ John Moorhead, "The Byzantines in the West in the sixth century," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, vol. I*, ed. Paul Fouracre (Cambridge, 2008), 122.

²⁶⁰ Claudio Azzara, *Teodorico. Storia e mito di un re barbarico* (Il Mulino, 2013).

through.²⁶¹ Cassiodorus also writes as the Romans may live in peace while the Goths make wars, beneath this rhetoric lay his characterization of the Gothic presence as militarized and often detached from local civilian life.²⁶²

After Theodoric's death, the regency of Amalasuintha for her young son Athalaric unraveled amid Gothic internal rivalries and external Frankish pressures. Amalasuintha's eventual murder in 535 was rumored to be connected to her rivalry with Empress Theodora,²⁶³ but what was for certain was that this murder bolstered Justinian's *casus belli* and paved the way for Belisarius to lead Byzantine troops into the Italian peninsula.²⁶⁴

In the wake of Gothic defeat, Justinian issued the Pragmatic Sanction (554), an imperial attempt to restore senatorial privilege and urban structures, affirming legal continuities and reestablishing property rights, disrupted by Totila, a Gothic warlord renowned for his cruelty.²⁶⁵ However, even these efforts acknowledged the growing power of bishops and local elites, revealing a society that was already moving beyond classical Roman forms. In turn, the reliance on ecclesiastical structures for local governance foreshadowed the increasing prominence of bishops as civic leaders in the centuries to come.²⁶⁶

²⁶¹ Claudio Azzara, *L'Italia dei barbari* (Il Mulino), 2002.

²⁶² Cassiodorus, *Variae*, XII. V. IV

²⁶³ David S. Potter, *Theodora: Actress, Empress, Saint Women in Antiquity* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 138–139; Massimiliano Vitello, *Amalasuintha: The Transformation of Queenship in the Post-Roman World* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 118–126; see Chris Wickham, "Gossip and Resistance among Medieval Pisanry," *Past & Present* 160 (1998): 3–24. Foss has an argument on how Theodora encouraged Justinian to plot against Amalasuinta and to pave the way for her possible execution, to be able of make a *casus belli* to attack Theodahad, the joint ruler and husband of Amalasuintha's daughter, Matasuntha. (C. Foss, "The Empress Theodora," *Byzantion* 72, no. 1 (2002): 141–176).

²⁶⁴ Susan Wise Bauer, *Ortaçağ Dünyası: Roma İmparatoru Büyük Constantinus'un Hristiyanlığı Kabul Etmesinden I. Haçlı Seferine* (Alfa, 2022), 345–349.

²⁶⁵ Eamon Duffy, *Saints & Sinners: A History of the Popes* (Yale University Press, 2006), 65–69.

²⁶⁶ Walter Goffart, *Barbarian Tides: The Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 224–227.

The arrival of the Lombards in 568 under Alboin marked another epochal transformation. While Paul the Deacon in his summary of *Origo Gentis Langobardorum* attributes their presence in Italy to a supposed invitation from Narses, perhaps motivated by vengeance against Constantinople,²⁶⁷ scholars now suggest a more complex set of causes: the former alliances between the Lombards and Byzantines in the Balkan regions, Lombard victories against the Gepids, and shifting geopolitical dynamics in the Alpine and Danubian regions. Alboin's rapid advance and symbolic acts such as his legendary thrust of his spear into the sea at Reggio signaled both ambition and permanence.²⁶⁸ The interregnum following Alboin's assassination in 572 presented Byzantium with opportunities, but coordination with Frankish allies proved ineffective. Even after temporary Frankish invasions and the reinstatement of Lombard kingship under Authari by the end of the sixth century, Byzantine efforts could not reverse Lombard territorial gains. On the other hand, the complex relationships once again were materializing between the Lombards and Byzantines. For instance, Droctulf, who defected from the Lombard ranks to serve the Byzantines and was buried with honors in San Vitale in Ravenna, underscores the fluid and transactional nature of loyalties during the period under scrutiny.²⁶⁹

By the later sixth century, the fragmentation of Italy into competing spheres of influence was well under way. Northern and central Italy increasingly fell under Lombard control, while the Byzantines consolidated their presence in coastal

²⁶⁷ *Origo gentis Langobardorum*, 5.

²⁶⁸ John Moorhead, "Ostrogothic Italy and the Lombard invasion" in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 1, ed. Paul Fouracre (Cambridge, 2009), 145; Neil Christie, *The Lombards: The Ancient Langobards*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 62.

²⁶⁹ Claire Sottinel, "Emperors and Popes in the Sixth Century" in *The Cambridge Companion to Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Mass (Cambridge, 2005), 275–277.

enclaves and southern Italy, yet one has to recognize the presence of Lombards in southern Italy as they founded the Duchy of Benevento.²⁷⁰

In southern Italy, notably Benevento, later Salerno by the mid-ninth century, maintained a certain level of independence until the aftermath of Carolingian intervention by the eighth century. Duke Arichis II of Benevento (758–787) exemplified the hybrid and complex identity, cultivating a court that emulated Byzantine sophistication, commissioning the Church of Santa Sofia in Benevento as an architectural echo of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, and fostering monastic networks like Monte Cassino and San Vincenzo al Volturno. His wife Adelperga and their son Grimoald ensured Benevento's transformation into a principality, illustrating local agency amid shifting hegemonies.²⁷¹

While Carolingian rulers, from Charlemagne (748–814) to Louis the Pious (778–840), issued charters asserting claims deep into southern Italy, these largely remained symbolic. The local rulers navigated competing Carolingian, Papal and Byzantine powers with a considerable level of pragmatism. The shifting alliances, exemplified in ephemeral coalitions against Carolingian incursions, reflected enduring local rivalries and political calculations over ideological loyalties.²⁷²

From the ninth century onwards, southern Italy became a theatre of even more complex interactions. The Arab conquest of Sicily and subsequent raids along the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic coastlines inserted Islamic actors into the region's political and social matrix. Arab control of Bari (847–871) and their entrenched

²⁷⁰ Barbara M. Kreutz, *Before the Normans: Southern Italy in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 34.

²⁷¹ Luigi Andrea Bertó, *The Little History of the Lombards of Benevento by Erchempert: A Critical Edition and Ystroriola Langobardorum Beneventum Degentium* (Routledge, 2021), 13–19.

²⁷² Mayke De Jong, *The Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the age of Louis the Pious, 814–840* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 28–45.

presence along the Garigliano River highlight this entanglement.²⁷³ The emergence of the Arabs also stimulated local economies through trade and generated new diplomatic configurations, not only with Arabs but also within the political entities such as the pact between Benevento and Naples, *Pactum Sicardi* (c. 836) ostensibly a non-aggression pact among southern Italian duchies, including provisions on trade with Muslim merchants, reflecting the complex nature of the interactions.²⁷⁴ On the other hand, southern Italian duchies had gradually gotten used to employing Arab mercenaries in local conflicts, underscoring the flexible nature of the dynamics of Southern Italian duchies such as Naples, Benevento or Salerno.²⁷⁵ Pope John VIII's effort to forge alliances, including a sort of holy war against Muslims, reveals the multilayered nature of the relationships, since Neapolitans and Amalfitans had shown reluctant signals toward joining the war, yet they strategically took side with the Papacy. The eventual defeat of Arab forces at the Battle of Garigliano (915), where the Arabs nestled under the permission of the Duchy of Gaeta, another de facto independent duchy on the Tyrrhenian coastline, detached from the Duchy of Naples in the beginning of ninth century, marked a symbolic turning point. However, Arab influence endured in material culture, coinage and local institutional adaptations as well as trade.²⁷⁶

Meanwhile, the Byzantine Empire sought to capitalize on the shifting balance of power by reinforcing the themes of Calabria and Langobardia,

²⁷³ Pietro Fedele, "La battaglia del Garigliano del 915 ed i monumenti che la ricordano," in *Archivio della Società Romana di storia patria* 22 (1989): 187–206.

²⁷⁴ Lorenzo M. Bondioli, "Islamic Bari between the Aghlabids and the Empires," in *The Aghlabids and their Neighbors*, ed. Glaire D. Anderson, Mariam Rossar-Owen, and Corisande Fenwick (Brill, 2018), 474–483.

²⁷⁵ Annlise Nef, "Byzantium and Islam in Southern Italy" in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, (eds.) Salvatore Cosentino, Brill, 2021, 212–213.

²⁷⁶ Vivien Prigent, "Notes sur l'évolution de l'administration byzantine en Adriatique (VIII-IX siècle)" in *Melanges de l'Ecole française de Rome, Moyen Age*, 120-2, 2008, pp. 393–417, pp. 401–403

establishing fortified cities and deploying the catepans, as well as by formally establishing the Catepanate of Italy in the late tenth century. This is traditionally dated to 965 and represented the second phase of Byzantine authority on the Italian peninsula. In fact, it represented imperial efforts to consolidate the authority over Southern Italy after centuries of fragmentation and external threats. Administrated by a *katepano*, a senior imperial officer combining both civil and military authority, the Catepanate was centred at Bari, which served as its strategic and administrative hub.²⁷⁷ This institution marked a shift from the aforementioned local governance structures, toward a more centralized, assertive model designed to project imperial power and counter Lombard and Arab incursions.²⁷⁸ By the end of 10th century, Byzantium's hold on southern Italy was weakened but not yet fully undone, laying the groundwork for future Norman incursions. Overall, the 6th and 10th centuries in Southern Italy illustrate a dynamic interplay of adaptation, ecclesiastical consolidation and regional resilience, a complex landscape that both preserved and transformed Byzantine presence.²⁷⁹

The political and cultural landscape of southern Italy between the fall of the Ostrogothic kingdom and the institutionalization of the Catepanate reveals a deeply stratified and dynamic process of transformation. The political entities such as Naples, Amalfi, Gaeta or Benevento asserted their agency through diplomatic fragmentation, strategic realignment, and cultural adaptation. The enduring presence of ecclesiastical structures, local and ecclesiastical elite patronage and

²⁷⁷ Salvatore Cosentino, *ibid*, 2021, pp. 43-44

²⁷⁸ Anthony Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood: The Rise and Fall of Byzantium, 955 AD to the First Crusade* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 160–164.

²⁷⁹ Vera von Falkenhausen, “Monte Cassino e Bisanzio dal IX al XII secolo” in *L’eta dell’abate Desiderio, Storia, arte e cultura* 3, no. 1, ed. F. Avagliano & O. Pecere (Pubblicazioni cassinesi, 1992), 79–91.

hybrid administrative practices illustrates a region where identities were forged through negotiation with Byzantine, Lombard, Carolingian, Islamic forces alike. The emergence of Catepanate of Italy signalled a renewed Byzantine assortment, yet it was one shaped by centuries of local complexity. These developments underscore the central thesis of this study that the cities and polities of southern Italy were not fading peripheries, but resilient and interactive actors embedded in the broader currents of the Byzantine *koine*.

In other words, the Italian peninsula during the period under scrutiny provides us with a picture of competing powers, fluctuating alliances, and deeply embedded local agency in relation to the imperial power. From the Ostrogothic kingdom's Roman-Gothic synthesis to the Lombard incursions and the shifting tides of Carolingians and Arab influence, Byzantine Italy, particularly in the south, proved remarkably resilient, adaptive, and multifaceted, as they negotiated their positions within broader geopolitical frameworks, cultivating hybrid identities, and fostering complex diplomatic, economic, cultural and military relationships. This in turn, reveals a region not as a marginal theatre of imperial politics but as a crucible of negotiation and transformation, where empire was continually reimagined, contested, and reshaped through the entangled actions of both rulers and communities.²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ Enrico Zanini, *Le Italie Bizantine, Territorio, insediamenti ed economia nella provincia bizantina d'Italia (VI-VIII secolo)*, Edipuglia, 1998.

CHAPTER III: Wearing Empires: The Ever-Changing Fabric and Identity of Naples (from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages)

This chapter examines the transformation of Naples from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages by tracing the city's evolving political, urban, religious, and socio-economic fabric under successive powers, from Ostrogoths to Byzantines, Lombards and Arabs. By focusing on Naples not as a remnant outpost, but as an adaptive and strategically engaged urban centre, this chapter aims to challenge teleological narratives of decline or independence. Instead, it highlights how Neapolitan society continuously negotiated its position within the Byzantine *koine*, through a flexible interplay of local agency, military organization, ecclesiastical authority, and Mediterranean connectivity. The following sections explore how Naples transformed its administrative structures, religious landscapes, commercial strategies, and urban identity in response to shifting imperial dynamics and regional rivalries.²⁸¹

3.1. At the Crossroads of Empire: The Formation and Transformation of the Duchy of Naples (6th and 10th Centuries)

Situated between imperial mandates and regional rivalries, Naples offers an illuminating case of urban and political transformation during the period under scrutiny. By tracing the urban development of Naples, we are confronted with a late antique city with deep Greek and Roman roots into a militarised and diplomatically agile duchy by the tenth century. Rather than viewing this trajectory as a linear descent into fragmentation, it becomes clear that Naples carved its own space within the evolving Byzantine *koine*. Anchored by its strategic position along

²⁸¹ Paul Arthur, *Naples from Roman Town to City-State: An Archaeological Perspective*, British School at Rome, 2002.

the Tyrrhenian coast, Naples absorbed imperial reforms while maintaining strong municipal institutions, engaged in regional diplomacy while cultivating economic networks, and negotiated local autonomy without entirely abandoning Byzantine affiliation. By examining the administration, ecclesiastical, military, and commercial developments in Naples, this section explores how local elites adapted to shifting power structures while shaping a distinct Neapolitan identity that was neither fully imperial nor wholly independent, but profoundly hybrid.

Indeed, Naples offers one of the richest case studies of urban transformation during the period under scrutiny. As this chapter explores the transformation of Naples by presenting its historical trajectory as well as urban transformation, it seems to me that, the Byzantine Duchy of Naples cannot be reduced to narratives of survival, decline or a temporary period that Naples had to swing between Roman and Byzantine authorities just to become independent.²⁸² On the contrary, Naples thrives through a series of negotiated adaptations, weaving together elements of Greek legacies, Roman municipal frameworks, Christian sacred landscape and Byzantine administrative and military reforms as well as interactions with different communities of Byzantine *koine*. The interplay between local resilience and imperial entanglement placed Naples in a unique position, no longer fully Roman, nor diverged from its inheritance, rather an active participant in the reorganization and adaptation process taking place in throughout the coastlines of Mediterranean.²⁸³ In light of this, as Naples occupied a strategic coastal position

²⁸² Paolo Bertolini, “La Chiesa di Napoli durante la crisi iconoclasta. Appunti sul codice Vaticano 5007,” in *Studi sul Medioevo cristiano offerti a Raffaello Morghen* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1974), 103–105.

²⁸³ Angela Palmentieri, “*Marmora Romana* in Medieval Naples: Architectural Spolia from the Fourth to the Fifteenth Centuries AD” in *Remembering Parthenope: The Reception of Classical Naples from Antiquity to the Present*, (eds.) J. Hughes & C. Buongiovanni, Oxford, 2015, pp. 121–157, 122–127

on the northern edge of the Bay of Naples, nestled between the volcanic slopes of Mount Vesuvius to the east and the rugged Phlegrean Fields to the west, this geographical setting enabled Naples to function as a maritime city of the Tyrrhenian Sea while maintaining access to the Campanian inland as well as to Latium.²⁸⁴ Its location provided natural harborage and defensive advantages, from which clearly Byzantines benefited, supporting both administrative and commercial resilience and urban continuity during the period under scrutiny. This placement further reinforced its role as an essential urban node, sustaining agricultural surplus and maintaining strong socio-political, economic and cultural ties to the Byzantine *koine*.²⁸⁵

With these preliminary caveats in mind, one can start by quoting Paul Arthur, one of the prominent scholars on Naples during the Late Antiquity and early Middle Ages, who begins his book as follows:

The history of the Mediterranean would probably have been profoundly different had not Naples and Campania maintained a certain pre-eminence throughout late antiquity and the Dark Ages. It was thus able to participate in the commercial revolution of the Middle Ages, alongside towns such as Genoa and Venice, and it became the centre respectively of Angevin, Aragonese and eventually Bourbon power in Italy, falling short of becoming the country's capital. Naples remained

²⁸⁴ Lorenzo Miletto, "Setting the Agenda: The Image of Classical Naples in Strabo's Geography and Other Ancient Literary Sources" in *Remembering Parthenope: The Reception of Classical Naples from Antiquity to the Present*, (eds.) J. Hughes & C. Buongiovanni, Oxford, 2015, pp. 19-39, 28-34.

²⁸⁵ Jean-Marie Martin, "Rural Economy: Organization, Exploitation and Resources" in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, (eds.) Salvatore Cosentino, Brill, 2021, 279-300, 286-288.

autonomous for some 400 years during the second half of first millennium, when other states, and even empires, arose and fell.²⁸⁶

Arthur is right to note that Naples had preserved its continuity and protected its urban identity while so many other states in the Mediterranean fractured, but to call this a survival through the so-called Dark Ages seems to miss the complex nature of the centuries in question as well as the level of adaptability, resilience and power of the city in question, and instead perceives the city as an peripheral outpost.²⁸⁷ By the sixth century, just before Byzantines sieged the city, Naples was an urban settlement where its community was accustomed to Greek and Roman elements as well as the blood of saints as Neapolitans were one of the earliest communities who started to convert to Christianity in Europe.²⁸⁸ In fact, this is not a matter of the long-standing debate over discontinuity versus continuity. Naples emerges before us, as this chapter explores, as a city in constant motion, negotiation and transformation.

The origin of Naples (Neapolis) stems from Greek colonial expansion during the seventh and eighth centuries BCE, when colonists from Cumae and Rhodes established the ancient settlement of Parthenope, which eventually turned into Neapolis, or “new city.”²⁸⁹ Located on the fertile Tyrrhenian coastline, Naples flourished as a city where Greek civic identity mingled with Roman influences by

²⁸⁶ Paul Arthur, *Naples from Roman Town to City-State: An Archaeological Perspective* (British School at Rome, 2002), xi.

²⁸⁷ Zavagno 2021, 150.

²⁸⁸ Stefano De Caro, “La necropoli di Piazzofalcone in Napoli” in *Rendiconti della Accademia di Archeologica, Lettere e Belle Arti di Napoli* 49 (1974): 37–67.

²⁸⁹ Daniela Giampaola & Bruno d’Agostino, “Osservazioni storiche e archeologiche sulla fondazione di ‘Neapolis’” in *Noctes Campaniae: Studi di storia antica ed archaeologia dell’Italia preromana e romana in memoria di Martin W. Frederiksen* (Luciano, 2005), 49–80; see also Karl Julius Beloch, *Campanien: Geschichte und Topographie des antiken Neapel seiner Umgeburg* (Breslau: Verlag von E. Morgenstern, 1890; Forgotten Books, 2017).

interacting with the Samnites and Romans. As a result, Naples gravitated toward Roman orbit by the fourth century BCE.²⁹⁰

Naples had gradually become an important administrative and ecclesiastical centre within the Roman and subsequently Byzantine system; however, its importance was shaded by the important maritime city Puteoli (present-day Pozzuoli).²⁹¹ Yet, it appeared that Naples especially attracted rich Roman elites who wanted to build their own villas. According to the archaeological sources, Naples had gradually flourished between second and third centuries CE,²⁹² and so, with the administrative reforms of Diocletian and Constantine, Naples became a part of the Campania (the old *Augustan Regio I*). Yet the centre of Campania remained as Capua, while Naples stayed as second-in-command.²⁹³ Despite administratively falling behind Capua, the prosperity and visibility of Naples increased, most probably as a result of the loss of Africa to the Vandals (430). After that, Naples became one of the local sources of the grain supply chain for Rome.²⁹⁴ But the real glow-up came about after the decline of Puteoli, as Naples became the main harbour for the region of Campania. As the excavations on the *Metropolitana Linea 1* have shown, the substrata of the harbour of Naples had been refurbished by the fifth century, indicating that maritime activities were occurring at the

²⁹⁰ Nazarena Valenza-Mele, “Napoli,” in *Bibliografia topografica della colonizzazione greca in Italia e nelle isole tirreniche XII: siti Monte Sant’Angelo/Orsomarso*, ed. Giuseppe Nenci and Georges Vallet (Pisa-Roma: École Française de Rome, Scuole Normale Superiore, 1993), 165–239.

²⁹¹ Puteoli is an important Roman harbour, located 11 kilometres north of Naples. Puteoli became the main commercial harbour in the Late Republican period and managed to sustain its success throughout the imperial age by working as the main harbour and settlement to unload imported Mediterranean goods and to distribute them into Rome and beyond (Filippo Demma, *Monumenti pubblici di Puteoli: Per un’archeologia dell’architettura*, (L’Erma di Bretschneider, 2007), 10–18.

²⁹² Daniela Giampaola (ed.), *Napoli: La città e il mare. Piazza Bovio tra Romani e Bizantini* (Naples: Electa, 2010), 17–27.

²⁹³ Eliodoro Savino, *Campania tardoantica (284–604 d.C.)* (Edipuglia, 2005), 56–61.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

harbour.²⁹⁵ In fact, imported goods from the Mediterranean yielded in the area could be perceived as indicators of the Naples' prosperity and of the central role it played on the distribution of goods throughout the Late Antiquity.²⁹⁶ This in turn led the developments on the episcopal quarter, located in the north-eastern area which were circled by the city walls.²⁹⁷ On the other hand, Naples provides us with a strong sense of Christianization with the early churches, which is supposedly related to Constantine I himself, and baptistery — in fact, a basilica is listed in the extensive building program of the first Byzantine emperor. Because he devoted great effort to dotting the land with ecclesiastical buildings, it seems that Naples was a settlement attractive enough to catch the attention of the emperor.²⁹⁸ As I will come back to this point later in this chapter, as a preliminary remark, one may mention that this attests not only to the Neapolitans' religious inclinations but also to the urban transformation itself. In this light, the diminishing Puteoli also lost the body of San Gennaro (Saint Januarius) to Naples. Due to this, the transfer of his relics bolstered the power of the Neapolitan bishops.²⁹⁹ The relics were placed in the catacombs situated on the hills behind the city, but in a religious sense, the relics were not the only thing that were transported from a different place and inserted centrally into urban life. Naples had a high level of interaction with North Africa — not only in a commercial sense, but also in a religious aspect. Furthermore, the traditions of North Africa and ecclesiastical tendencies had heavily impacted

²⁹⁵ Jean-Marie Martin, "Le fortificazioni dal secolo V al XIII," in *Napoli nel Medioevo, vol. I, Segni culturali di una città*, ed. Amedeo Feniello (Congedo Editore, 2007), 25–26.

²⁹⁶ Federico Marazzi, "Notizia preliminare sullo studio di materiali tardoantichi e altomedievali da Lecco Ameno, (Ischia – NA)" *Archaeologia Medievale* 12 (1985): 618.

²⁹⁷ Martin, 2007, 24

²⁹⁸ Pasquale Guida, "Il restuaro della chiesa e l'isolamento del campanile del complesso monumentale di S. Maria Maggiore alla Pietrasanta in Napoli," in *Accademia Pontaniana* 18 (1969): 126–127.

²⁹⁹ Eliodoro Savino, "Le diocesi nella Campania tardoantica: Considerazioni su identità regionale e identità cristiana" in *San Gennaro del XVIII centenario del martirio (305–2005)* (Editoriale Comunicazioni Sociali, 2007), 71–75.

Neapolitan Christian identity by the fifth century.³⁰⁰ Indeed, this North African influence is another indicator of Neapolitan interactions with wider Mediterranean circles, not limited to the economic aspect but also encompassing the socio-cultural sense.³⁰¹ Before the famous siege of Belisarius, which is proudly narrated by Procopius, Naples was under Ostrogothic authority enough to be a Gothic *comes*,³⁰² and Marazzi indicates that Naples functioned as the Ostrogothic military stronghold of Campania. He illustrates that this *comes* not only from organized military expeditions but also exerted control over urban life and commercial activities, but it is still not certain if Ostrogoths played a central role on urban administration and the region through Naples.³⁰³

Now, one can safely mention Cosentino and his observation about Justinian as he writes the following: “Justinian was an emperor who consciously planned several events of his reign, but the Gothic Wars was not one of them.”³⁰⁴ At the first thought, recapturing the lost regions would sound like a suitable plan, especially after the successful Byzantine expeditions on Dalmatia with Mundus and North Africa with Belisarius, yet one can safely agree with Cosentino and his observation after reading Procopius and Agathias. I shall not go in detail of the Gothic Wars³⁰⁵, but Procopius draws a picture of Naples while telling how

³⁰⁰ Domenico Ambrasi, “Il cristianesimo e la Chiesa napoletana dei primi secoli” in *Storia di Napoli*, vol. 1 (Società Editrice Storia di Napoli, 1967), 626–644.

³⁰¹ Antonio Vincenzo Nazzaro, *Quodvultdeus: Promesse e predizioni di Dio. Traduzione, introduzione e note*. (Città Nuova, 1989), 73–78.

³⁰² Thomas S. Burns, *A History of the Ostrogoths* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

³⁰³ Federico Marazzi, “Byzantine Naples and Gaeta,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino (Brill, 2021), 407.

³⁰⁴ Salvatore Cosentino, “Politics and Society,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino (Brill, 2021), 30.

³⁰⁵ Nick Holmes, *Justinian’s Empire: Triumph and Tragedy* (Puttenham Press, 2024).

Belisarius besieged and captured the city, and this portrait is worth taking into consideration:

But Belisarius, as he besieged the Neapolitans both by land and by sea, was beginning to be vexed [due to the unwillingness of the Neapolitans to surrender the city]. For he was coming to think that they would never yield to him, furthermore, he could not hope that the city would be captured, since he was finding that the difficulty of its position was proving to be very serious obstacle. (...) Indeed, he had already even given orders to the army to pack up, his intention being to depart from there as quickly as possible. But while he was in the greatest perplexity, it came to pass that he met with the following good fortune. One of the Isaurians was seized with the desire to observe the construction of the aqueduct, and to discover in what manner it provided the supply of water to the city. So, he entered it at a place, far distant from city, where Belisarius had broken it open, and proceeded to walk along it, finding no difficulty, since the water had stopped running because the aqueduct had been broken open. But when he reached a point near the circuit-wall, he came upon a large rock, not placed there by the hand of man but a part of the natural formation of the place. And those who had built the aqueduct many years before, after they had attached the masonry to this rock, proceeded to make a tunnel from that point on, not sufficiently large, however, for a man to pass through, but large enough to furnish passage for the water. (...) And when the Isaurian observed

this, it seemed to him not impossible for the army to penetrate the city, if they should make the tunnel at that point broader by a little.³⁰⁶

As Byzantine forces disembarked on the Italian peninsula, Naples was the first real opponent against whom they realized, in recapturing the city, that the Byzantine reconquest could not be accomplished in the blink of an eye.³⁰⁷ As mentioned above, Belisarius besieged a city whose community was not enthusiastic about accepting the army at the gates to the city; instead, they put up a fight against Byzantines.³⁰⁸ The walls of Naples and the harbor had been mentioned by Procopius several times and he seemed impressed by the prowess of both the builders of the walls of Naples and of the Neapolitans generally.³⁰⁹ Belisarius had faced quite challenges to persuade Neapolitans to open the gates, and the walls of Naples seemed as impenetrable. In fact, if the Isaurian soldier had not discovered the tunnel under the aqueducts, Belisarius would have been on the verge of retreating from instead of conquering Naples.

The importance of the walls of Naples for the Byzantines is also supported by Giampaola and Carsana, as the archaeological survey show that the walls were renovated by Byzantines,³¹⁰ but the date of this renovation is not certain, as Marazzi suggests that this refurbishment could have been done to strengthen Naples against the direct Lombard threat rising in the north by the sixth century.³¹¹ It is also important to mention that Naples had an impressive fortification. Martin shows

³⁰⁶ Procopius, *History of the Wars* V, IX. 4–10, trans. H. B. Dewing (Harvard University Press, 1928), § 5.9.8.

³⁰⁷ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, V, 10-13

³⁰⁸ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, V, 6-8

³⁰⁹ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, V, 8-12

³¹⁰ Daniela Giampaola et al. “Napoli trasformazioni edilizie e funzionali della fascia costiera,” in *La città campana fra Tarda Antichità e Alto Medioevo* (LavegliaCarlone, 2005), 219–248.

³¹¹ Marazzi 2021, 409.

that the defensive system encircled the outskirts of the urban centre, and he identifies this system as located on the islet of Megaride where Castel dell'Ovo³¹² stands, linked to Paleopolis (modern day Pizzofalcone).³¹³

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the arrival of the Lombards significantly changed the topography of Campania both in administrative and economic aspects by the end of the sixth century. While Lombards managed to take control over Capua, another important city of Campania that is located on 44 km north of Naples, and its hinterland, Naples had gradually adopted a pivotal role for Byzantine administrative, military and economic activities.³¹⁴ The Lombard presence on southern Italy divided the region into two spheres as Byzantine and Lombard, therefore, Naples became the administrative centre as the city present a natural boundary, since the hills encircling the city from the north to the west and Vesuvius on the east form a defensive line by nature. This partially small area, from the shores of Cumae to the peninsula of Sorrentine, remained same after the military confrontation started to calm down as Naples continued to be its centre.³¹⁵

The sixth century of Naples is recorded in the letters of Gregory the Great, who focused on the Italian peninsula not only in religious aspects, but also in the administrative sense. His letters are quite interesting as they give rare insight on the administrative and religious life of Naples as well as the interactions between the Neapolitans and the other communities. The picture that Gregory draws allows us

³¹² Ferdinando Ferraioli, *I castelli di Napoli nella storia della città* (Arte Tipographica, 1995). Veit Rosenberger. "The Saint and the Bishop: Severinus of Noricum" In *Episcopal Elections in Late Antiquity*, ed. Johan Leemans, Peter Van Nuffelen, Shawn W. J. Keough and Carla Nicolaye (De Gruyter, 2011), 203–216.

³¹³ De Caro 1974; Giampaola and d'Agostino 2005.

³¹⁴ Nicola Cilento, *Le origini della signoria di Capuana nella Longobardia minore* (Nella Sede Dell'Istituto, 1966), 23–36; Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards*, trans. William Dudley Foulke (University of Pennsylvania Press), 2003.

³¹⁵ Zanini 1997, 273–277.

to say that Naples had *iudex Campaniae*³¹⁶ for civil administration and a *magister militum*³¹⁷ for military organizations by the end of sixth century. Not only are they documented by Gregory but also by the *maior populi*³¹⁸ and a group of *seniores* who were responsible for collection of taxes from nearby islands and islets such as Procida or Ischia, collecting the tolls and taking care of urban infrastructure such as the aqueduct of Naples. On the other hand, Gregory's letters indicate the increasing power of the church, both in religious and institutional aspects. Gregory corresponded with the Neapolitan bishops, for instance with Bishop Fortunatus³¹⁹ and Bishop Paschasius³²⁰, to ask or answer questions concerning religion, institution, or different communities such as Jews. Moreover, Gregory indicates that the bishop enjoyed outstanding social prestige in the society not only because

³¹⁶ The title *iudex* (Latin for 'judge') was a civil-administrative title used in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. In Byzantine Italy, (including Naples) it referred to the local representative of imperial authority, usually acting as the head of civil administration and local justice (Thomas S. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers: Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy, AD 554–800*, British School at Rome, 1986, 2–38).

³¹⁷ The title *magister militum* (Latin for master of the soldiers) was high-ranking military commander in Late Antique and Early Medieval armies. From the fifth century onward, the *magister militum* became one of the empire's most powerful military titles, often controlling entire regional armies and at times overshadowing civil governors. (Vivien Prigent, "Byzantine Administration and the Army," in *A Companion to the Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino, Brill, 2021, 140–169).

³¹⁸ *Maior populi* generally means the leader or the elder of the people. In Late Antiquity and early Middle Ages, referred to a civil leader elected or chosen from among the local elite, often representing the collective interests of the urban population. While not a formal imperial office, the title signified preeminence in local administration, often used when traditional Roman offices like *curiales* or *decuriones* had diminished. The *maior populi* could act as a mediator between the urban populace and imperial authorities (François Bougard, "Public Power and Authority" in *Italy in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. C. La Rocca, Oxford University Press, 2002, 34–59).

³¹⁹ Bishop Fortunatus is mentioned in the letters of Gregory I, as he advised the bishop of Naples to protect the Christians of the city, regarding Jewish-owned slaves, indicating the bishop's active role in urban life. (Gregory the Great, *Epistulae*, Book VI, Epistle XXXII, trans. James Barmby, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 12 [part 2: The Book of Pastoral Rule, and Selected Epistles, of Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome], ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), 199.

³²⁰ Bishop Paschasius is addressed by Gregory to be respectful to the Jewish community in Naples, underscoring episcopal responsibilities to protect the peace among the members of community, no matter if they were Christian or not (Gregory the Great, *Epistulae*, Book XIII, Epistle XII, trans. James Barmby, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 13, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1898, 96–97).

he was the shepherd of his subjects but also, he was in the highest position to control the land owned by the church.³²¹

Gregory also writes directly to the Neapolitans, in fact, these direct letters could be interpreted as a type of dialogue between the community and the religious institution. He warns the Neapolitans regarding the selection of the deacon as follows:

EPISTLE LXII.

To the Neapolitans.

Gregory to the clergy and noble citizens of Naples.

It is not a new thing, nor is it reprehensible, that in the election of a bishop, the votes of the people should be divided between two parties: but it is a serious matter when in cases of this kind the election goes not by judgment, but by favour only. For before your letter reached us, we had learned from the report of certain persons that the deacon John, who has been elected by the other party, has a little daughter. (...) Peter the deacon, who you say has been elected by you, is, according to what is said, quite without astuteness. And you know that at the present time the person to be on the highest place of government, should be one who knows how to be careful, not only for the salvation of the soul but also with regard to the external advantage and safeguard of his subjects. But now further that is has come to our ears concerning him that he has given money on usury, which thing you ought to enquire into thoroughly, and,

³²¹ Gregory the Great, *Epistulae* XIII, Epistle XII, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol. 13, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co. / Oxford and London: Parker & Company, 1898), 96–97.

if it is so, elect another, and without delay hold yourself aloof from a person of this kind. (...)

Gregory goes on to explain how and why Peter needs to be inquired about by the Neapolitans, then he also adds that:

“... (since his person is unknown to us, and we know not whether what has been reported to us of his simplicity be true), he must needs come to us with your decree in his favour, that, having made careful enquiry into his life and manners, we may at the same become acquainted with intelligence, and thus, in case of his satisfying in this enquiry, we may in him, with the Lord’s help, fulfil your desires.”³²²

This letter from Gregory I to the clergy and nobles of Naples vividly illustrates the city’s complex civic and ecclesiastical dynamics by the sixth century. Far from being a passive provincial settlement, Naples emerges here as an active urban body negotiating its leadership through collective decision-making processes and moral scrutiny. Gregory’s emphasis on the bishop’s dual responsibility, caring for the souls of the flock while ensuring the external advantage and safeguard of the community, highlights how spiritual and civic functions were deeply intertwined.³²³ The mention of usury highlights the fact that there were economic anxieties and moral expectations placed on local elites, revealing a city acutely aware of its social fabric and

³²² Gregory the Great, *Epistulae*, X, Letter LXII, trans. James Barmby, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol. 13, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co. / Oxford and London: Parker & Company, 1898), 50.

³²³ Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (University of California Press, 2005), 192–197.

vulnerabilities.³²⁴ Moreover, papal insistence on further inquiry and his acknowledgement that the candidate is ‘unknown to us’ indicate a level of local autonomy and negotiation rather than top-down papal imposition.³²⁵ In turn, these elements led us to rethink Naples, as a city skillfully balancing internal cohesion and external relations, reflecting a hybrid identity at the intersection of imperial legacies, Christian authority and Mediterranean urban resilience.³²⁶

Indeed, it seems that Naples and Neapolitan society continued to maintain most of the dynamics of urban life and structures by the beginning of seventh century. As Thomas Brown carefully examines the administrative and social classes of Byzantine Italy, he points to the fact that:

“In the case of Naples, there is some evidence for a flourishing municipal life which has sometimes misleadingly been applied to Italian cities as a whole. (...) The strength of Naples’ municipal institutions can be explained by a number of exceptional factors. It a sizeable population, including many wealthy Jews, reserved the Roman system of guilds, and it remained favoured residence of senatorial aristocrats in Pope Gregory’s time. The high level of cultural activity which it maintained by a surviving manuscript of excerpts from St. Augustine’s works which was connected in the city in 587, and it

³²⁴ Edward M. Schoolman, “Dux to episcopus: From ruling cities to controlling sees in Byzantine Italy, 554–900,” in *Italy and the East Roman World in the Medieval Mediterranean: Empire, Cities and Elites, 476–1204*, ed. Thomas J. MacMaster & Nicholas S. M. Matheou (Routledge, 2021), 222–226.

³²⁵ Richard M. Polland, “A Cooperative Correspondance: The Letters of Gregory the Great,” in *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, ed. Bronwen Neil & Matthew J. Dal Santo (Brill, 2013), 297–303.

³²⁶ Deborah M. Deliyannis, “Bishops, Cities and Historical Memory in Byzantine Italy” in *A Companion to the Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino (Brill, 2021), 592–595.

appears to have remained immune from Lombard attack until shortly before Gregory's pontificate."³²⁷

In fact, one may notice that the social ruling class had been wearing a new cloak. After the mid-6th century, the senators gradually disappeared from the political life, if they had not already. The last mention to the Roman senators in socio-political life is a ceremony where they received the images of Phocas and Leontia, sent from Constantinople, therefore, they were obtaining these gifts along with the ecclesiastical officers in the very beginning of 7th century.³²⁸ This is not to deny that the senatorial families continued to have power, but their role had waned considerably by the dawn of the Lombards, and their continuing interest in social life is also mentioned by Brown.³²⁹ The second change happened in a lower circle, but it was more effective as the existence of *curiales*³³⁰ almost completely disappeared due to the reorganization of towns and municipal councils in the sixth century, with a few exceptions such as Naples and Ravenna. However, one also has to admit that offering a clear explanation as to the disappearance of some of the *curiales* is made difficult due to a paucity of evidence. It is as if some of them went off the grid while some others offered their services to the bishops.³³¹ Yet, Cosentino presents us an interesting portrayal, as they continued to appear in the documents from Ravenna, Naples, Gaeta, Amalfi, and Rome until the 9th century. He states that in the cities related to the imperial power, the sense of municipality

³²⁷ T. S. Brown "Gentlemen and Officers" (1984), 18–19.

³²⁸ T. S. Brown 1984, 9–10.

³²⁹ Thomas S. Brown, "Byzantine Italy: (680–876)," in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c. 500–1492*, ed. Jonathan Shephard (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 433–464.

³³⁰ *Curiales* (from Latin *curialis*, "belonging to the curia") refers to members of the municipal senate (*curia*), originally denoting local civic leaders responsible for administration and taxation. (Arnold Hugh Martin Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 737–756.

³³¹ Salvatore Cosentino, "Prosopography and Society in Byzantine Italy (6th–8th Centuries), in *Medieval Prosopography* 24 (2003): 83.

and *curiales* did not vanish, but adapted into a new form that Cosentino defines as the *virī honesti*. Thus, as *virī honesti* embodied either an elite identity, adapting traditional urban responsibilities into new, locally embedded frameworks — mainly ecclesiastical, that allowed them to maintain influence within the shifting administrative and religious landscapes of early medieval Byzantine Italy — Naples was not immune to this transformation.³³²

The amount of operational power the *curiales* possessed is open to debate, yet one can safely say that the civil officers were highly active and integrated into the urban life of Naples, and they were maintaining the vitality of urban life. On the other hand, it is certain that the Church began to enjoy a certain level of power that stemmed from their position as landowners, and they slowly but surely took over the reins of the Roman administrative hierarchy they inherited.³³³ Gregory's letter was not only a warning or a sort of showing the right thing to do, but also a part of deliberately crafted strategy to increase the ecclesiastical authority both over the Neapolitans and over the city itself by expanding the limits of this authority.³³⁴ And these efforts did not go in vain.³³⁵ The lands belonged to the Church, as known as *patrimones*³³⁶, were governed by an administrator bearing the title of *rector patrimonii Campaniea*, had gained a crucial prestige and power to play a role of

³³² Salvatore Cosentino, "Il ceto dei virī honesti οἱ αἰδέσιμοι nell'Italia tardoantica e bizantina," in *Bizantinistica, Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi*, ser. 2 vol. 1 (Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 1999), 13–30.

³³³ Francesco Lanzoni, *Le diocesi d'Italia delle origini al principio del secolo VII (an. 604)* (Faenza, 1927), 36–43.

³³⁴ George E. Demarcopoulos, "Gregory's Model of Spiritual Direction in the Liber Populae Pastoralis," in *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, ed. Bronwen Neil & Matthew J. Dal Santo (Brill, 2013), 212–214.

³³⁵ Richard M. Pollard (2013), 300–304.

³³⁶ The term *patrimones* refers to landed estates and income-producing properties owned by the church, particularly the Roman See, which managed these holdings to generate revenue for ecclesiastical, charitable, and administrative purposes. Such *patrimones* could include agricultural lands, urban real estate, and various rural assets distributed across different regions. (Federico Marazzi, *I «Patrimonia Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae» nel Lazio (secoli IV–X) Struttura amministrativa e prassi gestionali*, Roma: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1998).

intermediator between the Neapolitans and the clergy as well as the administrator of the vast land in question.³³⁷

One may recall that at the dawn of seventh century, that the Byzantine Empire had been going a transformation in administrative, military, and fiscal aspects due to the need to adapt to the new internal and external problems.³³⁸ Naples was not immune to the transformations, and Cosentino points to the fact that the diminishing power of the *praetorian prefecture* paved the way for the rise of the military officers and expansion of the limits of their powers as the civil authority that once belonged to the orders of the prefect now passed into the hands of military officers.³³⁹ With the creation of themes and duchies to govern the vast lands of the empire, these local territorial districts were controlled by either by a *strategos* of the theme or by the *dux* of the duchy. In this light, Naples rose and became the centre of the Duchy of Naples. Accordingly, the first *dux*³⁴⁰ to be appointed by Constantinople, in 661, would be Basil I of Naples (r. 661–666).³⁴¹

The formal creation of the Duchy of Naples indicated a strong and deep change within the administrative structure of Byzantine Empire. On the one hand, the title *dux* stemmed from the military orders; on the other hand, the creation of this title

³³⁷ Federico Marazzi, “Proprietà pontificie lungo il litorale tirrenico laziale (secoli VIII–X),” in *Catolporziano III. Campagne di scavo e restauro 1987–1991*, ed. Maria Giuseppina Lauro (Viella, 1998), 33–38.

³³⁸ John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

³³⁹ Jean-Marie Martin, “Militia et exercitus. Les institutions militaires du duché de Naples et de ‘Longobardia Minor,’” in *Guerres, accords et frontières et Italie meridionale pendant le haut Moyen Âge, Pacta de Liburia, Divisio principatus Beneventani et autres acts* (L’École Française de Rome, 2005), 23–74.

³⁴⁰ In the context of Byzantine Italy, *dux* (plural *duces*) referred to a military and often civil governor appointed to oversee strategic coastal cities and territories. The title, originally Roman, evolved to denote leaders combining military command with civil administrative authority, as in Naples and other southern Italian duchies during the seventh to tenth centuries (Vera von Falkenhausen, “I Bizantini in Italia,” in *I Bizantini in Italia*, ed. Guglielmo Casvallo et al., Liber Schweiwiller, 1986, 23–28).

³⁴¹ Marazzi 2021, 410.

ushered in a new type of formation, both in administration and in the military.³⁴² It is known that since the Gothic Wars, local communities tended to be recruited in different military positions. As the army became an opportunity to climb up the social ladder, this new system amplified the power of the military and once again changed the governance of the land.³⁴³ The soldiers were paid by allotments of the public land, and so this reorganization paved the way of the rise of a new aristocracy.³⁴⁴ In fact, either the *magister militum*, or dukes, were basically the generals of the expeditions. Around the end of sixth century, they started to settle in their respective areas with the troops under their command, thus interacting with the local administrative circles both in urban and ecclesiastical settings.³⁴⁵ In the case of Campania, and Naples as the capital of the duchy, the increasing power and involvement of the military was clear before the formal creation and promotion of Basil since the aforementioned *magister militum* had the power of granting sailing permits, a privilege that was accorded to the urban elites originally.³⁴⁶ By the mid-seventh century, the military authority became more visible, more powerful, and more excessive, and Naples became an illuminating example of the process.

According to the historical sources, Constans II was the founder of the Duchy of Naples. He appointed Basil as the first duke of this brand-new political entity on the Tyrrhenian coastline.³⁴⁷ Yet, one must point to the fact that there has been an

³⁴² Jean-Marie Martin, “L’Italie méridionale” in *Città e campagna nei secoli altomedievali*, ed. Andrea Castagnetti (Settimane CISAM, 2009), 741–743.

³⁴³ Amedeo Feniello, “Poteri pubblici nei ducati tirrenici” in *L’héritage byzantin en Italie (VIII–XIII siècle)*, vol. 2, Les cadres juridiques et sociaux et les institutions publiques, ed. Jean-Marie Martin, Annick Peters-Custot, and Vivien Prigent (L’École française de Rome, 2012), 326.

³⁴⁴ Giuseppe Galasso, “L’eredità municipale del ducato di Napoli” in *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome* (1995): 79–81.

³⁴⁵ Thomas S. Brown, *ibid.*, 1986, pp. 36–39

³⁴⁶ Enrico Cuozzo & Jean-Marie Martin, “Il particolarismo napoletano altomedievale” *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome* (1995): 9–12.

³⁴⁷ Marco Sannazaro, “Epigraia e città tra la tarda antichità e l’alto medioevo” in *La città italiana tra la tarda Antichità e l’alto Medioevo*, Atti del Convegno (Ravenna, 26–28 Febbraio 2004), (ed.) Andrea Augenti, *All’insegna del Giglio*, 2005, p. 84, CD 7

ongoing debate as to this promotion and the creation of the duchy, as the letters of Gregory indicate the existence of dukes, performing their roles in Naples and Campania.³⁴⁸ For instance, Cassandro interprets the creation of the duchy as a result of a gradual process, rather than of a quick decision by the emperor.³⁴⁹ Also, there is a historical inaccuracy in the narrative, since the dates of the appointment of Basil and the arrival of Constans II to Italian peninsula do not match with each other. Thomas Brown illustrates the event as an outcome of a transformative process that included previous dukes such as *dux Campaniae* or *dux Neapolitanum*, yet Constans II gave imperial confirmation and thereby increased the power of the duchy by granting Naples the right of opening a mint.³⁵⁰

The excavations at Piazza Municipio, for their part, yielded over 4.000 coins between 1996 and 2016, offering rare insight into Naples' monetary networks and its shifting political affiliations.³⁵¹ Rovelli's preliminary but groundbreaking study shows that approximately 23% of these coins date to the sixth and seventh centuries, including Byzantine issues struck in Constantinople, Rome, and Naples itself.³⁵² The presence of coins from the Capitoline mint³⁵³ aligns with similar finds from the catacomb of San Gennaro, where lower-denomination coins such as *pentanummi* and *decanummi* circulated until the seventh century.³⁵⁴ Notably,

³⁴⁸ Andrew Louth, "Gregory the Great and Byzantine Tradition" in *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, ed. Bronwen Neil & Matthew J. Dal Santo (Brill, 2013), 343–358.

³⁴⁹ Giovanni Cassandro, "Il ducato bizantino" in *Storia di Napoli*, vol. II (Naples: Società Editrice Storia di Napoli, 1969), 36–38.

³⁵⁰ T. S. Brown 1986, 54.

³⁵¹ Alessia Rovelli, "Naples, ville et atelier monétaire de l'Empire byzantin: l'apport des fouilles récentes" in *Mélanges Cécile Morrisson* (Paris: Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2010), 693–711.

³⁵² Alessia Rovelli, "Gold, Silver and Bronze: an Analysis of Monetary Circulation along the Italian coasts," in *From One Sea to Another: Trading places in the European and Mediterranean Early Middle Ages*, ed. Sauro Gelichi and Richard Hodges (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 267–296.

³⁵³ Vivien Prigent, "Mint, Coin Production and Circulation" in *A Companion to the Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino (Brill, 2021) 329–360.

³⁵⁴ Flavia Marani, "The Circulation of Coinage in Two Byzantine Cities: Rome and Naples in Comparison" in *Perspectives on Byzantine Archaeology: From Justinian to the Abbasid Age (6th-*

Roman coinage appears to cease in the mid-sixth century, with the last evidence being Justin II's *pentanummi* in Latium and Campania, a disruption likely tied to the Lombard's invasions and Naples' growing monetary integration into the Sicilian mint orbit.³⁵⁵

A decisive moment, indeed, came with Constans II's Italian campaign, which marked a renewed Byzantine engagement in southern Italy and led to the establishment of a new mint in Naples. Though difficult to attribute precisely and often less prolific than those of Sicily, the Neapolitan atelier continued minting coins even after Naples' emergence as an independent duchy. For example, *folles* attributed to Duke Stefano III (d. 832) attest to ongoing local production.³⁵⁶ It is certain that bronze coinage was produced in Naples after 663, during the reign of Justinian II (685–695), while silver minting appears to have begun a century later.³⁵⁷ Coins bearing the mint mark NC, including a *decanummus*, *pentanummus*, and a half *follis* attributed to Constantine IV (652–685) as well as a *nomisma* of Leo III (685–741), further highlight this continuity. Despite the establishment of a local atelier, Naples maintained ties to Roman monetary circuits, as these ties were demonstrated by a hoard of 129 gold coins unearthed in the harbour of Ischia and a silver siliqua of Constantine V (718–775), minted in Rome.³⁵⁸

9th centuries), ed. Angelo Castrorao Barba and Gabriele Castiglia (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), 192–197.

³⁵⁵ Bruno Callegher, “La monetazione bizantina in Italia (VI–XI secolo): aggiornamento bibliografico, temi in discussione e prospettive di ricerca,” in *Dialoghi di Numismatica. Protagonisti, prospettive, ricerche*, vol. I, ed. Alessandro Cavagna and Giacomo Pardini (Roma: Quasar, 2019), 231–235.

³⁵⁶ Salvatore Cosentino, “L’Italia bizantina: una prospettiva economica” in *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 28 (2015): 239.

³⁵⁷ Alessia Rovelli, “Un tremisse di Giustiniano II da San Vincenzo al Volturno. Osservazioni sulle emissioni auree dell’Italia bizantina,” in *Scritti in onore di Girolamo Arnaldi, offerti dalla Scuola nazionale di studi medievali* (Rome: Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2001), 501–503.

³⁵⁸ Luigi Pedroni, “Ischia, Lacco Ameno: Le monete conservate nell’Antiquarium della chiesa di S. Restituta,” *Bollettino di Numismatica* 32–33 (1999): 56–69.

Indeed, one may indicate that the creation of the Duchy of Naples may did not change the nature of the Byzantine-Neapolitan relationship by confirming a certain level of administrative dependence on Constantinople.³⁵⁹ Instead, it seems that the imperial confirmation definitely bolstered the legitimacy of the Neapolitan dukes and administration, yet this event was also simultaneously occurring in the other Byzantine regions of the Italian peninsula.³⁶⁰ In other words, this was certainly a turning point stemming from the serial transformations occurring in administrative organization, both in local and imperial spheres.³⁶¹ This in turn set the local population in motion; imperial recognition of the increased military power motivated the aristocracy to put on their armour more than they had in previous centuries. Then, those who were in charge of the garrisons distributed between towns and territories began mapping the Italian peninsula. Neapolitans were not immune to this transformation as they experienced same transition.³⁶² In fact, Neapolitans seem to have adjusted to the military enough to make the Neapolitan civilians fight side by side with the soldiers.³⁶³

Unfortunately, the historian who studies the Byzantine Naples must face a problem concerning the seventh century, since the scarcity of sources becomes an obstacle on narrating an all-encompassing history of the period.³⁶⁴ Yet, we are confronted with the important turning points of the historical trajectory. It is known that by the late 7th century, the Italian regions under Byzantine authority started to

³⁵⁹ Paolo Cammarosano, *Nobili e re: l'Italia politica dell'alto Medioevo* (Editori Laterza, 1998).

³⁶⁰ John Haldon, "The exarchate, the empire and the elites: Some comparative remarks" in Italy and East Roman World in Medieval Mediterranean, Empire, Cities and Elites 476–1204, Papers in Honor of Thomas S. Brown, ed. Thomas J. MacMaster & Nicholas S. M. Matheou (New York: Routledge), 142–154.

³⁶¹ Vivien Prigent 2021a, 154–155.

³⁶² Marazzi, "Byzantine Naples and Gaeta" (2021), 410.

³⁶³ Thomas S. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers* (1984), 136

³⁶⁴ Luigi Andrea Berto, "Introduction," in *The Deeds of the Neapolitan Bishops*, ed. Luigi Andrea Berto (New York: Routledge, 2023), ix.

enjoy a certain degree of autonomy as Rome and Ravenna could also testify. Hence, at the dawn of eighth century, the level of autonomy increased, yet the autonomy was gained differently by Naples.³⁶⁵

Indeed, one of the groundbreaking events in Byzantine history was Iconoclasm.³⁶⁶ When Leo III (685–741) issued the edict against the iconophiles, he unleashed chaos over the Byzantine administrative and ecclesiastical elites.³⁶⁷ Consequently, in the Italian peninsula Pentapolis and Venetian troops rebelled against the exarch of Ravenna.³⁶⁸ Neapolitans did not take a part of this revolt, instead they remained loyal to Constantinople and this loyalty did not go unnoticed as the new exarch sent by Constantinople disembarked on the peninsula from the harbour of Naples.³⁶⁹ Obviously, there is a mutual interest lie at the heart of Neapolitan loyalty as Neapolitans played along the imperial legitimacy and military support to use against growing Lombard threat.³⁷⁰ Even though imperial authority had been damaged after the fall of Ravenna (in 751), which Zanini likens in significance to the fall of Constantinople but on a smaller scale,³⁷¹ and Rome had started to seek freedom from the imperial power, Naples followed a different way.

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³⁶⁵ Francesca Luzzati Laganà, “Il ducato di Napoli” in *Il Mezzogiorno ai Bizantini a Federico II, Storia d’Italia*, ed. Giuseppe Galasso (Turin: UTET, 1983), 331

³⁶⁶ Leslie Brubaker, *Reinventing Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Bristol Classical Press, 2012).

³⁶⁷ Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford University Press, 1997).

³⁶⁸ Judith Herrin, *Ravenna: Capital of Empire, Crucible of Europe* (Princeton University Press, 2023).

³⁶⁹ Giovanni Italo Cassandro 1969, 39.

³⁷⁰ Barbara M. Kreutz, *Before the Normans: Southern Italy in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 1–5.

³⁷¹ Zanini 1997, 13.

³⁷² Alessandra Molinari, “Rome and the Roman Duchy,” in *A Companion to the Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino (Brill, 2021), 390–394.

Naples played the game alongside with Constantinople during the mid-eighth century. For instance, while tension was increasing between Constantinople and Rome during 761/762, Neapolitans did not allow their own bishop, Paul II, to come back to Naples since he had gone to receive blessings from Rome.³⁷³ But this decision has another side as Paul II was allowed to stay in the Church of Saint Januarius, located out of the walls as he would have pardoned in two years.³⁷⁴ In fact, it seems to me that this little incident is a good example to show Neapolitan strategies to display their loyalty to the empire, as their interest still lay at the heart of imperial power, yet at the same time they made their own decisions strategically by not putting themselves under suspicion.³⁷⁵ During the eighth century, the dukes continued to be appointed by local aristocracy, yet this selection did not indicate a real independence or breakage of bonds with the Byzantines. On the contrary, the dukes did not cut the ties between Naples and Constantinople as they fulfilled their role as dukes; they also received the recognition of their authority from the *strategos* in Sicily, who became the highest imperial officer after the Fall of Ravenna while dating the documents in the regnal year of the emperor.³⁷⁶ Indeed, whatever had been happening between other cities and Constantinople, Naples remained loyal enough to the empire to gain strategic importance for Byzantine diplomats to watch the increasing pressure from the Franks as they started to fight with Lombards.³⁷⁷ This, in turn, was not surprising given the fact that Naples was built on a key site geographically, the city being surrounded by the Lombard entities of Benevento and Salerno. This was both an advantage and a disadvantage, as its

³⁷³ Paolo Bertoloini 1974, 101–102.

³⁷⁴ Cassandro 1969, 41.

³⁷⁵ Laganà, “Il ducato di Napoli,” 331.

³⁷⁶ Marazzi, 2021, 411.

³⁷⁷ Michael McCormick, *ibid*, 2001, 852–973.

location helped to keep the socio-economic and cultural vitality alive, but at the same time left the city open to their closest enemy, Lombards.³⁷⁸

Here, one can safely mention the turning point of the Neapolitan politics towards to imperial authority as Byzantines were occupied with the Muslims on the eastern borders and Bulgarians on the Balkans.³⁷⁹ The new duke, Stephan, enjoyed such autonomy while he declared himself as the faithful subject of the emperor. At the same time, he was more interested in founding his dynasty at Naples and thereby to take control of the Neapolitan Church. This makes it sound like Stephen had been educated in such a way as to call imperial practices to mind.³⁸⁰ When the above-mentioned Paul II died in 788, Stephen declared himself as the bishop of Naples and passed his title on to his son Gregory, who became the new duke of Naples.³⁸¹ Unfortunately, Gregory died after 5 months, meaning that Stephen had to return to govern Naples until he died in 794. Upon his death, his son-in-law succeeded him as Duke Theophylact, and his wife Euphraxia (Stephen's daughter) managed their candidate, Paul, to be appointed as the bishop of Naples.³⁸² In this light, Stephen's ambitious plan to turn the duchy into a dynasty left its impact on Neapolitan administrative and ecclesiastical organizations.³⁸³ Yet, this influence did not last long as the successor of Theophylact is known only by his name of Anthemius, the one whose death induced Neapolitans to call on Byzantine officers

³⁷⁸ Herbert Bloch, "Montecassino, Byzantium and the West in the Earlier Middle Ages" in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 3 (1946): 163–224; Thomas Grainer, "Napolitains et Lombards aux VIII^e–XI^e siècles. De la guerre des peuples à la guerre des saints en Italie du Sud" in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome* (1996): 403–450.

³⁷⁹ See Leslie Brubaker & John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclastic Era, c. 680–c. 850: A History*, (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

³⁸⁰ Nicola Cilento, "La Chiesa di Napoli nell'alto Medioevo" in *Storia di Napoli, vol. II: Naples* (Società Editrice Storia di Napoli, 1969), 667–684.

³⁸¹ Vittorio Gleijeses, *La storia di Napoli dalle origini ai nostri giorni* (Naples: Società Editrice Napoletana, 1974), 43–44.

³⁸² Carmen Russo-Mailler, "Il ducato di Napoli," in *Storia del Mezzogiorno*, vol. II: Il Medioevo, (Società Editrice Storia di Napoli, 1988), 362–363.

³⁸³ Russo-Mailler, "Il ducato di Napoli" (1988), 370.

to govern the duchy.³⁸⁴ Accordingly, two Byzantine officers, most probably sent by the *strategos* of Sicily, took the control over the city. But Neapolitans were not content with them, either. According to *Gesta Episcopatum Neapolitanum*, the second imperial officer was driven out of the city, and Stephen (the grandson of the previous Stephen), was chosen as the new duke.³⁸⁵

Hence, Neapolitans enjoyed a certain level of autonomy while the ducal power changed between the hands of local families until the mid-ninth century, except for the aforementioned Stephen and his attempted dynasty. Marazzi interprets this experience as

A sort of local version of the so-called “cesaropapism” but at the same time it is evident that Stephen’s family could exercise control both secular and religious powers without any real hindrance from outside, i.e. from the central Byzantine government, which apparently did not intervene in the choice of either.³⁸⁶

Unfortunately, we do not have much information related to Stephen’s family, yet it would be a reasonable assumption to place him and his origins in the formed *militia*, as he, like the other administrative leaders of his time ruling in the political sphere of Byzantine Italy, bore titles tied to the military.³⁸⁷ As the Byzantines did not try to have a word on this dynastic experiment, they only intervened in the process when they were asked to do so by the Neapolitans. In fact, it is not so unreasonable to assume these concomitant events to have been a part of the detachment process, as Neapolitans did not directly claim any sort of independence.

³⁸⁴ John the Deacon, *The Deeds of Neapolitan Bishops*, 50–51.

³⁸⁵ John the Deacon, *The Deeds of Neapolitan Bishops*, 52–53.

³⁸⁶ Marazzi, “Byzantine Naples and Gaeta” (2021), 412.

³⁸⁷ T. S. Brown 2009, 342.

But independence nonetheless eventually emerged in the socio-political backcloth of the duchy, as the result of a complex process of the mutual relationship between Neapolitans and Byzantines.³⁸⁸ On the other hand, the silence of the source *Gesta Episcopatum Neapolitanum* on this case, i.e., on the Neapolitan urban elites' reactions to the Stephen's ascension, leads us to think that their acceptance of the foundation of a supreme power originated from a dynasty, until the ascension of Anthemus.³⁸⁹

In the three years between Anthemus and Stephen III, which passed under the authority of the aforementioned Byzantine officers, we do not have enough material to narrate the story, but we are confronted with the fact that these officers were forced by the citizens to leave Naples.³⁹⁰ Yet, the election of Stephen III made Sico, the prince of Lombard Benevento, feel provoked. In response, he attacked Naples, aiming to reconquer the city. Erchembert illustrates the Lombard expedition towards Naples as a decision stemming from the brand-new alliance between the Lombards and the Franks, and as a result, the deposition of Byzantine officers was perceived by Sico as a revolt against imperial authority.³⁹¹ The alliance with the Franks helped to frame himself as the legitimate executor of imperial authority in Southern Italy. Indeed, as it may sound ambiguous in these terms, it is one of the perfect examples to show the ambiguous nature of the socio-political relationships between locals and imperials. This is because Sico, the Lombard prince, justified his *casus belli* as the treachery of Neapolitans, who were subjects of the

³⁸⁸ Luigi Andrea Berto, *The 'Other' Identity and Memory in Early Medieval Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 67–76.

³⁸⁹ John the Deacon, *The Deeds of the Neapolitan Bishops*, 53.

³⁹⁰ John the Deacon, *The Deeds of the Neapolitan Bishops*, 54.

³⁹¹ Erchembert, “Ystoriola Langobardorum Beneventum degentium” in *The Little History of the Lombards of Benevento by Erchempert: Critical Edition and Translation of Ystoriola Langobardorum Beneventum degentium*, ed. Luigi Andrea Berto (New York: Routledge, 2022).

Byzantines.³⁹² In other words, this episode highlights the fluid nature of the politics and interactions of Naples that remained a part of the imperial *oikumene*, while at the same time bolstering its own autonomy.³⁹³ In fact, Neapolitans continued to select their own dukes, as the narrative goes, in the same way. After the election of Stephen III as duke, we have several names following him; Bonus (r. 832–834), Leo (r. 834), Andrew (r. 834–840) and Contardus (r. 840); in fact, our knowledge of these dukes is limited to the fact that they all came from the circles of *militia*, except for Bonus and Contardus.³⁹⁴

One of the most famous turning points in Neapolitan history occurred during the reign of Andrew as he negotiated a treaty with Sicard of Benevento known as the *Pactum Sicardum*. This pact not only highlighted the Lombard recognition of Neapolitan independency while also granting Neapolitans the right of trade with the Duchy of Benevento, but it also strictly prevented Neapolitans from selling Lombard captives into slavery.³⁹⁵ As I will return to this point, it is important to note that Naples was not only an administrative or religious centre where Byzantine officers preferred to disembark; or where pilgrims like Willibald, who landed on the city and visit its churches. Naples was also a central market that offered commercial opportunities to the merchants and traders as well as locals, and slaves were tradable objects in high demand.³⁹⁶ Yet, the *Pactum* did not last long, as Sicard was assassinated in 839, paving the way for internal strife to break out between

³⁹² Marazzi, “Byzantine and Lombards” in *A Companion to the Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino, (Brill, 2021), 177–178.

³⁹³ Paolo Bertolini, “I duchi di Benevento e San Vincenzo al Volturno, le origini,” in *Una grande abbazia altomedioevale nel Molise. San Vincenzo al Volturno*, (Miscellanea Cassinese, 51, Montecassino, 1985, 122–126.

³⁹⁴ Pietro Fedele, “Il catalogo dei duchi di Napoli” *Archivio storico per le perovince napoletane* 28 (1903): 561–567.

³⁹⁵ Barbara M. Kreutz 1996, 22–25.

³⁹⁶ McCormick 2001, 758–779.

Siconulf of Salerno and Radelchis of Benevento, a process that weakened Lombard power and unwittingly invited the Arabs into the peninsula.³⁹⁷

The desire to maintain the relationship with the Byzantines can be better perceived from a wider perspective, as has already been stated, since Neapolitans were dealing with their Lombard neighbours, who were more skilled in combat than the Neapolitans. At this point, Lombard power had weakened, and Arabs had gradually increased their power. One must bring another aspect of the story to light, as the Neapolitans were skilled diplomats in forging new ties with the Arabs as an emerging force in the Mediterranean.³⁹⁸ Neapolitans acknowledged their presence in the Tyrrhenian Sea and clearly in the Mediterranean. As Neapolitans bolstered their interactions with the Arabs, enough to get the attention of Rome and Constantinople, the historical trajectory of Naples fell into a new alignment. Sicily began to fall under Arab attacks, as they disembarked on the western part of the island by the mid-ninth century (in 827), and conquered Palermo after four years. In fact, they managed to seize the entirety of the north shore, and finally Messina fall under Arab authority in 843.³⁹⁹ Furthermore, Arabs conquered Messina by receiving help from the Neapolitans.⁴⁰⁰ Yet, this supposed help is still open to debate, however. If the Neapolitans really did help the Arabs to conquer Messina, this must have been a drastic shift in Neapolitan politics and relationships. It is true that the Arabs had gradually increased their power in Tyrrhenian, but the

³⁹⁷ Marazzi, “Il sud dell’Italia fra VII e VIII secolo,” in *Les cadres juridiques et sociaux et les institutions publiques* (Collection de l’École Française de Rome, 2021), 261–278.

³⁹⁸ Luigi Andrea Berto, *Christians and Muslims in Early Medieval Italy, Perceptions, Encounters, and Clashes* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 29–47.

³⁹⁹ Annliese Nef, “Byzantium and Islam in Southern Italy (7th–11th century)” in *A Companion to the Byzantine Italy*, ed. Salvatore Cosentino (Brill, 2021), 200–225.

⁴⁰⁰ Marazzi, “Byzantine Naples and Gaeta” (2021), 418.

Byzantines neither diminished nor vanished.⁴⁰¹ Here, I find myself reluctant to believe that the Neapolitans openly offered their help with the conquest, yet one may safely conclude that the Arab-Neapolitan relationship had been on good terms, especially after the mid-thirties of the ninth century, when Arabs came to rescue the Neapolitans from the Lombard attack. Duke Andrew made an alliance with the Arabs to obtain military aid when Sico besieged the city. Because of this, from then on, Neapolitans and Arabs became involved in a close, mutually beneficial interaction, as Naples also protected Arab fleets and troops until the beginning of the tenth century, the battle of Garigliano.⁴⁰² Here, one should remember that control of imperial fleet, which they held on the Tyrrhenian, started to shatter as the Neapolitans consequently started to form new alliances with the Arabs, who also had a word in ruling the waves.⁴⁰³ By the mid-ninth century, Arabs had established a presence not only in Sicily, but also in Southern Italy, as Muslim troops landed in Calabria, and captured Taranto by turning the city into their base, to expand their expeditions. Arabs had known the land and how to capture the cities and towns, as they had been offering their services as mercenaries to the Neapolitans, Lombards or Byzantines.⁴⁰⁴

In fact, the picture of Southern Italy in the ninth century presents us with one of the most diverse regions, not just in the Tyrrhenian but in the whole

⁴⁰¹ Marazzi, “*Ita ut facta videatur Neapolis Panormus vel Africa*. Geopolitica della presenza islamica nel domini di Napoli, Gaeta, Salerno e Benevento nel IX secolo,” *Schede Medievali* 45 (1997): 159–202.

⁴⁰² Marco Di Branco, Gianmatteo Matullo, and Kordula Wolf, “Nouve ricerche sull’isediamento islamico presso ill Garigliano (883–915),” in Lazio e Sabina 10, *Atti del convegno “Decimo incontro di studi sul Lazio e la Sabina”*, ed. Elena Calandra, Giuseppina Ghini, e Zaccaria Mari (Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2014), 273–280.

⁴⁰³ Alex Metcalf, *The Muslims of Medieval Italy* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 78–91.

⁴⁰⁴ Marco Di Branco & Kordula Wolf, “Terra di Conquista? I Musulmani in Italia meridionale nell’epoca aghlabita (184/800–269/909)” in *Guerra santa e conquiste islamiche nel Mediterraneo* (Rome: Viella Editrice, 2014), 141–154.

Mediterranean.⁴⁰⁵ While the Byzantines were occupied with concomitant expeditions against the Muslims and Bulgars, the Campanian-Tyrrhenian cities of Naples and Amalfi, as will be discussed in the next chapter, were building their independence as well as forging bonds with the Arabs.⁴⁰⁶ Unfortunately, Naples was also dealing with internal strife: for instance assassinating or imprisoning dukes became a way of expressing discontent as to the outcomes of the alliances between urban and ecclesiastical elites. Indeed, Duke Stephen II was assassinated by a couple of Neapolitans who allied with Benevento, and Duke Bonus, who was one of the conspirators, was imprisoned by Bishop Tiberius due to the confiscation of the *patrimonies* of the Church.⁴⁰⁷

Meanwhile, the Neapolitans, while honing their diplomatic skills to perfection, quickly placed themselves next to the Arabs while searching for opportunities to forge different alliances with other players, such as the Carolingians.⁴⁰⁸ Duke Andrew also sent envoys to request help from Lothar, who responded by sending a legate, Contardus, to negotiate the relationship. Yet, when Sicard was assassinated the new socio-political situation led Andrew to make a new proposal to Lothar, as he offered the hand of his daughter in marriage to cement the possible alliance.⁴⁰⁹ But Contardus had a different plan: he killed Andrew, married his daughter and declared himself as the duke of Naples.⁴¹⁰ However, Neapolitans did not share his happiness. They cornered him in the episcopal palace, killed

⁴⁰⁵ Warren Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780–842* (Stanford University Press, 1988).

⁴⁰⁶ Andrea Borruso, “Some Arab-Muslim Perceptions of Religion and Medieval Culture in Sicily,” in *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions*, ed. Jacques Waardenburg (Oxford University Press, 1999), 136–143.

⁴⁰⁷ Nicola Cilento, *La Chiesa di Napoli nell’alto Medioevo* (1969), 678–680.

⁴⁰⁸ Paolo Delogu, “Lombard and Carolingian Italy” in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. II, c. 700–c. 900, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 290–319.

⁴⁰⁹ John the Deacon, *The Deeds of Neapolitan Bishops*, 59.

⁴¹⁰ John the Deacon, *The Deeds of Neapolitan Bishops*, 61.

Contardus, Andrew's daughter and Contardus' supporters.⁴¹¹ In fact, the murder of Contardus shows not only Neapolitans' desire to punish an coup plotter, but also their unwillingness to integrate the city into the Frankish Empire, as the urban elites violently expressed their thoughts on the possible alliance.⁴¹² It seems that instead of subordinating Naples to Franks, they preferred to remain in the imperial *oikumene*, even though its military power started to shatter.⁴¹³ Yet, this is not to disregard the very fact that the Neapolitans no longer sought permission or confirmation from Constantinople by the mid-ninth century. As they forged ties with the Arabs, their ways of governing Naples and recalibrating alliances as suited to their own interests showed that they did not seek independence, and did not revolt against Byzantines, but nevertheless acted with a certain level of independence.⁴¹⁴ Their level of autonomy could be interpreted in terms of their peripheral location to Byzantine capital; however, such a interpretation ought to be regarded with skepticism, as Naples held integral importance for Byzantine activities on the Italian peninsula and beyond.⁴¹⁵

Neapolitans realized that they could act independently too, and this realization culminated in the election of Sergius I as the duke of Naples. He draws a different picture as a leader from his predecessors. On the one hand, he was the commander of the fortress at Cumae; but on the other hand, he led diplomatic missions between Naples and Salerno, Rome and the Carolingian court. Having been educated in Greek and Latin, he stood out as an ideal ruler of Neapolitan urban

⁴¹¹ John the Deacon, *The Deeds of Neapolitan Bishops*, 62–63.

⁴¹² John the Deacon, *The Deeds of the Neapolitan Bishops*, 65.

⁴¹³ Nicola Cilento, "Civiltà napoletana del medioevo nel secolo VI–XII," in *Storia di Napoli*, ed. Ernesto Pontieri (Società Editrice Storia di Napoli, 1969), 1,967–1,974.

⁴¹⁴ Galasso, 1995, 85–87.

⁴¹⁵ McCormick, 756–772.

elites.⁴¹⁶ Like his son Gregory who would succeed him, Sergius was a great example of an urban elite, combining military prowess with socio-political fluency, and reflecting the Neapolitan ability to conduct successful diplomacy in a sort of cosmopolitan world and to lead troops to success on the battlefield. The image of Sergius mirrors the adaptive nature of Neapolitan identity, interfacing and interacting with the world both inside and outside the city walls.⁴¹⁷ In fact, there were several main factors allowing Sergius, and then his son Gregory, to consolidate the ducal power, as Neapolitans wanted to avoid both the internal chaos of the near past and the weakened position of the Lombards due to their own civil war between principalities. Another fact that lay at the heart of ecclesiastical power was that Sergius managed to promote his other son, Athanasius, a deacon for little more than a year as the Bishop of Naples after the death of Bishop John.⁴¹⁸

This period was also marked by the socio-political efforts of the Neapolitans as they sought ways not only to reinforce their ducal power but also to gain benefits from the divisions and strife between the Lombard principalities.⁴¹⁹ This in turn did not bring fortune to the Neapolitans, and instead they suffered one of the fatal defeats in the history of the duchy as even the son of Sergius, Caesarius, was taken captive. This humiliation dealt a harsh blow to Neapolitans, who would never again mobilize against the Lombards.⁴²⁰ On the other hand, Gregory and his son Sergius II stayed away from the problems caused by Lombards or Carolingians. Even Sergius II arrested his uncle Bishop Athanasius, who enjoyed a close relationship

⁴¹⁶ Bartolommeo Capasso, *Monumenta ad Neapolitani ducatus historiam pertinentia*, I, (Naples: F. Giannini, 1881), 101–103.

⁴¹⁷ Capasso 1881, 105.

⁴¹⁸ Alessandra Nelucco Vaccaro, *I Longobardi in Italia* (Milan: Longanesi, 2007), 131–133.

⁴¹⁹ Paolo Bertolini, “Atanasio, santo,” in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, 4 (Rome: Istituto della enciclopedia italiana, 1961), 508–510.

⁴²⁰ Luigi Andrea Berto, *The ‘Other’ Identity and Memory in Early Medieval Italy* (2022), 65.

with Louis II; then Sergius forged an alliance with the Arabs, who promised they would not attack Naples.⁴²¹ Based on this, one may conclude that the period between the mid-eighth century and the ninth century presents a turning point for the history of the Duchy of Naples, as Neapolitans gradually obtained autonomy from Constantinople, but at the same time were constantly trying not to be swept away by the tension between Carolingians, Lombards, and Arabs.

At the same time, the cultural duality was limited neither to Sergius nor to his son Gregory. Literary as well as material sources such as coins, jewelry and mosaics allow us to say that the knowledge of Greek as a language and as a culture was widespread among Neapolitans, suggesting the mutual exchange between Naples and the Byzantine *koine*. McCormick indicates that these movements were not only related to the imperial officers, but also to private entrepreneurs, merchants, and traders as well as individuals such as pilgrims.⁴²² As I will return to this point in the following paragraphs, Naples was no less commercially and culturally engaged with the Tyrrhenian and Mediterranean than its closest neighbours Amalfi and Gaeta.⁴²³ In fact, the Neapolitan interactions were not limited only to commerce but extended to providing protection and security to its neighbours by use of its harbor. After an Arab raid on San Vincenzo al Volturno, an abbey located 122 km northeast of Naples, the monks were granted access to docks in the harbor, houses, and cellars in the city.⁴²⁴ Indeed, one may conclude that these facilities and the right of sailing indicated that the monks had a logistical

⁴²¹ John the Deacon, *The Deeds of the Neapolitan Bishops*, 54–57.

⁴²² Paolo Bertolini, “La serie episcopale napoletana nei secoli VIII e XI. Ricerche sulle fonti per la storia dell’Italia meridionale nell’alto medioevo,” in *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia*, XXIV, no. 2 (1970): 339–440.

⁴²³ McCormick, “Origins of the European Economy” (2001), 864–879.

⁴²⁴ See Patricia Skinner, *Family Power in Southern Italy: The Duchy of Gaeta and Its Neighbours, 850–1139* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

base from which to conduct their seaborne activities under the protection and supervision of Naples.⁴²⁵

Unfortunately, despite the ample evidence for the activity of the harbor of Naples, literary sources do not provide sufficient information on the Neapolitans' engagement in maritime activities. Local seamen or local merchants are generally missing, as Feniello clearly shows. While the documentation could potentially allow us to reconstruct the harbor, it unfortunately remains silent on the locals who were working in the harbor either by sailing or taking care of the harbor.⁴²⁶ In turn, this silence has led some scholars to assume that Neapolitans were more interested in the hinterland instead of the sea and maritime commerce.⁴²⁷ However, the archaeology of the harbour area does not support such an interpretation, as the harbor was in good shape during the period under scrutiny. On the other hand, the monks of San Vincenzo were not the only group benefiting from the Neapolitan port; Amalfitans' commercial activities and engagement with the harbour of Naples and the city itself provide us with a more complex picture. Amalfitans settled in Naples as they had gained the right to own property and contributed to ecclesiastical patronage as well. This was a mutually beneficial relationship, as Naples offered what Amalfi did not originally have: linkage to the hinterland and direct access to the markets to sell and supply wine, textiles, and slaves.⁴²⁸ Amalfitans were far from the only cosmopolitan presence in the Neapolitan community, as the inhabitants of the Duchy of Gaeta also included Muslim traders and mercenaries,

⁴²⁵ Alessandro Luciano, "Napoli sul mare: Il paesaggio costiero in epoca bizantina," *Salternum* XXII, no. 40–41, (2018): 71.

⁴²⁶ Amedeo Feniello, *Napoli. Società ed economia (902–1137)* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2011), 56–64.

⁴²⁷ Arthur, "Naples: a case of urban survival" (1991).

⁴²⁸ Federico Marazzi, "Byzantine Naples and Gaeta" (2021), 417.

as attested in the documents, presenting Naples as multicultural, vibrant, and vital urban environment.⁴²⁹ In other words, one may infer that Neapolitans were not interested in conducting seaborne activities by themselves at the same level of Amalfitans, and Neapolitans concentrated more on managing their commercial activities and political power through the city, rather than seeking ways to dominate the sea trade.⁴³⁰

Indeed, the urban elite of Naples had the tendency to manage the complex network of commerce that crossed the city and turned Naples into a sort of trading and marketing center. They therefore had to keep up a certain level of military prowess to maintain the flow of goods and merchants. Here, one may conclude that the administrative transformation of the seventh and eighth century that occurred simultaneously in the wider Byzantine circle helped Neapolitans to reorganize the city and to adopt new skills to sustain the vitality of their urban life in a very unstable geography.⁴³¹ In this light, Naples enjoyed a certain level of stability both in internal and external affairs during the reign of Sergius, when both the duke and the city were adaptive, flexible, and resilient to the changes happening around them.⁴³² Actually, this flexibility ran through the family, as Sergius' heirs saw no problem in switching between the poles. For instance, Neapolitans supported Carolingians (Louis II's campaigns against the Arabs), then they turned around and forged an alliance with the Arabs when Carolingian power weakened in Southern Italy. In a nutshell, the main objective was to prevent the players in Southern Italy

⁴²⁹ Jean-Marie Martin, "Structures familiales, vocabulaire de la parenté, dévolution du patrimoine: les duchés de Gaète et d'Amalfi," in *L'héritage byzantin en Italie (VIII^e-XII^e siècle)*, vol. 2, *Les cadres juridiques et sociaux et les institutions publiques* (L'École Française de Rome, 2012).

⁴³⁰ Patricia Skinner, *Family Power in Southern Italy: The Duchy of Gaeta and Its Neighbours, 850–1139*, (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 103–107.

⁴³¹ Federico Marazzi, "Byzantine Naples and Gaeta" (2021), 417.

⁴³² Antonio V. Boccia and Gennaro de Crescenzo, *Il ducato e Napoli medievale: le origini di una grande capitale* (Avellino: ABE Editore, 2024), 75–76.

from growing too powerful. In this light, from the late tenth century, the main concern was the need to prevent any Lombard principality, Capua, Salerno or Benevento, from gaining regional dominance.⁴³³ For instance, Athanasius, both the duke and the bishop of Naples between 878 and 898, launched a military expedition against Capua to prevent the Capuans from increasing their power.⁴³⁴ Yet, this is not to deny that Neapolitan relationships even with the Lombards were not always open, as they made multipolar pacts and treaties with Lombards between 8th and 10th centuries. For instance, they agreed on how to control Liburia, a sort of frontier between Naples and Capua, and the Liburian peasants paid their taxes both to the Neapolitans and the Capuans.⁴³⁵ The last decades of tenth century brought new challenges to the political entities of Southern Italy, and in turn, Naples was confronted with a new challenge in the form of a new threat stemming from Otto I's repeated claims on asserting western imperial power in the region. Duke Marinus II (r. 968–992), standing side by side with the Byzantines, withstood the sieges of Otto and Pandulf of Capua. The death of both adversaries in 983 calmed down the tension, and this rare interlude of peace lasted for almost 40 years till Capua once again emerged as a power.⁴³⁶

In this sense, the complex trajectory of Naples from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages defied reductive narratives of simple survival or passive decline. Instead, it reveals a city continuously negotiating its identity, power structures, and external relationships amid shifting imperial tides and local rivalries. Rather than a

⁴³³ Eric J. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict under Louis the German: 817–876* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 78–93.

⁴³⁴ John the Deacon, *The Deeds of the Neapolitan Bishops*, 61.

⁴³⁵ Cassandro, “La liburia e i suoi Tertiatores,” *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane* 65 (1940): 197–268.

⁴³⁶ Patricia Skinner, “Urban Communities in Naples, 900–1050,” *Papers of the British School of Rome* 62 (November 1994): 289–291.

passive settlement, Naples emerged as an adaptive urban entity that negotiated its identity and autonomy through complex interactions with Constantinople. From its early fortifications and ecclesiastical developments, shaped by imperial influence on the creation of the Duchy and its strategic use of Byzantine administrative, military and economic reforms, Naples maintained a balance between loyalty and independent agency. While the city leveraged imperial ties to reinforce its socio-political structures and protect itself against Lombard encroachment, it also cultivated external alliances, including with Arabs, without severing its Byzantine connections. The evolution of local governance, exemplified by the rise of local dynasties and the nuanced role of the dukes, underscores a gradual but deliberate assertion of autonomy that did not negate but rather reframed its Byzantine affiliation. Indeed, Naples stands as a vivid example of a Mediterranean city navigating imperial entanglement, embodying a hybrid identity, that fused local resilience within the Byzantine *koine*.⁴³⁷

The transformation of Naples during the period under scrutiny reveals a story not of decline or detachment but of deliberate negotiation and pragmatic adaptation within the fluid dynamics of the early medieval Mediterranean. From its strategic harbour and enduring city walls to the resilient civic structures and increasingly assertive ducal authority, Naples engaged with imperial power, ecclesiastical legitimacy, and regional threats with remarkable flexibility. Whether forging its relationship with Constantinople, resisting Lombard encroachment, building alliances with Arabs, or navigating internal factionalism, Neapolitans acted with a conscious sense of their city's geopolitical value and socio-economic

⁴³⁷ Paul Arthur, "Archeologia urbana a Napoli, riflessioni sugli ultimi tre anni" *Archeologia Medievale* XIII (1986): 520–521.

position. The rise of local military elites, integration of ecclesiastical urban governance, and vibrant commercial life framed a new kind of urban identity, rooted in continuity but shaped through reinvention. Ultimately, Naples stands as a vivid example of how a Byzantine city in the West could maintain urban vitality, assert regional relevance, and cultivate hybrid resilience within and beyond the Byzantine *koine*.⁴³⁸

3.2. From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages: A City in New Clothes

The transformation of early medieval Naples cannot be understood without examining how the city redefined its urban functions amid the fragmentation of classical order. Rather than experiencing abrupt decline, Naples adapted through spatial reorganization, architectural continuity, and strategic repurposing of existing structures. This section investigates three critical aspects of that transformation: ecclesiastical and urban construction, harbour redevelopment, and fortification strategies. Together, they reveal how Naples balanced inherited Roman and Greek legacies with evolving political, economic, and religious imperatives. The material and textual evidence suggests not a passive inheritance of the past, but a conscious effort to reshape the landscape in response to new realities, an urban identity built through continuity, adaptation, and selective innovation.⁴³⁹

Understanding early Medieval Naples requires seeking the answers to a few questions, such as, what did Late Antique Naples look like? Which functions had

⁴³⁸ See Patricia Skinner, "Urban Communities in Naples, 900-1050) in *Papers of the British School of Rome*, 1994.

⁴³⁹ See Paul Arthur, "Archeologia urbana a Napoli, riflessioni sugli ultimi tre anni" in *Archeologia Medievale*, XIII, 1986.

Naples been performing during this period? How early Medieval Naples function as a city that was not full of ‘classical’ urban amenities anymore?

In this light, a couple of points must be addressed. First of all, the transformation of the urban topography of Naples, especially the Greek and Roman times, is an attractive topic that gets scholarly attention since the end of nineteenth century.⁴⁴⁰ The second point I want to drive home is the very fact that the urban transformation of Naples provides us with two different directions to follow and reassess its importance. The first is related to the public contribution, including the Church, and is far more readily detectable from the literary and material sources. The second direction goes hand in hand with private benefaction, which left scarce traces to follow, yet testifies to the influence and tendencies of Neapolitan elites.⁴⁴¹

Indeed, the building activities in early Medieval Naples provide us with more activity, in contrast to many other settlements in the southern Italy. However, it is not possible to define the building techniques or the material quality, since the visible appearance of *spolia* is high in early Medieval Naples.⁴⁴² In fact, one can assert that the reuse of material did not start as an early Medieval practice. Rather, many columns, tiles, bricks, threshold slabs or altars or even roadblocks were annexed into the walls from late antiquity.⁴⁴³ For instance, San Maria Maggiore della Pietrasanta harkens back to the sixth century and presents an interesting composition. The church, built on the site of the earlier temple of Diana, was divided into three naves and eighteen spoliated columns.⁴⁴⁴ Neapolitans seem to

⁴⁴⁰ Bartolommeo Capasso, *Topografia della città di Napoli IX secolo* (Naples: Arnaldo Forni, 1895).

⁴⁴¹ Patricia Skinner, 1994, 286–287.

⁴⁴² Paul Arthur, *ibid*, 2002, p. 34

⁴⁴³ Angela Palmentieri, *ibid*, 2015, p. 133

⁴⁴⁴ Giancarlo Alisio, “La chiesa e il campanile della Pietrasanta” in *Napoli Nobilissima*, 3, 1969, pp. 226-236

have clearly understood Cassiodorus and his recommendation of the usage of *spolia*, as he firmly advises not leaving useful building materials in ruin, but instead to collect and reuse them in either new constructions or refurbishments.⁴⁴⁵

Naturally, not every building was built with *spolia*, but building activities and the profession itself made their way through early Medieval Naples due to the need of new buildings, especially the ecclesiastical ones. Constructing buildings and using *spolia* revolved around the adaptation of pre-existing structures, demolition, re-roofing, re-plastering or building of walls in portions after the sixth century.⁴⁴⁶ In turn, Carsana and Paolo de Stefano present the re-roofing activities in relation to the production; for example, roof-tiles were in production, and flat ones (*tegulae*) sometimes bore stamps such as SPES IN DEO or SPES DEI.⁴⁴⁷

3.3. The Harbour of Naples

Mediterranean has a lot of harbours and ports, lying on different continents and connecting the coastlines from the west to the east, yet the Gulf of Naples presenting some of the best harbours of the entire Mediterranean basin from the Phlegrean Field and Ischia in the west to the Sorrentine peninsula in the east.⁴⁴⁸ As it has been said before, the decline of the harbour of Puteoli and Misenum paved the way of increasing power of the harbour of Naples, the harbour rapidly grew.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁵ Cassiodorus, Var. III. 9)

⁴⁴⁶ Paul Arthur 2002, 37.

⁴⁴⁷ See Vittoria Carsana & Paolo de Stefano (eds.), *Archaeologia e trasformazione urbana, Catalogo della nostra*, Notiziario 12, Programma straordinario di edilizia residenziale per la città di Napoli (Naples: Arti Grafiche Boccia, 1987).

⁴⁴⁸ Teresa Colletta, *Napoli città portuale e mercantile: La città bassa, il porto e il mercato dall'VIII al XVII secolo* (Kappa, 2000), 18–31.

⁴⁴⁹ Gianfranco De Rossi, Vincenzo di Giovanni, Paola Miniero, Simona Salmieri, and Gianluca Soricelli, “Il porto di Miseno (Campania – Italia) in Età Tardoantica: Analisi dei Contesti Ceramici,” in *LRCW 3 Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean, Archaeology and Archaeometry, Comparison between western and eastern Mediterranean*, Volume I, ed. Simonetta Menchelli et al. (Oxford: BAR International Series 2185-I, 2010), 487–495.

During the Gothic Wars, Byzantine fleet anchored to the harbour which was far away from the reach of the missiles of the Ostrogoths who were on the walls of Naples.⁴⁵⁰ The Neapolitan harbour had gradually gained more importance due to the socio-political, economic and military needs, this significance led Narses to protect the port at the expense of the extension of the walls. Lewis and Runyan suggest that this in turn led Neapolitans to overhaul the ships, if not to build them, yet it seems a sort of far-fetched theory since there is not sufficient record to prove the shipbuilding activities in Naples during the period under scrutiny.⁴⁵¹

However, archaeological analysis on the Piazza Municipio, the Greco-Roman harbour ceased in function by the early 5th century since the basin silted and sanded up.⁴⁵² In this sense, it is important to note that the configuration of Neapolitan harbour underwent significant changes, as stratigraphic and archaeological evidence, especially from Piazza Municipio and Piazza Bovio demonstrate that the Byzantine administration placed strategic importance on developing coastal fortification and revitalizing port infrastructure.⁴⁵³ The harbor basin, initially subjected to the silting process in Late Antiquity, shifted progressively south-eastward, creating a new emerged coast area that allowed further settlement adjustments. Indeed, the Duchy of Naples took advantage of the new emerged areas as the Port Vulpulum, located on present-day Piazza Borsa; and the smaller one, situated slightly northeast, primarily used for military functions and equipped with a dockyard and arsenal. The latter was connected to the ducal

⁴⁵⁰ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, V, 2–4.

⁴⁵¹ Archibald R. Lewis & Timothy J. Runyan, *European Naval and Maritime History, 300–1600* (Indiana University Press, 1990), 20–22.

⁴⁵² Vittoria Carsana et al., “Evoluzione del paesaggio costiero tra Parthenope e Neapolis,” in *Mediterranee* 112 (2009): 14–22.

⁴⁵³ Stefania Febbraro, “Il quartiere artigiano e la necropoli,” in *Napoli: la città e il mare: Piazza Bovio: tra Romana e Bizantini, Catalogo della Mostra, Napoli: MANN 21* (Verona: Electa, 2010), 57–60.

palace, emphasizing the close ties between the administration and its control over seaborne activities.⁴⁵⁴ Archaeological investigations have uncovered warehouses that harken back to the passage between the seventh and ninth centuries, close to the ducal palace and harbours, as these settlements, consisting of eight rooms arranged around a large rectangular hall connected to an open space with a well, highlight the functional complexity of the port zone.⁴⁵⁵ Furthermore, a road built between the late sixth and early seventh centuries linked the port to the city and extended towards the Phlegraean Fields, evidencing integrated logistical networks.⁴⁵⁶

Along with the military structures, the port zone became a center for artisanal production, as workshops of glass (mid-sixth century) and metal (late sixth century) were established near the docks, designed to maintain commercial activities and distribution. This arrangement underlines how Naples functioned not only as a consumption center but also a node of regional and interregional distribution.⁴⁵⁷

From the eighth century onwards, the presence of merchants became more visible, such as that of Jews, Arabs, or Amalfitans, and further emphasized the Mediterranean character of the ports of Naples. Both Jews and Amalfitans possessed lodgings in Naples, as well as markets and religious buildings.⁴⁵⁸ On the other hand, the monasteries played an important role in seaborne activities such as

⁴⁵⁴ Alessandro Luciano, "Napoli sul mare. Il paesaggio costiero in epoca bizantina," *Salternum* XXII, no. 40–41, (2018): 70.

⁴⁵⁵ Beatrice Roncella, "I magazzini" in *Napoli: la città e il mare: Piazza Bovio: tra Romana e Bizantini, Catalogo della Mostro, Napoli: MANN 21* (Verona: Electa, 2010), 63–68.

⁴⁵⁶ Daniela Giampaola, "Il paesaggio costiero di Neapolis tra Greci e Bizantini" in *Napoli: la città e il mare: Piazza Bovio: tra Romana e Bizantini, Catalogo della Mostro, Napoli: MANN 21* (Verona: Electa, 2010), 19–20.

⁴⁵⁷ Stefania Febbraro, "Il quartiere artiginale e la necropoli," (2010), 57.

⁴⁵⁸ Luciano, "Napoli sul mare. Il paesaggio costiero in epoca bizantina" (2019), 78.

San Salvatore Maggiore and San Vincenzo al Volturno, and received grants of rights that allowed the monks to participate in ship owning and trade.⁴⁵⁹ The port thus became a space where urban and ecclesiastical elites as well as merchants and artisans intersected, and reinforced Naples' position among the maritime cities of the Byzantine *koine*. These activities and the population of Naples during the period under scrutiny present us with a bustling port, rather than a peripheral infrastructure. No evidence on the port's structural material has appeared, yet some scholars argue that it was largely wooden, complemented by mixed stone-wood constructions. They have deduced this by comparing the harbour of Naples with other maritime cities like Ravenna or Comacchio, as this adaptation matched the practical needs of maintaining flexible and rapidly reparable facilities.⁴⁶⁰

Ultimately, the port(s) of Naples during Byzantine times was more than an economic installation, it was the linchpin of a complex urbanity and interactions between the shores of Naples and the maritime cities of the Mediterranean. It intertwined defense, production, trade and religious life, symbolizing Naples' resilience and strategic importance within the Byzantine *koine*.⁴⁶¹

3.4. The Walls of Naples / Fortification / Defences

“The walls of Naples were inaccessible, on one side by reason of the sea, on the other because of some difficult country, and those who planned to attack it could gain entrance at no point, not only because of its general situation, but also because the ground sloped steeply.”⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁹ Marazzi, “Byzantine Naples and Gaeta” (2021), 417–418.

⁴⁶⁰ Luciano, “Napoli sul mare” (2019), 69.

⁴⁶¹ Paul Arthur, *Naples: From a Roman Town to City State* (2002), 41.

⁴⁶² Procopius, *History of the Wars*, V, 2–4.

Procopius defines the famous walls of Naples as impenetrable, and the morphology of Naples supports his explanation of the walls in question. The walls, built on a rectangular tuff platform as the historical center, remain the tuff platform, and were cut by the watercourses at the sides that helped to protect its reputation as impenetrable.⁴⁶³ The walls were of Greek origin and needed to be refurbished, as previously mentioned.⁴⁶⁴ Von Falkenhausen proposes that the need of refurbishing the walls may have continued through medieval times, resembling with the case of Byzantine Otranto.⁴⁶⁵ What we are confronted with is the fact that further refurbishment was taken up under Belisarius as well as by Narses in the mid-sixth century, as seven towers were assigned as built by Belisarius while Narses was credited not only for the work he put in to strengthen the walls but also to stretch the wall up to enclose the harbour of Naples and thus protect the anchored imperial fleet. As to the foundation of the extension, there is an ongoing debate as Mario Napoli relates the extension with the refurbishment process of Valentinian III,⁴⁶⁶ while Arthur refutes Napoli's theory by stating that this extension of the walls must have been built by the mid-sixth century.⁴⁶⁷ The debate over the dating is still ongoing; however, it has been ascertained that the extension of the wall did not include the port itself, but enclosed the adjacent land. Here, we are confronted with new reports as the coastal defences seem to be continued to be refurbished during the seventh and ninth centuries, as the excavations of Piazza Bovio revealed a quadrangular tower, attached to the city walls, built with *spolia* from a Severan

⁴⁶³ Arturo Rigillo, "Il centro antico: un bene culturale" in Pozzi, 1985, 406.

⁴⁶⁴ Werner Johannowsky, "Problemi archaeologici napoletani, con particolare riferimento alle zone interessate dal risanamento" in Russo 1960, 493–494.

⁴⁶⁵ Von Falkenhausen 1978, 151.

⁴⁶⁶ Mario Napoli, "La città e i suoi monumenti," in *Storia di Napoli*, vol. II (Società Editrice Storia di Napoli, 1969), 327–54.

⁴⁶⁷ Arthur, *Naples: From Roman Town to City-State* (2002), 35.

honorific arch. This tower, along with the other maritime fortifications and a system of advanced walls known as the *muricino* or *baricatorio*, reflects the constant need to protect the harbors.⁴⁶⁸

This new enclosed area provides us with the erection of one of the biggest churches of the city, San Giovanni Maggiore, which is located alongside the southwestern harbour-side, and was consecrated by Bishop Vincent in the mid-sixth century. There is also another church in this area that harkens back to the mid-tenth century, San Nicola, and it was also described as *intus castellione novum*.⁴⁶⁹ The suburbs of Naples and the first mention of a fort in the suburban area date back to 536. Despite the gloominess of its location, there are some suggestions such as the bay of Santa Lucia, either on the rock of Pizzofalcone or on the islet of Megarida (today Castel dell'Ovo). Yet, this is an important indication of the significance that Naples held in the eyes of the Byzantine Empire, as the period under scrutiny did not provide financial opportunities to be generous.⁴⁷⁰

The problems about the walls of Naples are not easy to deal with. The Mura Greche (Greek Walls) were about more or less 3.8 km long; Falco of Benevento writes that their length was 2.363 *passi*, which equaled 4.47 km by the mid-twelfth century.⁴⁷¹ The main problems stem from the southwestern and southeastern parts of the walls. Mario Napoli argues that San Giovanni Maggiore stood next to the southwestern part, while the monastery of Santa Chiara lay outside of the walls.⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁸ Mario Gentile, "La fortificazione bizantina apoli: la città e il mare: Piazza Bovio: tra Romana e Bizantini, Catalogo della Mostro, Napoli: MANN 21, Verona: Electa, 2010

⁴⁶⁹ Amedeo Feniello, "Contributo alla storia della iunctura civitatis di Napoli nei secoli X–XIII" in *Napoli Nobilissima* 38 (1991): 191–192.

⁴⁷⁰ Casimiro Martucci & Maria Lucia Di Costanzo, "Napoli e il mare: vicende urbane presso il Castello del Carmine," in *Atti convegno Internazionale CIRICE La Città Palinsesto. Tracce, sguardi e narrazioni sulla complessità dei contesti urbani storici*, 2021, ed. Francesca Capano and Massimo Visone (Federico II University Press), 174–179.

⁴⁷¹ Amedeo Feniello, *Napoli normanno-sveva* (Rome: Newton, 1995), 37.

⁴⁷² Mario Napoli 1969, 741.

Furthermore, he claims that its refurbishment by Valentinian III extended the southeastern walls through the watercourse, which was more or less located on Via Sant'Anna dei Lombardi, Via Monteoliveto and Via Media, which present a city gate from Piazza San Domenico Maggiore to Piazza del Gesù.⁴⁷³ In this light, the suburban area seemed to be developed from that of the Republic to the Greco-Roman port in Piazza Municipio, the public baths of Santa Chiara, and the *domus* at Santa Maria la Nova.⁴⁷⁴

Arthur rebuts Napoli's view by indicating that the area that Napoli depicted was abandoned in late antiquity. Arthur claims that the only tract of wall that could be associated with Valentinian III's refurbishment was in Via del Cerriglio, as Capasso noted.⁴⁷⁵ However, as he argues on the insufficient nature of Capasso's claim, Arthur draws the wall circuit as follows:

I prefer to identify a wall line linking the area of San Giovanni Maggiore directly to the known Greek walls at Piazza Bellini, following the line of Via San Sebastiano and Via Santa Chiara, rather than hypothesizing an initial extension solely around the church. This would fit with the fact that a watercourse ran along Via San Sebastiano and Via Santa Chiara, which might, by the time of Procopius, have acted as a suitable *fossatum*, later to be backfilled. Recent excavations within the main cloister of the monastery of Santa Chiara have yielded a substantial infill that may support this view.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷³ Mario Napoli, "Topografia e archeologia" in *Storia di Napoli*, vol. I (Società Editrice Storia di Napoli, 1967), 455; Pelosi 1985.

⁴⁷⁴ Mario Napoli 1967, 456.

⁴⁷⁵ Bartolommeo Capasso, *Napoli greco-romana*, Naples: Arturo Berisio Edizione, 1905, pp. 101-102

⁴⁷⁶ Arthur, *Naples: From Roman Town to City-State* (2002), 37.

Unfortunately, the archaeological evidence for the sixth century remains insufficient and meager in comparison to that for the following centuries, yet a Byzantine pentagonal prow-tower was discovered on the seaward side of the historical centre. It was built by using *spolia* such as fragments and tombstones, and this tower supposedly dates to the fifth century, but the archaeological evidence has never been represented.⁴⁷⁷ In turn, one may support this idea with other Byzantine examples coming from different cities such as Antioch or Sergiopolis, where the similar type of towers that can be dated to the fifth and sixth centuries, and which started to serve their function in the seventh century.⁴⁷⁸ A similar example presents itself in Benevento, which is dated to the end of the sixth century, and the tower in Benevento also contains reused material.⁴⁷⁹ Indeed, one may think that this tower was one of the seven towers of Belisarius, and one may wonder if the walls of Naples might have presented a sort of notched, toothed façade towards the sea, and if they could be paired with the walls of Ankara or the walls of Salona.⁴⁸⁰ The northeast of the walls follows the same line as the modern Via Carbonara, which runs adjacent to the walls, where the *carbonarius publicus* was also attested in the beginning of tenth century.⁴⁸¹ This line could have been breached by a gate at Castel Capuano, where the Normans built a fort; De Seta implies that there could have been an area of earlier settlement on this site.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁷ Arthur 2002, 37.

⁴⁷⁸ Enrico Pozzi, *Napoli antica* (Naples: G. Macchiaroli, 1985), 486–488.

⁴⁷⁹ Paolo Peduto, “Torri e castelli longobardi in Italia meridionale: una nuova proposta,” in *Castelli: Storia e archaeologia*, ed. Aldo Angelo Settia & Rinaldo Comba (Turingraf, 1984), 393.

⁴⁸⁰ Archibald W. Dunn, “Heraclius’ reconstruction of cities and their sixth-century Balkan antecedents,” in *Acta XIII, Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae II, Studi di Antichità Cristiana LIV and Vjesnik za Arheologiju i Historiju Dalmatinsku = Bulletin d’archéologie et d’histoire dalmate*, supplementary volumes 87–89 (1998): 800–803.

⁴⁸¹ Bartolommeo Capasso 1895, 12–13.

⁴⁸² Cesare De Seta, *Napoli* (Bari: Laterza, 1981), 36.

Concerning the city gates, the conversation of the ancient street plan shows that the original city gates were under reconstruction at different times and stages throughout medieval times. Unfortunately, the lack of better archaeology prevents us from grasping a better understanding of the gates, yet some remains have been identified under Castel Capuano, which is located at the end of Via dei Tribunali and by Piazza Calenda, while another gate might have been located to the southwest to the sea.⁴⁸³ The actual gate, Porta San Gennaro, to the west of Via Duomo appears to reflect a road alongside the valley of the Sanita, which led to the extramural catacombs.⁴⁸⁴

What emerges from the architectural and infrastructural developments of early medieval Naples is a portrait of a city actively reshaping its role within the Byzantine *koine*. The reuse of classical materials, the evolution of sacred and civic architecture, and the consolidation of its harbour and defences all point to the resilient urban strategy rooted in both memory and pragmatism. Naples' shifting coastline, evolving fortifications, and expanding port functions were not merely responses to external threats or environmental changes, but deliberate interventions that sustained the city's political agency or commercial relevance. Through these layered processes, Naples asserted its place as a connected, versatile, and enduring centre within the Byzantine *koine*, by crafting its own path through turbulent times.

3.5. Streets, Public Buildings and Spaces

The preservation and adaptation of Naples' ancient urban layout offers critical insight into the city's evolution from its Greek foundations to its early

⁴⁸³ Arthur 2002, 38.

⁴⁸⁴ Bartolommeo Capasso 1895, 17.

medieval configurations. Far from being erased by the transformation of Late Antiquity, the street grid, forum structures, and public spaces were not only retained but recalibrated within new administrative and religious frameworks. This section considers how the enduring street plan, evolving use of space, and selective monumental continuity reflected both institutional oversight and shifting communal priorities.⁴⁸⁵

The ancient street plan has often been perceived as one of the key elements to determine whether the city has protected its urban layout or not. In the Italian peninsula, there are at least 27 examples of cities that could be identified as having well-preserved ancient street-grids.⁴⁸⁶ In fact, Naples is an excellent example, with a Greek street pattern harkening back to the sixth century BCE, which survives up to the present day. Indeed, in Naples we have the best-preserved example not only in Southern Italy but in whole of the peninsula. Mario Napoli indicates that the street plan composes three main roads (*plateiai*) and 22 lesser perpendicular roads (*stenopoi*).⁴⁸⁷ In addition, Giampaola, Fratta and Scarpatti conducted a survey in which they show that there may have been a fourth main road alongside Via Bartolomeo Capasso and Via Arte della Lana. Based on this, their junction point was where the Roman camp was built, providing access to the sea.⁴⁸⁸ Greco argues for another possibility, that the *median plateia* (Via dei Tribunali) was 13 meters wide, due to its importance, and the upper and lower (Via San Biagio and Via Anticaglia) were 6 meters wide, while the *stenepoi* measured 3 meters in width.

⁴⁸⁵ Mario Napoli, "La città e i suoi monumenti" in *Storia di Napoli*, vol. II, Societe Editrice Storia di Napoli 1969, 327-354, 3331-333.

⁴⁸⁶ Paul Arthur, *Naples: From Roman Town to City-State*, 2002, 44.

⁴⁸⁷ Mario Napoli, "Topografia e archeologia" in *Storia di Napoli* vol I, Societe Editrice Storia di Napoli, 1967, 759-760.

⁴⁸⁸ Giampaola, Fratta, and Scarpatti, 1996, p. 117

However, Greco also points to the dire need of having better archaeology on the area.⁴⁸⁹

Despite various transformations, the persistence of Naples' classical road system suggests that property boundaries along street frontages remained under some form of regulation. This regulation is also observed in other cities, for instance in Pavia, likely stemming from the enduring presence of a central authority that could preserve the nature of *viae publicae*.⁴⁹⁰ On the one hand, the oversight kept the main routes largely clear for circulation, but partial encroachments by private and later public buildings still occurred, which in turn led the medieval and modern streets often being narrower than their Roman counterparts. In this light, the original topography, comprising terraces, gradients, ramps, and stairways, was further modified throughout the centuries.⁴⁹¹ In fact, the gates and street layouts were designed to limit movement within the urban boundaries, between the coastline and the hinterland. This in turn led the Neapolitans to position the forum strategically near the center. By this arrangement, no one could dwell more than 650 meters from the forum.⁴⁹² On the other hand, it is important to note that the roads started to gradually lose the significance they had back in Roman times, as the use of wagons diminished. This in turn led the Roman roads to deteriorate, and increased the cost of land transportation.⁴⁹³ This in turn led the wide roads to

⁴⁸⁹ Emanuele A. Greco, "L'impianto urbano di Neapolis greca: aspetti e problemi" in *Neapolis, Atti del 25 convegno di studi sulla Magna Grecia* (Taranto, Istituto per la Storia e l'Archaeologia della Magna Graecia, 1986), 201-203

⁴⁹⁰ Donald A. Bullough, "Urban change in early medieval Italy: the example of Pavia" in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, vol. 34, 1966, pp. 82-130, p. 98

⁴⁹¹ Arthur, *Naples: From Roman Town to City-State* (2002), 39.

⁴⁹² G. Caniggia, "La tipologia urbana di Napoli e le esperienze di recupero nel centro storico" in *Quaderni della Edina 3: La ricostruzione di Napoli*, ed. Lucio Valerio Barbera (Naples: Art Grafiche Boccia, 1985), 7-8.

⁴⁹³ Kathryn Jones, "Roman Naples" in *A Companion to the Roman Italy*, ed. Alison E. Cooley (Blackwell: Wiley, 2016), 242-243.

narrow down, as evident in Naples, except that the wide *plateia* were used for processions, ceremonies — once illegal, they became tolerated encroachments due to economic and demographic growth by the ninth century.⁴⁹⁴

Some Roman monuments certainly vanished, yet this should be interpreted as a resulting from decline or abandonment caused by transformation, rather their presence no longer being functional. For instance, a gymnasium last mentioned in the mid-fourth century disappeared because it did not meet a public need anymore.⁴⁹⁵ On the other hand, the Roman theater remained in use, but was converted to residences, as seen in other cities throughout the Mediterranean.⁴⁹⁶

By the sixth century, the urban layout of Naples presents us with a developed network of basilicas, five in total, ensuring that no one inside of the walls could be far from the churches. The spatial proximity was not only reinforced religious life but also showed how Christianization had started to take place and redefine the late antique landscape.⁴⁹⁷ As I will return to this point in the following paragraphs, the construction process outside of the ecclesiastical context is scarcely attested in archaeological reports, and so it can be reconstructed only through the literary sources. In fact, the Ducal Palace (*Praetorium*), the seat of the Neapolitan administration, located in the Monterone, overlooking the sea, beneath today's University of Naples.⁴⁹⁸ One may bring up von Falkenhausen's suggestion as she indicates that the term *praetorium* was in use also in Reggio Calabria, denoting a

⁴⁹⁴ See Paolo De Stefano & Vittoria Carsana (eds.), *Archeologia e trasformazione urbana, Notizario 12, Programma straordinario di edilizia residenziale e la città di Napoli* (Napoli: Arti Grafiche Boccia, 1987).

⁴⁹⁵ See Neil Christie, *From Constantine to Charlemagne: An Archaeology of Italy, AD 300–800*, (Routledge, 2005), 183–268.

⁴⁹⁶ Russo-Mailler 1966, 157.

⁴⁹⁷ Paolo de Stefano and Vittoria Carsana 1987, 10–13.

⁴⁹⁸ Batholommeo Capasso, *Topografia della città di Napoli dell'XI secolo* (Naples: Artro Berisio Edizione, 1895), 193.

fortified structure, although it was restricted to associations with administrative features.⁴⁹⁹ Yet, the Neapolitan ducal palace is less significant than the contemporary *palatium* of Salerno that was built by Arechis II as the archaeological excavations report unearthing impressive fragments of the complex.⁵⁰⁰ In fact, what we are confronted with in the Neapolitan ducal palace is limited by what may have included a large portico that probably housed the monastery of San Marcellino e Pietro, which was refounded by Theodonanda who was the widow of Duke Anthemius by the mid-ninth century.⁵⁰¹ The administrative centre also seems to have housed the mint which was located close by, in San Marcellino where the place name was attested as *ad monetam* from the mid-eighth century.⁵⁰² Furthermore, the palace also housed the *diaconia*⁵⁰³ of San Giovanni di Paolo as the complex was restored by Duke Theodore by 721.⁵⁰⁴ Here, one may take Skinner's suggestion into the consideration as she proposes a theory based on the duchies of Amalfi and Gaeta: since their dukes expanded the area of their properties, it might have been also applied to Neapolitan ducal palace by the tenth century.⁵⁰⁵ There is no evidence to prove her suggestion, either literary nor material, yet if her theory is correct, the area between the lower *plateia* and the sea walls, close to the ports, might have been reorganized by the ducal palace.

⁴⁹⁹ Vera von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina nell'Italia Meridionale dal IX all'XI secolo* (Bari: Ecumenica Editrice, 1978), 151.

⁵⁰⁰ Di Muro, "Tra Longobardi e Normanni. Lo scavo di Salerno" in *Scavi medievali in Italia 1994–1995, 1998* (Vienna: Herder, 1998), 77–78.

⁵⁰¹ Capasso 1895, 93.

⁵⁰² Capasso 1895, 108.

⁵⁰³ The term '*diaconia*' is rooted in Greek, coined by theologians to address the care of poor and oppressed. Not only describing the action, or the performance itself, the term gradually gained a new meaning to describe the place where care is given to the poor. In this sense, the place became a permanent establishment, generally located near the main church. In fact, *diaconia* presents a distinctive feature of the Neapolitan church, having similarities with the examples of the churches in Rome during Late Antiquity and early Middle Ages (Ian Bradley, *Water: A Spiritual History*, London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

⁵⁰⁴ Capasso 1895, 105.

⁵⁰⁵ Skinner 1995, 61.

Neapolitans needed to have public spaces, as the other communities of Mediterranean. The Greek *agora*, later the Roman *forum*, was located centrally within the walls, and so the public space developed around the present-day Via dei Tribunali. Its layout still provides us with a gloomy picture, making its reconstruction difficult. There are several theories on the area of the forum. For example, Greco argues that it was in the present-day Via San Gregorio Armeno, having no ancient origin while he draws a picture of the area between Vico Giganti to the east and Vico Purgatorio to the west, with this layout also standing next to the ancient theatre complex. He argues on that they bordered a large piazza that extended to the south where it was traced by the Via San Biagio (lower *plateia*).⁵⁰⁶ Arthur suggests a different theory to reconstruct the public space, based on the lack of room available in the area. Building on the evidence at hand, Arthur proposes that the area encompassing the theatre complex — the Temple of Dioscuri which is beneath San Lorenzo Maggiore — and the *macellum* extended more than 50 meters south of the Via dei Tribunali. The upper public square was likely more expansive than its counterpart to the south, a spatial hierarchy that may explain the orientation of the Via Maffei, and the subsequent development from the tenth century onward, of part of the monastic complex of San Gregorio Armeno just below it.⁵⁰⁷

Naples maintained a remarkable degree of urban cohesion by integrating inherited infrastructures with new spatial demands shaped by ecclesiastical, administrative, and commercial functions.⁵⁰⁸ The persistence of the street grid,

⁵⁰⁶ Emanuele A. Greco, “L’impianto urbano di Neapolis greca: aspetti e problemi” in *Neapolis: Atti del 25 convegno di studi della Magna Grecia*, ed. G. Pugliese, 1986 (Taranto: Istituto per la Storia e l’Archaeologia della Magna Grecia, 1985), 188–190.

⁵⁰⁷ Arthur 2002, 31.

⁵⁰⁸ Bartolommeo Capasso 1895, 98–99.

redefined forums, and strategic sitting of ducal and ecclesiastical building reveal a city that reshaped its identity without dismantling its core structure. These developments underscore the adaptability of Naples' urban topography within the broader dynamics of the Byzantine *koine*.⁵⁰⁹

3.6. Aqueduct and Baths

The infrastructure of water supply and bathing culture in early medieval Naples reveals a complex continuity between Roman engineering and later urban adaptations. The city's connection to the Aqua Augusta, a rare example of a regional aqueduct system, as well as the survival of thermal structures such as the baths beneath Santa Chiara, underscores the lasting importance of hydraulic networks in sustaining public and religious life.⁵¹⁰

The aqueduct of Naples was a part of Serino Aqueduct or Aqua Augusta, which connects eight urban centres in the region Campania, including Pompeii and Herculaneum.⁵¹¹ In contrast to many other aqueducts, the Aqua Augusta confronts us with a regional example.⁵¹² The Neapolitan part of the aqueduct was restored by the fourth century, continuing to function in the sixth century as Procopius' narrative on the siege of Naples testifies, as the aqueduct became the Achilles' heel of the Neapolitans.⁵¹³

The aqueduct and cisterns of Naples have been mentioned in documents, as the water supply was also fundamental to running the functions of the public baths

⁵⁰⁹ Arthur, 2002, 33-34.

⁵¹⁰ Paolo Squatriti, *Water and Society in early medieval Italy, AD 400–1000* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 48-49.

⁵¹¹ Squatriti, 2998, 48–55.

⁵¹² Giovanni De Feo, "Historical Development of the Augustan Aqueduct of Southern Italy twenty centuries of Works from Serino to Naples," in *Water Supply* 7 (2007): 131–138.

⁵¹³ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, V, 8–10.

of Santa Chiara. Hence, there are many records of the baths during the early Medieval period in Naples.⁵¹⁴ Excavations have brought to light the remains of the early bathhouse in Naples, located beneath the late Franciscan monastery of Santa Chiara, which dates back to the beginning of the fourteenth century.⁵¹⁵ The monastic complex postdates the bath remains, indicating the fact that the baths were already obsolete by the High Middle Ages when the monastery was founded. These baths may themselves have been built over earlier Roman thermal structures known to have existed in the area, suggesting the transformation of the complex as the baths of Santa Chiara were run by the ecclesiastical officers as a sort of religious cleansing.⁵¹⁶ In turn, the baths of Santa Chiara could allow us to present a palimpsest of bathing culture, infrastructure as well as spatial reorganization.⁵¹⁷

Two rooms have survived: one of them may have featured a cross-vaulted ceiling with a dome that was modified during the foundation of the monastery, while the second room retains what appears to be an original conical dome resting on pendentives. In particular, this architectural feature bears a resemblance to the dome of the so-called Trulio chapel at Olevano sul Tusciano, dated to the tenth century, as well as to the domes in early Islamic bathhouses such as the Quşayr ‘Amra baths in Jordan.⁵¹⁸ Moreover, the existence of five ventilation or heating pipes inserted into the pendentives reflects a sophisticated understanding of the circulation of air and heating, consistent with the bathing customs and habits of

⁵¹⁴ Giuliana Vitale, “Case ed abitanti della regio Nilensis in età ducale osservazioni” in *Palazzo Corigliano archaeologia e storia*, ed. Irene Bragantini and Patrizia Gastaldi (Naples: Istituto universitario orientale, 1985), 13–14.

⁵¹⁵ Squatriti 1998, 47.

⁵¹⁶ Squatriti 1998, 51.

⁵¹⁷ Squatriti 1998, 54.

⁵¹⁸ Arthur, *Naples: From Roman Town to City-State* (2002), 38.

Mediterranean.⁵¹⁹ Significantly, the bath complex may have been fed by a branch of the Augustan Aqueduct, located directly beneath Santa Chiara. If so, it constitutes rare and compelling evidence for the persistence and partial functionality of Roman water systems well into the early Middle Ages. This has, in turn, led us to rethink the narratives of infrastructural collapse, and supports more nuanced view of late antique urban resilience.⁵²⁰

The archaeological and architectural remains of the Neapolitan aqueduct and bath complex mirror a layered urban history in which Roman infrastructure was neither abruptly abandoned nor uniformly preserved. Instead, these systems were selectively maintained, repurposed, and integrated into new spatial and cultural frameworks. Their persistence challenges simplified narratives of decline and affirms the adaptive resilience of Naples within the urban trajectories of the early Middle Ages.⁵²¹

3.7. Christianization and Ecclesiastical Urbanism of the Duchy of Naples

The urban fabric of Naples during the period under scrutiny was decisively shaped by the growing presence and authority of the Christianity, and in relation to the religion, ecclesiastical organization, just as elsewhere in the Mediterranean.⁵²² The Christianization of the city was neither abrupt nor imposed solely from above, but rather emerged from a complex process involving relic translations, episcopal patronage, refugees such as North African priests fleeing to Naples after the Vandal

⁵¹⁹ Squatriti, *Water and Society in early medieval Italy, AD 400–1000* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 59.

⁵²⁰ Squatriti 1998, 60–62.

⁵²¹ Paolo Squatriti, *Water and Society in early medieval Italy, AD 400–1000* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 49–52.

⁵²² Valerie Ramseyer, *The Transformation of Religious Landscape, Medieval Southern Italy, 850–1150* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 2006, 7–24.

invasion, and ecclesiastical construction. The ecclesiastical development of Naples was anchored in the transformation of the Roman spaces into a sacred Christian landscape, a process that both reorganized and redefined earlier urban forms in turn.⁵²³

The sacred landscape of Naples was deeply influenced by cults of saints as anywhere else in the Mediterranean basin. Yet, Naples presents a contrast to many cities of Campania, as Naples had relatively few local martyrs in the early periods, as the protector saint of Naples, St. Januarius, was not Neapolitan but Beneventan. This absence might have been related to the cosmopolitan nature of Neapolitan structure, which possibly buffered it from the impact of the age of persecutions. In turn, Naples cultivated a strong sense of episcopal identity, with a profusion of bishop-saints who became the foci of local devotion such as Saint Januarius, who was the bishop of Benevento before becoming the patron saint of Naples.⁵²⁴ His cult eclipsed earlier local figures like Agrippinus, as the remains of Januarius were transferred from Puteoli. Early Christians enshrined his relics in the catacombs of Capodimonte, the hill encircling the historical center, which developed into a major pilgrimage site. As Willibald also testified when he disembarked on the harbour of Naples, he visited the shrines of Naples while on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land.⁵²⁵ Yet Januarius was not the only saint of the city over the course of the Early Middle Ages. Naples received relics from across the Mediterranean, such as St. Severinus' bones from Noricum (5th c.), St. Restituta from Carthage (5th c.) or St. Gregory from Armenia (8th c.). These transfers of relics to Neapolitan churches occurred either in

⁵²³ Marcel Simon, "Early Christianity and Pagan Thought: Confluences and Conflicts" in *Religious Studies*, 9, 1973, 385–390.

⁵²⁴ Domenico Ambrasi, "Il cristianesimo e la Chiesa napoletana dei primi secoli," *Storia di Napoli* 1 (1967): 701–709.

⁵²⁵ Nicola Cilento, "La Chiesa di Napoli nell'alto Medioevo" 1969, 534–537.

response to political or military insecurities or to elevate the importance of Naples in the ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁵²⁶ This movement of relics intensified during the Arab corsair activities by the ninth century, as coastal Lucullanum and other vulnerable sites were abandoned in favor of safer intramural locations such as the monasteries of San Severino and Sossino, which were founded to house the imported saints, and became powerful spiritual and economic centers.⁵²⁷

The fifth and sixth centuries witnessed an explosion of ecclesiastical construction, mainly driven by bishops such as Severinus, Vincent, or John I. Naples' first cathedral complex, Santa Restituta, the baptistery of San Giovanni in Fonte, and the episcopal palace became the monumental core of Christian identity and the heart of religious practices.⁵²⁸ By adapting the same fundamental dynamics of Roman building programs and patronage traditions, the ecclesiastical officers and later urban elites started to mark the land with religious buildings such as chapels, churches, and basilicas as well as burial places. Twin cathedrals, the construction of which was common practice in late antiquity, offering separate spaces and demonstrated Neapolitan familiarity with broader religious architectural trends from Ravenna to Aquileia.⁵²⁹ Naples' churches, such as San Giorgio Maggiore or San Lorenzo Maggiore, were often built upon Roman sites, as these reorganizations of the landscape signaled a symbolic Christian consecration of the land, creating sacred spaces, transforming the land itself by building the religious. Altering the nature of the sphere itself from mundane to ethereal would not have been perceived as a destruction of the classical urban amenities. Accordingly, it

⁵²⁶ Paul Arthur, *Naples: From Roman Town to City-State* (London School at Rome, 2002), 72.

⁵²⁷ Éric Thoreau-Girault, *Une société chrétienne: Naples, Amalfi, Gaète (VI^e–XII^e siècle)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2022), 201–203.

⁵²⁸ Thoreau-Girault 2022, 204–207.

⁵²⁹ Nicola Cilento, “La Chiesa di Napoli nell’alto Medioevo” (1969), 540–541.

should instead be interpreted as a new functionalization of the sphere in relation to the transformation both of the landscape and mindscape of the society.⁵³⁰ In light of this, the conversion of the Temple of Dioscuri into San Paolo Maggiore by Bishop Pomponius would not have been understood as a striking example, as Arthur suggests; instead, it would have been a natural consequence of the Christianization, process since this conversion did not create a rupture or demolish the temple, but simply altered its function and consecrated the sphere.⁵³¹

On the other hand, monastic complexes proliferated within and around Naples, from the sixth century onward, as these institutions played a key role, not only in religious life, but as previously mentioned also in urban life. For example, the monks of San Vincenzo were granted the right of access to the harbor as well as to own houses in the city for commercial activities.⁵³² Monasteries like San Martino, San Sebastiano or San Gregorio Armeno, generally founded by Neapolitan urban elite families who played the role of patrons, became hubs for intellectual activities, charitable services, and urban stability, as the monks present their services to the locals. Monasteries were not marginal to the city or civic life, their scriptoriums being related to both Rome and Constantinople. Because of this, their relations to the city, to the region, and beyond made them an essential part of urban life both in material and spiritual aspects.⁵³³ In fact, the monastery of San Gregorio Armeno maintained the cults of eastern saints such as Gregory of Armenia and San Severino e Sossio, and operated ships, managed trade, and developed

⁵³⁰ Angela Palmentieri, "Marmora Romana in Medieval Naples: Architectural Spolia from the Fourth to the Fifteenth Centuries AD," 131–136.

⁵³¹ Arthur, *Naples: From Roman Town to City-State* (2002), 69.

⁵³² Nicola Cilento, "La Chiesa di Napoli nell'alto Medioevo" 1969, 556–559.

⁵³³ See Jole Mazzoleni, *Il monastero Benedettino dei San Severino e Sossio, sede dell'Archivio di Napoli* (Società Napoletana di Storia Patria, 1964); eadem, *Le Pergamene del monastero di San Gregorio Armeno di Napoli* (Libreria Scientifica Editrice, 1973).

extensive agricultural activities. From this, one can conclude that the monasteries played a key role in the society, especially reflecting the role of Roman aristocracy and transformation of civic administration.⁵³⁴

There is another topic that one must mention, which is the presence of the *diaconia*, which had played a significant role in urban life. Along with the basilicas and monasteries, the rise of *diaconiae*, which stood for charitable institutions for food and alms distribution, marked a new phase in the Christian urban intervention. As it was established from the sixth century at latest, *diaconiae* multiplied at the dawn of first millennium. These institutions inherited the role of imperial *annona*, bolstering the Church's claim as the protector and guarantor of social peace and stability. The letters of Gregory I to the Neapolitan officers reveal his concern for ransom funds, clerical discipline, and the provisioning of the poor, indeed, functions increasingly undertaken by bishops and monastic officials.⁵³⁵ The *diaconiae* in Naples, such as those of San Gennaro and Santa Maria in Cosmedin, were often situated near the Via del Tribunali, suggesting their embeddedness in the heart of urban life, as they provided care and food to the poor as well as performing civic tasks in a transformed fashion from the ancient Roman customs for the elites, both in urban and ecclesiastical circles.⁵³⁶ On the other hand, *diaconiae* served liturgical and ritual functions, too, as they were often linked to churches and monasteries. This in turn led them to reinforce ecclesiastical control

⁵³⁴ Deborah Deliyannis, "Bishops, Cities and Historical Memorial Memory of Byzantine Italy," 592–594.

⁵³⁵ Nicola Cilento, "La Chiesa di Napoli nell'alto Medioevo" 1969, 562–564.

⁵³⁶ Arthur, *Naples: From Roman Town to City-State* (2002), 66–67.

over urban provisioning, becoming a key feature of ecclesiastical socio-political influence and power as well as its economic activities.⁵³⁷

Another point to discuss is the long religious tradition that Naples adopted in conjunction with its encounter with Christianity. Naples is one of the earliest settings in which Christianity began to have an impact, as according to tradition, Paul disembarked at the harbor of Puteoli and travelled through Campania on his way to Rome, passing by or near Naples.⁵³⁸ Despite the fact that the evidence of direct apostolic foundation remains insufficient both in literary and material sources, the proximity of Paul's movements and the location of Naples, and more importantly, the maritime traffic connected to Naples cultivated early exposure to and engagement with Christian teachings, especially in a North African form. Naples had close ties to the harbors of Puteoli and Misenum, in addition to having its own actively used harbor, turned Naples into a vital node not only for commerce but also for religious influences, integrating the community into broader Mediterranean currents, in economic, cultural and religious aspects alike.⁵³⁹ By the late second century, Christian communities were present in the Bay of Naples, as evidenced by the martyrdom accounts from nearby Puteoli, pointing to the fact that Naples had begun to nurture Christian groups, albeit without taking active part in the Age of Persecutions.⁵⁴⁰

The Christianization of Naples in Late Antiquity followed a gradual but visible trajectory, marked not by the presence of martyrs but by episcopal

⁵³⁷ Thoreau-Girault, *Une société chrétienne: Naples, Amalfi, Gaète (VI^e–XII^e siècle)* (Peeters, 2022), 306–310.

⁵³⁸ Acts 28: 13–14.

⁵³⁹ Domenico Ambrasi, “Il cristianesimo e la Chiesa napoletana dei primi secoli”, (Società Editrice Storia di Napoli, 1967), 701–709.

⁵⁴⁰ Fermude Gülsevinç, “Erken Ortaçağ'da Hristiyan Topluluklarının Mağduriyeti,” unpublished master's thesis (Hacettepe University: Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2018), 78–79.

nationalization and liturgical topography. The earliest known bishop, Agrippinus, remains elusive in terms of chronology, but by the late third or early fourth century, an episcopal presence was clearly established. As previously discussed, unlike many other urban settlements, Naples does not provide us with local martyrs, as the city built its sacred topography and identity around bishops and transformed relics.⁵⁴¹ In this sense, it is crucial to perceive the Neapolitan power of adopting Mediterranean customs and religious practices to construct its own religious identity, since Naples also absorbed not only liturgical but also artistic and architectural motifs from the Byzantines.⁵⁴²

Material culture provides compelling testimony for the Christianization and Byzantine artistic and architectural entanglement in Naples. Several catacombs, Sant'Eusebio, also known as Sant'Eufremo Vecchio, San Fortunato, San Gaudioso (modern Santa Maria della Sanità), San Severo, and especially San Gennaro, offer significant artistic evidence for tracking the diffusion and local adaptation of Byzantine art and iconographic patterns. These funerary spaces reveal how late antique and early medieval Naples shaped a visual vocabulary and referenced Byzantine and Mediterranean centers while maintaining distinctively local traits.⁵⁴³

The funerary rituals and architecture had a central role in Christianization; moreover, burial places were highly transformative of the land itself. The catacombs or cemeteries developed a certain sense of Christian identity, oratories, crypts and liturgies.⁵⁴⁴ These catacombs or cemeteries not only provided burial

⁵⁴¹ Gülsevinç 2018, 24–36.

⁵⁴² Thoreau-Girault, *Une société chrétienne: Naples, Amalfi, Gaète (VI^e–XII^e siècle)* (Peeters, 2022), 156–158.

⁵⁴³ Caroline Bruzelius and William Tronzo, *Medieval Naples: An Architectural & Urban History: 400–1400*, (New York: Italica, 2011), 10–14.

⁵⁴⁴ See, Philippe Pergola, *Le catacombe romane, storia e tipografia* (Rome: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1997); on the development of the relationship between *ad sanctos* and catacombs since

spaces but also became foci of collective memory and pilgrimage. In addition, their architectural layering such as *arcosolia* (arched recesses), wall-paintings, tombstones, and mosaics underscored the evolving liturgical and spatial significance of the sites.⁵⁴⁵ Among the examples in Naples, the catacombs of San Gennaro, strategically located on the crest of Capodimonte, played a central liturgical and commemorative role well into the early Middle Ages. The vast burial galleries are adorned with abbreviated inscriptions and bucolic motifs such as floral garlands, pastoral scenes, and geometric frames, reminding us of the visual traditions present in the Neonian Baptistery in Ravenna, the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, and more distantly, the mosaics of Great Palace of Constantinople.⁵⁴⁶ Each *arcosolium* in San Gennaro typically includes a painted portrait of an elite figure, either from an urban or ecclesiastical setting, whose stylization offers valuable comparative data to trace visual similarities between Neapolitan, Ravennatan or eastern Mediterranean Christian art.⁵⁴⁷ Figures such as *Bishop Quodvultdeus of Carthage* or *Family of the Ilaritas and Theotecnus*, interred with richly decorated mosaics, dated back to the fifth/sixth centuries, reflecting both their prestigious positions as well as the sanctity and ambitions of Neapolitan urban and ecclesiastical elites.⁵⁴⁸ In fact, these mosaics mirror the complex nature of connectivity and transformation, as they highlight the multilayered social identity,

the fourth century, see Marios Costambeys, "Burial Topography and the Power of the Church in Fifth and Sixth Century Rome," in *Papers of the British School of Rome*, vol. 69, Centenary Volume (British School of Rome, 2001), 180–186.

⁵⁴⁵ Roberto Meneghini, "La trasformazione dello spazio pubblica a Roma tra tarda antichità e alto medioevo," in MEFRA 115 (2003): 1056–1058.

⁵⁴⁶ Bruzelius and Tronzo, *Medieval Naples* (2011), 16

⁵⁴⁷ Bruzelius and Tronzo (2011), 17–18.

⁵⁴⁸ Bruzelius and Tronzo 2011, 18–19.

patterns of emulation, and Mediterranean influence which formed the urban elites' desire for spiritual and social visibility.⁵⁴⁹

The mosaic program of the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Fonte provides us with a further exemplification of this synthesis of indigenous craftsmanship and broader artistic influence. Its celestial dome, with a central Chi-Rho monogram surrounded by mythical and real birds including phoenixes, set against a starry dark blue background, powerfully recalls the celestial apse of Galla Placidia in Ravenna. Here, one must note that this iconographic and theological vision was rendered by a local Neapolitan workshop, not by any other artisans.⁵⁵⁰ The existence of such a refined work indicates a strong regional market for mosaic production, sustained by local demand and a patron class in civic adornment. The stylistic similarity with Byzantine motifs suggests that Neapolitan artisans were attuned to eastern Mediterranean customs and influence yet also developed their own style of representation. This interplay between external models and local elaboration illustrates the vibrancy of Naples during the process of transition from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages.⁵⁵¹

The Christianization process led us to rethink and reassess not only the style or hybrid identity or connectivity but also the structures of patronage networks that maintained the vitality of urban life and transformation.⁵⁵² The very nature of local endowment, particularly by urban and ecclesiastical elites, played a decisive role in shaping the Neapolitan sacred landscape. Foundation legends surrounding

⁵⁴⁹ Deborah Deliyannis, "Bishops, Cities and Historical Memorial Memory of Byzantine Italy", 593.

⁵⁵⁰ Thoreau-Girault, *Une société chrétienne: Naples, Amalfi, Gaète (VI^e–XII^e siècle)* (Peeters, 2022), 413–415.

⁵⁵¹ Thoreau-Girault 2022, 325–327.

⁵⁵² Marios Costambeys, *Power and Patronage in the Early Medieval Italy* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1–11.

churches such as the Santa Restituta and San Giovanni Maggiore reinforce this pattern. For instance, the Santa Restituta was constructed under imperial initiative, Constantine ordered the construction of Santa Restituta alongside his extensive building campaigns in Rome, Constantinople and Jerusalem.⁵⁵³ Similarly, the founding legacy of San Giovanni Maggiore is also attributed to Constantine. As the story goes, building this church was an act of imperial gratitude because allegedly Constantine's daughter Constantina was saved from a shipwreck. These stories, while rooted in hagiographical imagination, served to link Neapolitan churches to imperial legitimacy and patronage, embedding the city within the broader imperial *oikumene*.⁵⁵⁴

By the mid-tenth century, when the Byzantines founded the Catepanate of Italy, Naples had matured into a Christianized and independent duchy, embedded with a dense matrix of alliances, political and commercial activities, and shifting sovereignties. While the city retained a strong relationship with Byzantine *koine*, the gradually loosening administrative ties paved the way of acquiring independence for the ducal authority. Yet, this independence did not mark a real evolution in ducal power or Neapolitan administrative practices, since Naples had already functioned with a high degree of autonomy since the mid-eighth century. Naples increasingly interacted with Byzantines, Lombards, Arabs, and Carolingians in relation to their own interests.⁵⁵⁵ Such a high level of autonomy casts doubt on common depictions of historical trajectory of Naples as a linear process, starting as a Roman city, becoming Byzantine after the reconquest, semi-

⁵⁵³ Domenico Ambrasi, "Il cristianesimo e la Chiesa napoletana dei primi secoli," (Società Editrice Storia di Napoli, 1967), 703–704.

⁵⁵⁴ Nicola Cilento, "La Chiesa di Napoli nell'alto Medioevo" (1969), 571–573.

⁵⁵⁵ Marazzi, "Byzantine Naples and Gaeta" (2021), 418–420.

autonomous, then finally independent.⁵⁵⁶ Instead, Neapolitans carefully forged their administrative, military and economic relationships as an integral, autonomously functioning part of the Byzantine *koine*; even after they became independent, they still retained their ties to Byzantines, not just in nominal terms but in Tyrrhenian and more significantly in Mediterranean activities. The political flexibility that Naples showed did not materialize in the blink of an eye, Neapolitans were already flexible and fluid in administrative aspects, even when Constans II bestowed confirmation of the title *dux* on Sergius. But independence did not signal socio-political, economic or cultural detachment, either, as Naples remained part and parcel of Byzantine *koine* while developing local models of governance and elite identity. The ducal families of Neapolitan society combined military authority with ecclesiastical influence, revealing the city's new social hierarchy in which urban and ecclesiastical power combined their powers just like presenting an union of sword and sanctuary.⁵⁵⁷ Against the usual view, which portrays Naples as rather exceptional, it seems to me that Neapolitans experienced not exceptionality but connectivity, and therefore a vital urban life.⁵⁵⁸ As traced through its streets, walls, churches and monastic networks, baths as well as catacombs, but most importantly with the harbor, a broader picture is presented in this chapter: Urban life in early Medieval Naples and Mediterranean was not extinguished but transformed. Naples was not a passive frontier town but a dynamic coastal actor: resilient, interconnected, adaptive and interactive. Neapolitans' ability to reshape its civic institutions and to reorganize the landscape and mindscape while maintaining

⁵⁵⁶ Jean-Marie Martin, "L'Italie meridionale" in *Citta e campagne nei secoli altomedievali*, (ed.) Andrea Castagnetti, *Settimane CISAM*, 56, 2009.

⁵⁵⁷ Giuseppe Galasso, "L'eredità municipale del ducato di Napoli" in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome* (1995): 79–81.

⁵⁵⁸ Arthur, *Naples: From Roman Town to a City-State* (2002), 14.

economic relevance in times of imperial contraction reflect not a “Dark Age,” but a moment of luminous complexity. As Wickham implies, the early medieval city did not vanish but changed its clothes.⁵⁵⁹



⁵⁵⁹ Chris Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy: Central Power and Local Society 400–1000* (University of Michigan Press, 1981), 80–92.

CHAPTER IV: Between Tides and Currents: The Duchy of Amalfi (from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages)

Amalfi ascent from a late antique castrum to an autonomous duchy by the tenth century constitutes one of the most compelling case studies in the adaptive resilience of coastal settlements of the Byzantine *koine*. Nestled between steep slopes and the Tyrrhenian Sea, the Duchy of Amalfi did not emerge within a classical urban framework but developed in response to the very limitations that defined its environment, fragmented lands, restricted hinterland, and difficult access by land routes. This chapter traces the evolution of Amalfi as a maritime power within the Byzantine *koine*, examining how its geographical constraints were repurposed into strengths, how its political autonomy was negotiated through imperial affiliations, and how its community, composed of elites, artisans, tenants, women, and mariners, crafted a distinctive identity grounded in local agency and broader Mediterranean connectivity. Through a close reading of charters, chronicles and material culture, this chapter reconstructs the socio-political, economic and religious dynamics of Amalfi, foregrounding its interactions with Byzantines, Lombards, and Arab polities, and revealing a world that anything but peripheral.⁵⁶⁰

4.1. The Birth of a Maritime Power: The Duchy of Amalfi (800–965)

The historical trajectory of Amalfi from a Byzantine suzerainty to a prosperous and autonomous maritime duchy by the tenth century offers a compelling case study in the adaptive capacities of Byzantine coastal cities during

⁵⁶⁰ Armand O. Citarella, “Amalfi”, in *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia*, vol. 1-2, (ed.) Christopher Kleinhenz, Oxford: Routledge, 2004.

the early Middle Ages. Elusive imperial legacies, local ambitions and complex regional power dynamics present Amalfi as having evolved through a combination of commercial success, diplomatic fluidity and political resilience.⁵⁶¹ While modern visitors are struck by Amalfi's picturesque setting and enduring charm, the historical reconstruction of Amalfi remains a difficult task, compounded by the fragmented nature of the sources. Yet, when read collectively, through the testimonies of Latin, Greek, and Arab authors, the administrative documents of urban elites, and the multilayered nature of Amalfitan connectivity, the picture emerges of a port city deeply embedded in the Mediterranean. As Skinner rightly indicates, the history of Amalfi is the history of Mediterranean by its very nature, reflecting the constant engagement of Amalfi with a wide array of political actors and cultural influence.⁵⁶² Amalfi navigated not only in the waves and tides of the Mediterranean but also between Byzantine sovereignty, Lombard aggression, and Muslim presence, while enveloping internal mechanisms of rule and identity, echoing the dynamics of broader Byzantine *koine*.⁵⁶³ In fact, this glory of the city that won Amalfi fame throughout the Mediterranean coastline is written by William of Apulia, the writer of *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi* and a native Apulian, writes as follows:

Huc et Alexandri diversa feruntur ab urbe, regis et Antiochi. Haec freta
plurima transit, hic Arabes, Libi, Siculi noscuntur et Afri. Haec gens

⁵⁶¹ Barbara M. Kreutz, *ibid*, 1996, pp. 75-77

⁵⁶² Patricia Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800-1250*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 10

⁵⁶³ Luca Zavagno, "Insular Urbanism in Byzantium" in *The Routledge Handbook of the Byzantine City, From Justinian to Mehmet II, (ca.500-ca. 1500)*, ed. Nikolas Bakirtzis & Luca Zavagno, New York: Routledge, 2024, pp.172-192, p. 184

est totum prope nobilitata per orbem. Et mercanda ferens et amans
mercata referre.⁵⁶⁴

This definition of Amalfi could be paired with the tenth-century testimony of Ibn Hawkal, an Arab visitor, as he had nothing but praise for the city:

Then there is Amalfi, the most prosperous town in Lombardy, the most noble, the most illustrious in account of its conditions, the most affluent and opulent. The territory of Amalfi borders on that of Naples. This is a fair city, but less important than Amalfi.⁵⁶⁵

The first mention of Amalfi comes from the literary sources found in the letters of Gregory the Great by the end of the sixth century, as he writes about a sort of Byzantine stronghold that existed in Amalfi.⁵⁶⁶ This is not to deny that there are founding legacies on Amalfi which date to the beginning of the settlement in fourth century, yet because no historical or archaeological material has been unearthed that can corroborate these stories of the origins of Amalfi, they cannot be relied upon as authoritative, absent further evidence. no.⁵⁶⁷ Yet, one point that calls for attention is that even in these sorts of made-up tales, the first settlers of Amalfi are always merchants.⁵⁶⁸ Despite the stories over origins, connecting the first settlers as merchants who were hoping to reach Constantinople but were shipwrecked on the coast of Amalfi, we are confronted with the facts which were

⁵⁶⁴ From here and from different cities, including Alexandria and the city of King Antiochus, many people arrive. These [people] cross many seas; here are Arabs, Libyans, Sicilians, and Africans. This people is renowned almost throughout the whole world, both bringing goods to sell and loving to carry back the goods they have purchased (William of Apulia, *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi*, in MGH. SS. IX. ed. Pertz, 275).

⁵⁶⁵ Armand O. Citarella, "The Relations of Amalfi with the Arab World before the Crusades," *Speculum* 42, no. 2 (1967): 299.

⁵⁶⁶ Gregory the Great, *Epistulae*, V, XIV.

⁵⁶⁷ See Mihail Berza, "Amalfi preducale, 596–967," *Ephemeris Dacoromana* 8, 1938: 349–444.

⁵⁶⁸ Mihail Berza 1938, 352–356.

written by Gregory to indicate that Amalfi was a settlement significant enough to warrant a diocese by the end of sixth century.⁵⁶⁹ As Kreutz argues on:

Most of the ninth century evidence has already been noted, including the fact that in the Roman period, there was no Amalfi, indeed no town at all along the south coast of the Amalfitan peninsula. (...) We find the first indication of a town; Gregory the Great deplores the bishop of Amalfi's propensity to stay beyond his castrum, neglecting his duties.⁵⁷⁰

Citarella also indicates that the castrum of Amalfi is mentioned by George of Cyprus, a Byzantine geographer, in one of his works dated to the beginning of seventh century, as he interprets the aforementioned castrum as a garrison, a base for the Byzantine fleet, which was an active presence in the Tyrrhenian Sea at the beginning of seventh century.⁵⁷¹ From Late Antiquity into the early Middle Ages, Amalfi emerged as part and parcel of the Byzantine sphere, as the town was a part of the Duchy of Naples during the first decades of its existence.⁵⁷² By the end of eighth century, Amalfi was besieged by Arechis II of Benevento; relief came from Neapolitan forces, and when Nikephoros Phocas mobilized the imperial fleet in the Tyrrhenian Sea, both Naples and Amalfi contributed ships to the Byzantine expedition at the beginning of ninth century.⁵⁷³ In other words, Amalfi was tied to the Byzantine administration at the beginning of its historical trajectory.

⁵⁶⁹ Armand O. Citarella, "Amalfi," in *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia*, vol. 1–2, ed. Christopher Kleinhenz (Routledge, 2004), p. 214

⁵⁷⁰ Barbara M. Kreutz 1996, 80.

⁵⁷¹ Armand O. Citarella, "Amalfi" (2004), p. 214

⁵⁷² Mario del Treppo & Alfonso Leone, *Amalfi medioevale* (Naples: Giannini, 1977), 34–35.

⁵⁷³ Giuseppe Cassandro 1969, 145–153.

Indeed, one can safely conclude that the administrative trajectory of Amalfi is divided into several phases, but two main turning points emerge clearly within the time frame of my study: The first one begins with the initial mention of Gregory I in 596. The second starts in 839, when the Amalfitans become independent from the Duchy of Naples, and consequently from the Byzantines.⁵⁷⁴ The second phase includes different ruling families between 839 and 958, and from then until 1073, which extends beyond scope of this thesis, but presents third turning point in Amalfitan history.

By the mid-ninth century, Amalfi's prosperity and increased power made it effectively independent of the Duchy of Naples. But the rise of Amalfi also drew the attention of the Lombards, as Sicard of Benevento captured and sacked Amalfi in 836, which might have been seen as a catastrophic event for the Amalfitans. Yet fate turned quickly in their favor as Sicard was assassinated in 839, in consequence of which Amalfitans rebelled and managed to set part of Salerno on fire.⁵⁷⁵ The year of 839 marked a turning point in history for the Amalfitans, as they also proclaimed a local leader, a certain Pietro who bore the title of *comes* (count) as their governor. Even though *De administrando Imperio* refers to Amalfi as one of the Byzantine duchies in Byzantine Italy, from 839 onwards, Amalfi presents us with a de facto independent polity.⁵⁷⁶ The Duchy of Amalfi expanded by the late ninth century, and its domain stretched from the Sorrentine peninsula to the west to the Principality of Salerno to the east, and from the Lattari Mountains to the sea,

⁵⁷⁴ Russo-Mailler 1988, 384–386.

⁵⁷⁵ Francesco Forcellini, "L'Impresa di Sicardo contra Amalfi e l'emancipazione politica di questo città del ducato di Napoli" in *Archivio Storico per Province Napoletane* 24 (1945): 13–28.

⁵⁷⁶ Matteo Camera, *Memorie storico-diplomatiche dell'antica città e ducato di Amalfi* (Salerno, 1876).

including the island of Capri.⁵⁷⁷ In this light, the Duchy of Amalfi had control over most of the *Costiera Amalfitana*, including towns such as Positano and Minori.

The Amalfitan administrative system had evolved from a sort of republican sense, as during the first two decades of Amalfi's independence, its rulers were elected annually, but after 859, the governance of the duchy shifted to the succession.⁵⁷⁸ Powerful leaders began to arrange to have their sons put into positions of power: for instance, Manso I made his son Mastalus I co-ruler, as a result of which both bore the Byzantine title *patrikios*. Furthermore, they acknowledged the Byzantine emperor and his authority while they cemented their power at the beginning of tenth century.⁵⁷⁹ Just before the foundation of the Catepanate of Italy, Sergius I of Amalfi deposed Mastalus II and had himself raised to the title of *dux* by the urban elites in 958. This year also became a turning point in Amalfitan history as the hereditary ducal family started to rule until the Norman conquest of Amalfi.⁵⁸⁰ Yet, one has to mention that this hereditary system was not yet fully developed. Although descent from a comital ancestor might have helped a candidate, a successful coup d'état could also have destroyed the hereditary line. The families who ruled Amalfi from 839 to 965 (and beyond till 1073) show that hereditary governance also led Amalfitans to adopt a Byzantine practice, assigning a co-ruler to ensure smooth succession.⁵⁸¹ This Byzantine imprint is seen not only in the Amalfitans' succession, but also in the fact that the dukes did not generally

⁵⁷⁷ Adolf Hofmeister, "Zur Geschichte Amalfis in der byzantinischen Zeit," *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher* 1 (1920): 94–127.

⁵⁷⁸ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800–1250* (2013), 112–114.

⁵⁷⁹ Schwartz, *Amalfi del medioevo* (Centro di Cultura e Storica Amalfitana, 1985), 20–24 (originally published as *Amalfi im frühen Mittelalter* (9.–11. Jahrhundert), Tübingen: Max Niermayer Verlagen, 1978).

⁵⁸⁰ *Consuetudines Civitatis Amalfie*, ed. Alfonso Leone & Alessandro Piccirillo (Cava del Tirreni: Di Mauro Editore, 1970).

⁵⁸¹ Matteo Camera 1876, 44–48.

issue edicts by themselves. On the contrary, Byzantine law prevailed, along with pre-existing rules and customs. When edicts were issued they seemed to be issued informally during the period under scrutiny.⁵⁸² In fact, communication of power related to the act of writing a transaction in Amalfi, which required the writer to have good knowledge of Byzantine honorifics, as many Amalfitan officers held these titles to emphasize the power and prestige they had in the social class, but there is something striking in this practice because Amalfitans dated their documents with the regnal year of the Amalfitan ruler who bore the imperial honorific.⁵⁸³

As stated previously, the political balance between different players in Campania during the ninth and tenth centuries can be described as unstable. Before 839, while Amalfi was still under Neapolitan authority, the city was addressed in *Pactum Sicardi* as the following:

You, John (the Bishop of Naples) elect of the holy Neapolitan Church and to Andrea, (*magister militum*) and to your subject people of the Neapolitan duchy, Sorrento, Amalfi and the other fortified places of localities which are under your rule.⁵⁸⁴

This pact between Naples and Benevento also indicates that a part of Amalfitans were forced to leave their city and settle down in Salerno (*de Amalfinis, qualiter peragantur*). This established a forced but strong relation between Amalfitans and Salernitans, especially when Manso II, the duke of Amalfi, would

⁵⁸² Skinner 2013, 112.

⁵⁸³ *Chronicon Amalfitanum*, 13, ed. Ulrich Schwarz.

⁵⁸⁴ *Leges*, IV, MGH, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz (Hannover, 1868). See, Geoffrey V. B. West, "Communities and pacts in early medieval Italy. Jurisdiction, regulatory, authority and dispute avoidance," *EME* 18 (2010): 367–93.

have claimed authority over the larger territory by the end of tenth century, and taken advantage of these relationships.⁵⁸⁵ Yet, as mentioned before, the Pact did not last long, and Amalfi had to navigate its own routes in the Campanian arena, against teams composed of stronger rivals than Amalfi.

So, how did Amalfi manage to elevate its status to that of a *de facto* duchy and also increase its prosperity and wealth, especially during one of the most turbulent periods in the region? Obviously, the Amalfitan success had been perceived as exceptional for decades or became an element of comparison, to praise Venetian success,⁵⁸⁶ but in the mid-twentieth century, Citarella changed the writing of Amalfitan history by calling for attention to the reasons behind the Amalfitan rise as a maritime power, as Amalfi elevated its status and power in its early relations with the Muslim world.⁵⁸⁷

In fact, the Amalfitan ships had been frequently used for different missions and occasions, as discussed in Chapter I, as in the transfer of Saint Bartholomew's relics in the name of Benevento, or the saving of Prince Siconolf, son of Prince Sico, from the prison in Taranto.⁵⁸⁸ Amalfitans were famous as active participants in joint operations. For example, they participated in the operation to drive the Arabs off the island of Ponza when they joined the combined forces of Naples and Gaeta in the mid-ninth century.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁵ *Leges*, Folio, IV, MGH, ed. Pertz, Hannover, 1868. Amalfitan clause is number 44.

⁵⁸⁶ See Charles R. Beazley, *The Dawn of Modern Geography* (London, 1897).

⁵⁸⁷ Armand O. Citarella, "Patterns in Medieval Trade: The Commerce of Amalfi before the Crusades" in *The Journal of Economic History* 28, no. 4 (1968): 531–555.

⁵⁸⁸ *Chronicon Salernitum*, 5, 52, ed. U. Wsterbergh, (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1956).

⁵⁸⁹ Barbara M. Kreutz, *Before the Normans: Southern Italy in the Ninth and Tenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 82.

In spite of its fame, almost everything we know about the earliest phases of Amalfitan history, which corresponds to the period under scrutiny, stems from two primary sources: *Chronicon Amalfitanum* and a tenth-century chronicle written in Salerno. In this sense, one may raise concern about the reliability of the *Chronicon Amalfitanum*. While this compilation of the historical sources of Amalfi is generally accepted as a primary source, the degree of anachronism of the source is also acknowledged by scholars such as Skinner, Kreutz and Schwartz. For instance, the *Chronicon Amalfitanum* calls the first rulers of Amalfi *duces*, which is partially wrong, given the fact that Amalfi was governed by the Neapolitan dukes in the first centuries of its emergence.⁵⁹⁰ Schwarz presents a comparison between two sources by focusing on the rulers and their titles, and suggests on this basis that while the Salernitan chronicler keeps his focus on the *comites*, the Amalfitan chronicler focuses on the *praefecti*.⁵⁹¹

Yet, we are confronted with the fact these rulers, no matter what title they bore, obtained a certain level of power so long as the civil war between Lombard principalities was the backdrop.⁵⁹² Not only did they come to power during turbulent time, they were also drawn by the changing tides, as most of the Amalfitan rulers forged alliances with the Lombards by marriage. For example, the son of Marinus of Amalfi, the brother-in-law of Pando of Capua was captured by Ademarius of Salerno, then handed over to Sergius, the duke of Naples in 858.⁵⁹³ In the light of complex relationships and changing nature of the power balance

⁵⁹⁰ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800-1250*, (Oxford University Press, 2013),

⁵⁹¹ Barbara M. Kreutz, *ibid*, 80

⁵⁹² Mihail Berza, "Amalfi preducale, 596–967," *Ephemeria Dacoromana* 8 (1938): 352.

⁵⁹³ Ulrich Schwarz, *Amalfi del medioevo* (1985), 15–17.

between political entities, this led the Amalfitans to swing between alliances within and outside the region.

Unfortunately, the pre-ducual period is obscure in the sources, both literary and material, but we can trace a sort of dynastic style and elevation in imperial honorifics to emphasize the level of power that Amalfi had, as Skinner indicates:

Dynastic style of rule common in contemporary states both of southern Italy and further afield. This appears to have been successful, if the fact that all the documents, without exception, use the rulers (and not, as the Duchy of Naples did, the Byzantine emperors) as a dating reference. From these clauses, we see an evolution in titles from prefect (Mauro in 860), Pulcharius in 875) to magnificent prefect (Sergius II in 883) to the elevation of Manso I Fusilis to the title of imperial *spatharocandidatus* in 907.⁵⁹⁴

This in turn led Amalfitans to enjoy de facto independency, yet mirroring the authority stems from imperial power, which was still the source of legitimacy amongst the political entities, urban and ecclesiastical elites of Southern Italy.⁵⁹⁵ But constructing an autonomous political entity in Amalfi was not only related to the usage of imperial honorifics, as Amalfi also had to maintain the balance between different powers as well, sometimes taking part in joint expeditions even if the expedition was planned against Amalfitan interests. For instance, Amalfi had to lend support to Salerno in resisting Arab raids on the Tyrrhenian coastline. This had to be a hard decision to make, since Amalfi was famous, or infamous at the

⁵⁹⁴ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800-1250* (2013), 117.

⁵⁹⁵ Matteo Camera, *Memorie storico e diplomatiche dell'antica città il ducato di Amalfi*, Salerno, 1876, 34–39.

time for maintaining good relationships with the Arabs.⁵⁹⁶ At the end of ninth century, Byzantines had gradually regained power and reinforced imperial authority in the regions of Southern Italy, and consequently, the increased imperial influence impacted the rulers of Amalfi, as Sergius II was granted with the title of *magnificus* in 887.⁵⁹⁷

Amalfitans certainly began to benefit from imperial support, which provided them with the opportunities to increase their power and influence, not only in Tyrrhenian but also in the wider Mediterranean. On the other hand, receiving a new imperial title from the Byzantines enabled Sergius II to increase his familial power, as his son and grandson inherited his title.⁵⁹⁸ Unfortunately for historians who wish to learn more about these years of Amalfi and its ruling family, and thereby reconstruct the only way to restore their dignity, the narrative has remained shrouded in mystery.⁵⁹⁹ In this sense, one can make a comparison between two political entities that once belonged to the Duchy of Naples, and therefore subsidiary to Byzantine authority, as Amalfi and Gaeta followed more or less same the historical trajectory in terms of gaining their own autonomies. In contrast to Amalfi, Gaeta kept better records on the earlier years of its polity and on its socio-political and religious activities.⁶⁰⁰ However, the records of Amalfi tell us that there was a sort of push-and-pull dynamic between Amalfitans and Byzantines, as neither Mastalus nor his son Leo inherit the title of *magnificus* when they came into power around 920. But within two years, both of them were granted with the new imperial

⁵⁹⁶ Barbara M. Kreutz, *Before the Normans: Southern Italy in the Ninth and Tenth Century* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991, 1996), 64–66.

⁵⁹⁷ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800–1250* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 118.

⁵⁹⁸ Graham Anthony Loud, “Southern Italy and the eastern and western empires, c. 900–1050” in *Journal of Medieval History* 38 (2012): 8–12.

⁵⁹⁹ *Codice Diplomatico Amalfitano*, I, no. 2–4, ed. Riccardo Filangieri di Candida Gonzaga (Naples: Silvio Morano, 1917).

⁶⁰⁰ Skinner, *Family Power in Southern Italy* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

titles, as Mastalus became a *patricius* and Leo started to bear the title of *protospatharius*.⁶⁰¹ Mastalus was assassinated, yet this did not imply a rejection to the construction of hereditary power in the Duchy of Amalfi. Rather, his murder illustrates the hidden conflict between the Amalfitan urban elites, as can be found in many early Medieval cities.⁶⁰²

As one might expect, the urban elites of the Duchy of Amalfi is better documented than the members of lower classes, as they occupied the main positions in administration, economy or religious life, which were the main pillars of pre-industrial society. The Amalfitan families, or as Del Treppo calls them, *nobiltà di lunga memoria*,⁶⁰³ traced their bloodlines back at least twelve or thirteen generations, generally starting with an ancestor who bore the imperial titles and they frequently had surnames to highlight their family power.⁶⁰⁴ The other groups, less frequent in the documents, was composed of tenants or less important landowners such as a certain Sergius, the son of Leo, who donated to the San Michele Arcangelo di Pogerola, are recorded as having exhibited distinctive features, as in the case of the son of Leo, who had a workshop near to the harbour.⁶⁰⁵

When it comes to their families, at least thirty of them can be separated out from the documents as the members of urban elite by the tenth century. They emphasized their illustrious ancestors to distinguish themselves from one another, as there were many Constantines and Johns.⁶⁰⁶ It is not surprising to find that these

⁶⁰¹ *Codice Diplomatico Amalfitano*, I, no. 2–4.

⁶⁰² Skinner 2013, 119–120.

⁶⁰³ Mario Del Treppo, “Ancora su Amalfi medievale” in *Città e territorio nell’Italia del medioevo, Studi in onore di Gabriella Rossetti*, ed. Giorgio Chittolini, Giovanna Patti Balbi, and Giovanni Vitolo (Liguori Editore, 2007), 201–242, 210–211

⁶⁰⁴ Del Treppo 2007,

⁶⁰⁵ Robert P. Bergman, “Byzantine Influence and Private Patronage in a Newly Discovered Medieval Church in Amalfi: S. Michele Arcangelo di Pogerola” in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 30, 1992, 121–145, 132.

⁶⁰⁶ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800–1250* (2013), 122–126.

families connecting each other, exchanging properties, creating alliances by marriage, engaging in partnered trade activities, and being witnesses for each other.⁶⁰⁷ The family of Count Mauro Monteincollo, for example, became one of the most successful families among Amalfitan urban elites. This family has been extensively studied, as its members became patrons of the Church of San Paolo Fuori le Mura in Rome, of the famous doors of the Duomo di Amalfi, and of the bronze doors of Montecassino.⁶⁰⁸ This family not only made donations to the religious buildings but they also commissioned an ivory casket, now in the abbey of Farfa, and Count Mauro listed his six sons and asked God's mercy upon them.⁶⁰⁹

In this sense, Amalfi had emerged not only as a de facto independent duchy but as a maritime power whose socio-political and economic foundations were shaped by a remarkable synthesis of Byzantine legitimacy, local dynastic strategies, and commercial cosmopolitanism by the tenth century.⁶¹⁰ The persistence of imperial honorifics, the evolving structures of co-rulership originated from Byzantine administrative customs, and the distinctive naming practices of elite families reveal a community in constant negotiation with both transformation and connection. Far from being a provincial outpost, Amalfi actively cultivated ties with the Byzantines, Lombards and Arabs.⁶¹¹ The urban elite leveraged both hereditary claims and urban support, indicating a political model that balanced autocracy with urban engagement, however limited. Despite the gloomy picture that the early sources draw, Amalfi stands as a testament to the resilience,

⁶⁰⁷ Skinner 2013, 129.

⁶⁰⁸ Patricia Skinner, "Commercio internazionale e politica locale nell'Amalfi medievale: le porte di bronzo e i loro donatori nel secolo XI" *Rassegna del Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana* (2006): 65–78.

⁶⁰⁹ Marios Costambeys, *Power and Patronage in the Early Medieval Italy* (2007), 78–80.

⁶¹⁰ Del Treppo & Alfonso Leone, *Amalfi medioevale*, Naples: Giannini, 1977, 101–104.

⁶¹¹ Del Treppo & Leone 1977, 101–104.

adaptation, quick ability to transform itself as the need arose, and ingenuity of a coastal settlement in Byzantine Italy.⁶¹² Indeed, the early centuries of Amalfi is not a mere tale of exceptionality, but rather a sort of strategic administration, interconnection, and the development of a maritime power at the crossroads of the Byzantines, the Caliphate, the Lombards, and then the Carolingians.⁶¹³

By the mid-tenth century, Amalfi had matured into a de facto independent duchy, its urban elite securing political continuity through hereditary strategies, its ruling families adopting Byzantine titles and administrative models to legitimize their power, and its maritime activities expanding across a wide swath of the Mediterranean. Although contemporary sources are sparse and often retrospective in tone, they reveal a polity embedded in imperial, local, and interregional dynamics, a duchy balancing autonomy with recognition, tradition with pragmatism. The Amalfitan practice of co-rulership, its use of imperial honorifics in public documents, and its naming conventions all point to a political culture shaped as much by Byzantine paradigms by local adaptations. While some elements, such as the assassination of Mastalus or the volatile alliances with Lombard rulers, highlight internal tensions, these episodes do not undermine the broader trajectory of Amalfi as a durable and strategically agile power. Rather than an anomaly, Amalfi emerges as a paradigmatic example of how small-scale polities negotiated their place within a fragmented but interconnected Byzantine world. Its resilience, maritime enterprise, and ability to project influence beyond its mountainous borders underscore the sophistication of early medieval Amalfi, not

⁶¹² Kreutz, *Before the Normans: Southern Italy in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (1996), 76.

⁶¹³ Barbara M. Kreutz, *ibid*, 1996, 77-78.

simply as a commercial hub, but as a political and cultural actor whose history was written between tides, titles, and tribute.

4.2. Between Slope and Sea: The Urban Fabric and Territorial Limits of Early Medieval Amalfi

The urban form of early medieval Amalfi developed not from classical foundations but as a direct response to its challenging natural environment. Unlike many settlements in southern Italy, Amalfi had no Roman street plan, no inherited forum, and no monumental infrastructure; instead, its spatial organization was determined by the steep contours of the Lattari Mountains and the narrow strip of coastal land between slope and sea. In the absence of a Roman urban legacy, the town emerged as a fragmented, yet resilient fabric shaped by topographical constraint and maritime necessity.⁶¹⁴ Early references to Amalfi, such as those in the letters of Gregory the Great, confirm both the settlement's marginal conditions and its nascent ecclesiastical significance. These characteristics shaped not only its defensive posture, but also the distinctive trajectory of the urban development, compact, vertically stratified, and closely tied to access points along the coast. To understand how this precarious geography became the foundation of a dynamic urban centre, one must explore the interplay between spatial constraint, economic resourcefulness, and religious infrastructure in shaping the urban landscape of Amalfi.⁶¹⁵

Nestled between the precipitous cliffs of the Lattari Mountains and the ever-shifting expanse of the Tyrrhenian Sea, early Medieval Amalfi did not emerge as a

⁶¹⁴ See Patricia Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800-1250*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

⁶¹⁵ See Matteo Camera, *Memorie storico e diplomatiche dell'antica città il ducato di Amalfi*, Salerno, 1876.

planned settlement, but as an organically formed fabric on the slopes, shaped by geography. As Amalfi had neither a Greek nor a Roman past, the ancient city plan and classical amenities did not find a place for themselves in Amalfi, but instead in Minori, where a Roman villa (Villa Romana di Minori) is well-preserved. The urban fabric of Amalfi developed along steep slopes and narrow terraces, its territorial reach while reinforcing its distinct maritime character.⁶¹⁶ Unlike the many contemporary settlements, Amalfi had a fragmented, constrained land where Amalfitans strategically adapted to its dual identity as a natural fortress and more crucially a port. Yet, despite the spatial limitations, the city bore the hallmarks of a dynamic urban centre, developing urban infrastructure, and an episcopal see by the sixth century.⁶¹⁷

As it has been said, the first mention of Amalfi as a settlement is related to the letter of Gregory the Great as he ordered the subdeacon Anthemius to bring the errant bishop of Amalfi, Pimenius to the heel as Pimenius preferred to wander around, rather than stay in his place. Gargano interprets this letter in a positive way and argues that the letter indicates a settled community with their wandering bishop. Yet, the critical tone of the letter leads us to rethink this argument as the bishop in question may have been wandering around due to the lack of population, choosing to live elsewhere but not in castrum of Amalfi due to the harsh conditions of the cut-off settlement by the end of the sixth century.⁶¹⁸

Even today, the impressions that one gets from visiting Amalfi underscore the geographical isolation and natural barriers that shaped Amalfi's landscape.

⁶¹⁶ Barbara M. Kreutz, "The Ecology of maritime success: the puzzling case of Amalfi" in *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 3:1, 1998, 101-113, 101.

⁶¹⁷ Barbara M. Kreutz, *ibid*, 102.

⁶¹⁸ Gregory the Great, *Epistulae*,

Approaching Amalfi by boat offers the most scenic route that allows travellers to trace the jagged contour of *Costiera Amalfitana*, from the Sorrentine Peninsula to Salerno, including Positano, Amalfi, Atrani, Minori, Maiori, Cetera and Salerno; and before arriving at the small harbour nestled beneath steep cliffs, one can enjoy the clear view of the slopes of Amalfi. By land, the journey is far more arduous as the travelers must take the twisting, narrow roads of the Lattari Mountains, winding along slopes that descend dramatically to the sea. The Strada Stratale 163 (Amalfitana) clings to the mountain's edge, often reduced to a single lane by sharp turns and cliffside constrictions.⁶¹⁹ The inland route, winding over the passes from Agerola or Scala, reveals Amalfi only at the very last moment, even though Amalfi conceals itself in a sort of natural fortress of limestone and verticality. The enduring difficulty in accessing Amalfi highlights how its geography bestowed both protection and isolation, features that would have been significantly more forbidding back in the early Middle Ages.⁶²⁰ In this light, one might find Pimenius justified in wandering around instead of abiding in the *castrum* of Amalfi.⁶²¹ Yet, what one can conclude is that the geography of Amalfi must have shaped not only Amalfitan defense, but also its patterns of communication, connection, trade, and identity within the broader Byzantine *koine*.

Much like Caesar's celebrated description of Gaul, "*Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres*,"⁶²² the landscape of Amalfi, too, can be conceptualized in three distinct topographical zones: the narrow river valleys, the steep mountainous ridges, and the elevated limestone plateau. This tripartite division not only defined

⁶¹⁹ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800–1250* (2013), 20.

⁶²⁰ Giuseppe Gargano, *La città davanti al mare: Aree urbane e storie sommerse di Amalfi nel Medioevo* (Amalfi: Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana, 1992), 4–7.

⁶²¹ Gregory the Great, *Epistulae*,

⁶²² Giuseppe Gargano, "La città davanti al mare" (1992), 11–16.

the geomorphological identity of Amalfi, but also profoundly shaped its urban development and patterns of settlement during the period under scrutiny.⁶²³ Furthermore, the sea itself became an important natural resource for the Amalfitan community, providing not only the liquid sphere of communication between the mainland and harbours as well as the *Costiera Amalfitana* and the island of Capri which was under Amalfitan authority, but also contributing fish and shellfish to the Amalfitans' dietary selections.⁶²⁴

Gargano traces the urban development of particular residential and commercial areas as he highlights that these sites were crossing the central spine of the river Canneto which is canalized in order to keep its flow under control.⁶²⁵ Hence, the urban settlement of Amalfi had a triangular shape, reminiscent of the general pattern of coastal settlements, as the available land was limited by the mountains.⁶²⁶ The geomorphology shaped the Amalfitan settlement pattern as the houses developed a sort of multi-storey buildings by the tenth century, and the districts became visible and identified within the urban landscape. On the other hand, references to the gates are also found in the documents, yet neither the gates nor the walls which were in need to encircle these gates exist today.⁶²⁷

Another issue that arises from the documents is the fact that the Amalfitans valued having flat lands or having access to flat lands as well as to the coastline, more than to rocky areas. The prices for flat lands were higher than for the others, and the dukes had their palace on the *plano*, much of the open space described as

⁶²³ Skinner 2013, 22.

⁶²⁴ Jean-Marie Martin, "Capri, isola del ducato di Amalfi (X–XIII secolo) in *Medioevo, Mezzogiorno, Mediterraneo, Studi in onore di Mario Del Treppo*, ed. Gabriella Rossetti & Giovanni Vitolo (Napoli: Liguori Editore, 2000), 1985–1986.

⁶²⁵ Gargano 1992, 65–69.

⁶²⁶ Gargano 1992, 65–66.

⁶²⁷ Gargano 1992, 66.

empty.⁶²⁸ Unfortunately, there is scant evidence to show the exact value of the houses and of the land during the period under scrutiny, but there is better documentation for the subsequent centuries. For instance, Adelmund, son of Leo, divided his house in Atrani into three; the ground, first, and second floors, which show the existence of multi-storey buildings by the mid-eleventh century.⁶²⁹ Another transaction shows that a certain John sold his garden to the abbot of SS Ciricus and Iulicte, and he received 3 *tari* in return, by the end of twelfth century.⁶³⁰ Indeed, Amalfi presents us with a fragmented landscape, shaped by the difficulties which led us to remember once again the errant bishop Pimenius. Neither the city itself was, nor the surrounding area was welcoming or offered many opportunities.⁶³¹ The general preference of Amalfitans to settle down on the southern coast of the *Costiera Amalfitana* indicates that having access to the sea was the major factor that shaped the urban settlement and transactions. Unlike Naples, where Neapolitans could have easier access to markets and could totally rely on agriculture and pastoral activities across its surrounding hinterland, Amalfi lacked such a hinterland that could pave the way of developing alternative strategies for provisioning and commerce.⁶³² This brings us to the simple but effective question: Who were the Amalfitans?

In this sense, the built environment of Amalfi was neither monumental nor uniform but instead reflected a highly adaptive engagement with its dramatic topography. Its triangular layout, canalised river spine, preference for that and accessible land, and multi-storey construction practices all reveal how Amalfitans

⁶²⁸ *Codice Diplomatico Amalfitano (CDA)* I, 12–14.

⁶²⁹ *CDA*, I, 13.

⁶³⁰ *CDA*, I, 208.

⁶³¹ Gargano 1992, 72–75.

⁶³² Barbara M. Kreutz, “The Ecology of maritime success: the puzzling case of Amalfi”, 1998, 107.

negotiated their limited space with ingenuity and pragmatism. The spatial limitations of the city, compounded by the absence of a productive hinterland, pushed Amalfitans toward maritime strategies for sustenance, trade, and identity formation. These constraints did not hinder urban development but rather prompted a distinctive mode of settlement that prioritised access to the sea and flexibility in land use. Viewed through the lens of early medieval connectivity, Amalfi's urban form exemplifies the ways in which local communities redefined urbanity in the Byzantine world, carving out new civic logics within the broader structures of the Byzantine *koine*. The result was a maritime city forged not on the flat plains of antiquity, but on the steep threshold between mountain and sea.⁶³³

4.3. “Mariners, Merchants, and Magistrates (?)”: The Amalfitan Community

Behind Amalfi's reputation as a city of seafarers and merchant lies a more complex and stratified community that demands closer scrutiny. The prevailing historiography often focuses on Amalfi's maritime prowess, yet this image eclipses the lived realities of those who remained on land, those who laboured, negotiated property, cultivated narrow terraces, or served in households across the duchy. In a town shaped as much by topography as by trade, the composition and organisation of society reveal how geography, economic necessity, and imperial affiliation converged to produce a layered urban fabric. Exploring the roles of lower-class workers, landowners, slaves, tenants, and urban elites alike is essential to

⁶³³ See Barbara M. Kreutz, *Before the Normans: Southern Italy in the Ninth and Tenth Century*, 1996.

understanding how Amalfitan identity and authority were constructed within and beyond the Byzantine *koine*.⁶³⁴

The Amalfitans have been perceived as great seafarers and successful merchants, but what about the Amalfitans in the Duchy? What about people who did not leave the city? To cast light on these questions, it is crucial to look for the urban community of Amalfi. The urban community of Amalfi developed alongside the coastal strip with lesser cultivable land, and so these geomorphological limitations significantly shaped the organization and economic orientation of the Amalfitans.⁶³⁵ Indeed, like many other pre-industrial societies, most of the Amalfitan community did not enjoy high status in the social ladder, and von Falkenhausen illustrates that the presence of the lower-class members among them shows that the lower class made up the backbone of the labor force and therefore of the medieval economy.⁶³⁶

It is well known that Amalfitans were famous seafarers and merchants as well as skilled diplomats, but what about the rest of the community? For instance, was their role only confined to making profit from the slave economy or did enslaved people also take active part in Amalfitan society? The evidence for household slaves is spectacularly rare, as the documentation generally focused on transactions of property, not of humans as a part of household.⁶³⁷ The direct word of *serva* is recorded for a certain Raia, who sold land in Minori by the end of the

⁶³⁴ See Mario del Treppo, "Ancora su Amalfi medievale" in *Citta territorie nell'Italia del medioevo*, Studi in onore di Gabriella Rossetti, (ed.) Giovanni Vitolo & Giovanna Patti Balbi & Giorgio Chittolini, Liguori, 201-242.

⁶³⁵ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800–1250* (2013), 28.

⁶³⁶ Von Falkenhausen, "Aspetti storico-economici dell'età di Roberti il Guiscardo" in *Roberto il Guiscardo e il suo tempo: Atti delle prime giornate normanna-sveve, Bari, 28–29 maggio* (Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 1992), 130–131.

⁶³⁷ Skinner, "The light of my eyes": medieval motherhood in the Mediterranean," *Women's History Review* 6, no. 3 (1997): 391–410.

ninth century.⁶³⁸ Yet, the line between free and unfree was blurred in pre-industrial societies. For example, being tied to the land did not correspond to be completely deprived of freedom, as poor or landless citizens could offer their labor to the landholder in exchange for accommodation and food.⁶³⁹ However, similar to the Neapolitan cases, the Amalfitan poor emerge as a mostly un-differentiated mass of people in the documents, often serving as the symbols to show the largesse of members of the pious upper class.⁶⁴⁰ But, as an example of interactions between different circles of the Amalfitans and their communication skills with outsiders as the story goes on, there is a woman named Gemma (a common name in the documents), who sold her son John to a couple as their servant. Gemma received 6 *solidi* for her son, quite a remarkable amount, almost equal to the price of a house, and John was recoded as fathered by Peter of Salerno, who is absent in the story because Gemma is also the mistress of a certain Marinus. The couple also promised that John would have received extra 4 *solidi* as his inheritance as well as movable goods.⁶⁴¹ This has in turn led us to think that the transactions were not entirely about the immovable property but also about the people, even the kids, as John was a child. Because of this, the couple who bought him from Gemma guaranteed his lifetime services by creating bonds via the possible punishment and by appointing him as a legal inheritor. Girls were not immune to these transactions, for instance, Sica was sold into the service of an elderly couple until their deaths, and for this the mother received 4 *tari*,⁶⁴² while another girl was placed under the service of Theodora, a member of an upper-class family, and her family received both

⁶³⁸ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi* (2013), 34.

⁶³⁹ Del Treppo & Leone, *Amalfi medioevale* (1977), 22–27.

⁶⁴⁰ Skinner, ““The light of my eyes”” (1997), 399.

⁶⁴¹ Skinner 2013, 400.

⁶⁴² CDA I, 85.

connections and money in exchange.⁶⁴³ In fact, Stuard significantly draws a picture of the households and lower class members of Amalfi, she reveals that the masters of houses might have been engaged in different activities with the servants of their houses, as the recording of illegitimate children underscores the fact that Amalfitan community was not only playing an active part in slave trade but also keeping them in the household as a part of the community.⁶⁴⁴ Yet, one has to be careful in assessing this practice and its impact on social life, since enslaved labor on land had become rare in Southern Italy by the end of ninth century. Martin rightly calls it a real revolution in production, as slave labour became absent in lands where Byzantine authority still held sway.⁶⁴⁵

But who was working on the arable land, even if the scale was smaller and limited in comparison to other areas in Campania? Andrenolli argues that, in regard to the presence of tenants and their freedom to offer their services and organize their labor for the best compensation and in their own interests, we are confronted with the presence of tenants and their work on the land.⁶⁴⁶ This in turn led us to draw on Del Treppo and his overview of the agricultural and pastoral activities of the Amalfi, by drawing a line between the activities of the vineyards, which dominated the early period of Amalfitan history, and the rise of chestnut tree cultivation after the first millennium.⁶⁴⁷ Here, I shall give three cases as examples to present different types of contracts between landowners and tenants, since the documentation also varies. A certain Marinus was allowed by his landowner to turn

⁶⁴³ CDA I, 62. Susan Mosher Stuard, "Ancillary evidence for the decline of medieval slavery" *Past & Present* 149, 1995, 3-28, 13-16.

⁶⁴⁴ CDA I, 62-65. Susan Mosher Stuard, "Ancillary Evidence for the Decline of Medieval Slavery," *Past & Present* 149 (1995): 3-28.

⁶⁴⁵ Jean-Marie Martin, *La pouille du VI^e au XII^e siècle* (Rome: L'École française de Rome, 1993), 293.

⁶⁴⁶ Bruno Andreolli, *Contratti agrari e trasformazione dell'ambiente* (Dedalo, 1989), 119-120.

⁶⁴⁷ Del Treppo & Leone, *Amalfi medievale*, (1977), 17-38.

virgin land into a valuable vineyard in exchange for the landlord keeping a third of the production.⁶⁴⁸ The contract between a certain Petrus and his landowner promised Petrus one chicken and half of the grains from the land he cultivated.⁶⁴⁹ Last but not least, another example stems from a widow and her children who had to return their rented land when her husband died, and their children could not take care of the land.⁶⁵⁰ These contracts allow us to see the mobility of the society as the lands were changing hands between tenants, for better or for worse. On the other hand, the tenants also could climb the social ladder when they could make the best of the rented land: for instance, some Amalfitans complained of how they had to buy the vineyards of their fathers back from their tenants. Indeed, the presence of tenants indicates the existence of landowners, as the contracts were signed by both sides. In Amalfi, we are confronted with landowners who actively engaged in interactions with the other members of society, not only in land sales. In fact, their activities may allow us to show that the importance and power of Amalfi gradually increased. Its population became dense in the city, between tenth and eleventh centuries, as illustrated by the rise in prices, for instance the average price was 56 gold *tari* in the tenth century, but this rose to 216 *tari* in the eleventh century.⁶⁵¹

As stated above, reconstructing the early history of Amalfi is a challenge due to the scarcity of the sources, yet scholars like Gargano and del Treppo point to the fact that the presence of local aristocracies is clearly evident in the documentary record.⁶⁵² Their families traced their ancestors, as the source of

⁶⁴⁸ CDA I, 112.

⁶⁴⁹ CDA I, 66.

⁶⁵⁰ Skinner, ““The light of my eyes,”” 394.

⁶⁵¹ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora* (2013), 36–37.

⁶⁵² Gargano, “La città davanti al mare” (1992); Mario del Treppo and Alfonso Leone, *Amalfi medievale* (Naples: Giannini Editore, 1977).

legitimation of their status, back to the ninth century. As Del Treppo indicates, these ancestors boasted (real or fabricated) Byzantine titles and enforced Byzantine government authority in Amalfi.⁶⁵³ The exact numbers of these ancestors or comital families from the earliest period are still shrouded in mystery due to the nature of the *Chronicon Amalfitanum* and *Chronicon Salernitum*, but we do have evidence of some practices they had performed.⁶⁵⁴ Obviously they presented the huge part of transactions both in movable and immovable properties, and they bore witness for each other, for instance the daughter of a count sold her land to another count, while two other counts were the witnesses of this transaction. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the titles were not hereditary during the period between ninth and tenth century, and instead the members of urban elite had to gain their own titles.⁶⁵⁵

The Byzantine titles became commemoratives in the charters while the dukes did not try to take part in this tradition. In this sense Skinner claims that “It is difficult to explain, however, why the various dukes of Amalfi did not join in this particular game (although their relatives sometimes did): was being the duke enough to establish authority or does this conceal a lack of aristocratic background and explain the instability of Amalfitan society?”⁶⁵⁶ In turn, in contrast to retelling of the tenants and small landowners, explaining the social mobility among the Amalfitan urban elites is harder due to the ambiguous nature of the documents. As social mobility often hinged on service to the imperial administration or the church

⁶⁵³ Treppo and Leone, *Amalfi medievale* (1977), 46–49.

⁶⁵⁴ Patricia Skinner 2013, 38.

⁶⁵⁵ Ulrich Schwarz, *Amalfi nell'alto Medioevo* [trans. from *Amalfi im frühen Mittelalter (9.-11. Jahrhundert). Untersuchungen zur amalfitaner Überlieferung* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1978)] (Amalfi: Quaderni del Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana, 2002), 18–34.

⁶⁵⁶ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800–1250* (2013), 41.

in Byzantine Italy, enabling individuals who had no aristocratic background to ascend through bureaucratic, military, or ecclesiastical offices.⁶⁵⁷ Familial connections within the administrative or ecclesiastical networks, where the power flowed in, could enable people to pass into the elite strata, illustrating a flexible system that valued skill more than birth right. On the other hand, this mobility was not uniform but relationally structured and dependent on local dynamics and features, patronage ties and institutional, which varied between centers such as Naples or Sicily in Southern Italy.⁶⁵⁸

Considering this, the heavy usage of imperial titles in Amalfi becomes more important to grasp a better understanding between Amalfitan-Byzantine relations. As mentioned before, Amalfi remained under Byzantine authority after the arrival of Lombards in Southern Italy, then the Duchy became a *de facto* independent political entity that remained part and parcel of the Byzantine *koine*.⁶⁵⁹ This in turn led earlier rulers to legitimize their authority with imperial titles, then granting Byzantine titles either on Amalfitan upper class members or on individuals within the Duchy of Amalfi.⁶⁶⁰ In Amalfi, we find better documentation than in Naples, and the meticulousness of Amalfitan notary practices allow us to gain a glimpse into the Byzantine administrative influence on Amalfitan urban elites and rulers. As expected, the imperial ranks and titles were mainly conferred by the rulers; for instance, when Manso was promoted as *spatharocandidatus* by the beginning of

⁶⁵⁷ Thoreau-Girault, *Une société chrétienne: Naples, Amalfi, Gaète (VI^e–XII^e siècle)* (Peeters, 2022), 71–72.

⁶⁵⁸ Patricia Skinner, “What was wrong with bishops in sixth century southern Italy?” in *Italy and East Roman World in the Medieval Mediterranean: Empire, Cities and Elites 476–1204, Papers in Honour of Thomas S. Brown*, ed. Thomas J. MacMaster & Nicholas S. M. Matheou (Routledge, 2021), 275–289.

⁶⁵⁹ Matteo Camera, *Memorie storico-diplomatiche dell'antica città e ducato di Amalfi* (Salerno, 1876), 58–103.

⁶⁶⁰ Camera 1876, 234–238.

tenth century, Mastalus was titled as *patrikios*, while Leo and John received the titles of *protospatharius* and *patrikios*. Duke Sergius III also was granted the title of *patrikios*, then his son Manso received the same at the wake of the Catepanate of Italy.⁶⁶¹ Moreover, as an individual whose roots were not related to the urban elites, a certain Niketas was conferred the title of *protospatharius* by the end of the tenth century. *Protospatharius* is a lower rank than *patrikios*, which was in use to define governors, yet it is striking to note that Niketas received this title, even though it was lower in rank, that formerly belonged to a son of the ruler of Amalfi.⁶⁶² We find more information on this Niketas, since he was called a close friend of the Duke John II and his wife Regalis, therefore, his way of using Greek signalling that either he had Byzantine origins or that he was educated in the Byzantine sphere, similarly to Duke Sergius and his son Gregory from Naples.⁶⁶³ Titles enable us to identify people and the power relations between local and imperial circles, yet these titled men, and sometimes women such Theodora⁶⁶⁴, allow us to reconstruct the social practices as they left traces on the documents either as witnesses, landowners, receivers or judges.⁶⁶⁵ The earliest usage of the term *boni homines* originates from the mid-eleventh century, yet it is difficult to accept uncritically that the upper class members of Amalfi during the passage between ninth and tenth centuries were not performing their roles in the communal and judicial matters, as they were actively taking part in them, according to the documentary record.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶¹ Camera 1876, 242–248.

⁶⁶² Matteo Camera, *ibid*, 251–255.

⁶⁶³ Federico Marazzi, “Byzantine Naples and Gaeta” (2021), 417.

⁶⁶⁴ Skinner, “Women, wills, and wealth in medieval southern Italy,” *Early Medieval Europe* 2, no. 2 (1993): 140–142.

⁶⁶⁵ Patricia Skinner, *ibid*, 143.

⁶⁶⁶ See Karin Nehlsen-von Stryk, *Die boni homines des fruhen Mittelalters*, Berlin: Duncker and Humboldt, 1981.

Indeed, it seems that the social structure of early Medieval Amalfi reveals a dynamic interplay between class, mobility, and imperial affiliation, rather than just between skilled seafarers and merchants. This is not to minimize that they were extremely skilled mariners and merchants, but as a community, they illustrate the more complex nature of identity, class, and professional affiliations. While the majority of the population occupied the lower social strata, often tied to the land or in service roles, the upper class was defined by negotiated prestige, wealth, and proximity to power rather than by hereditary power. Imperial titles thus granted, interactions documented in charters, and the fluid roles of landowners and tenants consequently allow us to see a community in which limited social mobility was reasonably constructed and embedded in local and imperial networks. The Amalfitan case provides an example of a maritime society navigating its positions between local agency and the wider Byzantine *koine*, through both material and institutional channels.⁶⁶⁷

What emerges from the documents and surviving contracts is a portrait of Amalfi as a community shaped by fluid social boundaries and the entanglement of imperial and local networks. While its maritime elite secured prestige through commerce and Byzantine titles, the broader social landscape included mobile tenants, household servants, and landowners navigating power through kinship and economic transaction. Status in Amalfi was less a matter of rigid hierarchy than of accumulated affiliations, legal, economic and ceremonial. In this context, the invocation of imperial honorifics, even among those without hereditary claims,

⁶⁶⁷ See Ulrich Schwartz, *Amalfi del medioevo* (Centro di Cultura e Storica Amalfitana, 1985), Mario del Treppo, "Ancora su Amalfi medievale" in *Città e territorio nell'Italia del medioevo*, Studi in onore di Gabriella Rossetti, (ed.) Giovanni Vitolo & Giovanna Patti Balbi & Giorgio Chittolini, Liguori, 201-242

served not only as a means of legitimacy but as a mirror of Amalfi's negotiation with the structures of the Byzantine koine. The resulting society was not merely one of merchants and mariners, but a dynamic civic entity whose cohesion rested on shared strategies of adaptation, negotiation and projection of power.⁶⁶⁸

4.4. Sacred Space and Social Fabric: The Religious Landscape of Amalfi

The religious identity of early medieval Amalfi did not arise from the steady extension of episcopal control or inherited antique structures, but rather from a dynamic and evolving set of practices shaped by geography, patronage, and transregional affiliations. While its ecclesiastical foundations lacked the depth of older urban centres, Amalfi's sacred landscape was actively constructed through a combination of local agency and alignment with broader Christian and Byzantine traditions. Examining the development of churches, the emergence of private cult sites, the roles of urban patrons, and the liturgical aesthetics of ecclesiastical buildings provide us with a picture of a religious fabric interwoven with social prestige, political assertion, and a visual dialogue with Constantinopolitan models. In this light, Christianization in Amalfi must be seen as an urban and cultural process, reflecting the aspirations of a maritime society positioned at the frontier of imperial, local and Muslim worlds.⁶⁶⁹

The Christianization of Amalfi unfolded not as a straightforward extension of episcopal authority, but as a multilayered and negotiated process rooted in Amalfi's urban transformation, both in social and spatial aspects. Amalfi lacked a

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⁶⁶⁹ See Eric Thoreau-Girault, *Une societa chretienne: Naples, Amalfi, Gaeta (VII-XII siecles)*, 2022.

strong Late Antique ecclesiastical inheritance, and the wandering bishop Pimenius literally became a prominent example of this lack, but this did not prevent Amalfi from cultivating its religious identity at the crossroads of local initiative, patronage and Byzantine influence.⁶⁷⁰ Churches, monastic foundations, and the cult of saints were not only spiritual markers but also instruments through which Amalfitans articulated their autonomy and legitimacy within the Byzantine *koine*. In this light, the Christianization of Amalfi was as much as a civic and cultural phenomenon as it was a religious one, embedded in its maritime position and expressed through rituals, architecture, and its deliberate alignment with imperial traditions.⁶⁷¹

As an Early Medieval community, Amalfi had a strong ecclesiastical organization not only in religious life but also in urban patterns and economic activities, as the Church was one of the biggest landowners in the Duchy of Amalfi.⁶⁷² Because of this, Amalfi followed a trajectory no different from that of its neighbours, as the Church held vast lands, especially in rural areas like the *patrimonies*.⁶⁷³ On the other hand, religious life was organized through three main currents: personal, social, and institutional flows, as well as in relation to Muslim and Jewish impacts, as we see that a different kind of Christianity was formed in the regions of Southern Italy, and so Amalfi was not immune to this ecclesiastical organization, reminiscent of that of the Duchy of Naples and Gaeta.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷⁰ Nicola Cilento, “Il problema della istituzione delle sedi metropolitiche nell’Italia meridionale in Campania,” in *La Chiesa di Amalfi nel medioevo. Convegno internazionale di studi per il millenario nell’archidiocesi di Amalfi (Amalfi-Scala)*, ed. Nicola Cilento (Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana, 1996), 13–24, 13–15.

Gregory the Great, *Epistulae*,

⁶⁷¹ Thoreau-Girault, *Une société chrétienne: Naples, Amalfi, Gaète (VI^e–XII^e siècle)* (Peeters, 2022), 83–87.

⁶⁷² Maria Andoloro, “Amalfi tra bizanzio e l’Occidente” in *La Chiesa di Amalfi nel medioevo. Convegno internazionale di studi per il millenario nell’archidiocesi di Amalfi (Amalfi-Scala)*, ed. Nicola Cilento (Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana, 1996), 281–300, 283–284.

⁶⁷³ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800–1250* (2013), 62.

⁶⁷⁴ Thoreau-Girault, 2022, 148–171.

Like other religious systems, Christianity also requires a special set of rituals and practices which is related to theological organization. One of the main practices of personal piety is praying and building a relationship with Christ and the saints. Yet there is a materialized version of the practice of praying, as donations and transfers show. The Church was not only one of the biggest landowners and donors, but also one of the religious and socio-economic safe havens during the period under scrutiny.⁶⁷⁵ This in turn led us to rethink the reciprocal relationship between the believers and the organization. In fact, one must mention that while Naples presents us with a careful urban transformation, Christianization of the landscape had played the key role. Hence, this transformation can be reconstructed through the material sources and better archaeology. Amalfi provides us with various opportunities to take into consideration to reevaluate the Christianization of Amalfi, gaining insight even into individual piety, due to the extensive amount of documentation that the Duchy of Amalfi created.⁶⁷⁶

Furthermore, the Amalfitan landscape was marked with chapels, churches and monasteries by the tenth century; because of this, one of the driving forces behind this increased number of sacred spaces was personal donations. Most of the churches were assigned to a priest or a group of priests, which in turn transformed the profession into an occupation that generated income, both from the revenues of the ecclesiastical lands and from individual donations of the patrons.⁶⁷⁷ For example, Mauro, son of Manso and a descendant of a certain Leo who bore the title of *comitus*, donated property to the Monastery of SS Ciricus and Iulicte upon his

⁶⁷⁵ See Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁶⁷⁶ Thoreau-Girault, *Une société chrétienne: Naples, Amalfi, Gaète (VI^e–XII^e siècle)* (Peeters, 2022), 243–245.

⁶⁷⁷ Thoreau-Girault 2022, 246–247.

death, and the monks received a certain amount of money from this donated property to commemorate Mauro on his death anniversary as a result.⁶⁷⁸ One may also point to the fact that the Church turned into a sort of safety net, not only for the poor, as the example of the practice of *diaconia* of Naples indicates; but also for members of upper class, as Amalfitan families exhibited a tendency to make special agreements with the ecclesiastical organization. For example, the Monastery of SS Maria and Vitus at Positano made an agreement with a couple who promised to sell their land to the monastery in a decade. When the agreed time came to an end, the couple gave up the land, took the money, then rented the land back from the monastery until their deaths. When they died, they were buried in the monastery, securing a sacred space and passage to the afterlife by guaranteeing their donation and ultimate burial place.⁶⁷⁹

In fact, there is one practice that stands out in the case of individual piety and its practice in Amalfitan Christianization: the foundation of private chapels or churches, which seemed to be common practice among the urban and ecclesiastical elites, generally controlled by individuals or by a consortium.⁶⁸⁰ In connection with this, one can bring Brown into the light as the first to indicate accurately the importance of ancestors and their eternal souls as they confer on their living descendants the chance of legitimacy and prestige.⁶⁸¹ He conceptualizes the power of holy corpses, and calls this power and all the practices that evolved around them

⁶⁷⁸ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800–1250* (2013), 77–78.

⁶⁷⁹ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800–1250*, 78–79.

⁶⁸⁰ Gerardo Sangermano, “Istituzioni ecclesiastiche e vita religiosa nei Ducati di Amalfi e Sorrento” in *La Chiesa di Amalfi nel medioevo. Convegno internazionale di studi per il millenario nell'archidiocesi di Amalfi* (Amalfi-Scala), ed. Nicola Cilento (Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana, 1996), 41–49.

⁶⁸¹ Peter Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

a cult of saints.⁶⁸² A private church or chapel was the materialized offspring of these two theories, and as such churches were founded to commemorate the dead and create burial space that corresponded ethereal and earthly aims and purposes, the land came to be dotted with Christian landmarks. In turn, family, kin, social status, social identity, patronage networks and their wealth became palpable and tangible, beyond mere inscriptions on documents whose textual content only a select few could understand. Del Treppo presents the Amalfitan private churches as a nearly ideal alternative to commercial investment by the Amalfitan rich as they poured movable and immovable goods as donations into their private churches, hoping to receive spiritual blessings.⁶⁸³ The practice of founding private churches was mirrored by the ducal power: The Monastery of St. Laurence was built by Manso II and his brothers by the end of the tenth century, St. Thomas at Atrani was recorded as the property of Constantine, and the duke of Manso as well as the priests of St. Felix at Caput de Amalfia received ducal permission to sell a part of the land. The Church of St. Peter was founded by a certain Sergius, descended from a comital family, by the end of tenth century and this church was donated to the nunnery of St. Laurence in Amalfi in the late tenth century.⁶⁸⁴ On the other hand, the Church of St. Peter received donations, such as a vineyard that was given to the church.⁶⁸⁵ But personal piety did not consist only in the foundation of private churches or chapels; it was common practice to construct churches for the community and to control them through a consortium, group of people which included women as well as men. For instance, one-third of St. Peter in Atrani was

⁶⁸² Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (University of Chicago Press, 1981).

⁶⁸³ Mario del Treppo, "Ancora su Amalfi medievale" 230–231.

⁶⁸⁴ *Codice Diplomatico Amalfitano* I, 23–28.

⁶⁸⁵ *CDA*, I, 33–35.

controlled by the family of Caramargia, a merchant family in which most of its members were engaged in seaborne activities.⁶⁸⁶

The last aspect of religious organization stemmed from institutions that had a crucial role both in urban settlement and communal life. In fact, the religious institutions of Amalfi have received a significant amount of scholarly attention.⁶⁸⁷ Before the town turned into an archbishopric, the bishop of Amalfi was under the authority of the Neapolitan archbishop, but this changed after 839.⁶⁸⁸ The creation of the see of Minori, since Minori was the cult centre of Saint Trofimena, and then of the see of Scala, led to the elevation of the bishop of Amalfi to archbishop in 987. Neither the bishop nor the archbishop of Amalfi appear to have offered consistent spiritual leadership or served as religious exemplars for the Amalfitan community, unlike the Neapolitan bishops, who were frequently portrayed in the *Gesta* as moral and doctrinal guides for their Christian flock.⁶⁸⁹ In fact, the shortage of documentation before the ninth century prevents us from offering a detailed portrayal of the bishop of Amalfi and episcopal organization, yet it seems that the bishopric grew alongside Amalfi's gradual rise both in administrative and economic aspects. Elevation to the archbishopric near the end of the tenth century was an outcome of both urban and religious development as well as the good relations that Manso forged with imperial officers.⁶⁹⁰ On the other hand, the bishopric of Minori was better-documented, at least providing us with the opportunity of gaining insight into episcopal activities. The bishopric of Minori was

⁶⁸⁶ CDA, I, 40.

⁶⁸⁷ Sangermano, "Istituzioni ecclesiastiche e vita religiosa nel Ducato di Amalfi e sorrento," 35–37.

⁶⁸⁸ Andrea Carenza, "Le sedi suffraganee della Metropoli di Amalfi" in *La Chiesa di Amalfi nel medioevo. Convegno internazionale di studi per il millenario nell'archidiocesi di Amalfi (Amalfi-Scala)*, ed. Nicola Cilento (Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana, 1996), 104–156.

⁶⁸⁹ John the Deacon, *The History of the Neapolitan Bishops*, 60–63.

⁶⁹⁰ Thoreau-Girault, *Une société chrétienne: Naples, Amalfi, Gaète (VI^e–XII^e siècle)* (Peeters, 2022), 303–306.

created mainly in relation to the cult of Saint Trofimena. As stated previously, the transfer of the relic of Trofimena incited a dispute between the Amalfitans and the Minorians, with Peter of Amalfi being cursed due to his role in this transfer. The relic of Trofimena was brought back to Minori, therefore, it seems like getting received donations from the dukes of Amalfi.⁶⁹¹ Before the relics of St. Andrew the Apostle were brought to Amalfi after the Sack of Constantinople (1204), St. Trofimena and her cult became a symbol of the independence of Amalfi.⁶⁹²

The centuries before the first millennium show that Amalfitan religious identity was constructed at the intersection of Byzantine ecclesiastical traditions, sustained interactions with the Muslim world, and an increasing Roman influence. Éric Thoreau-Girault points to the fact that Byzantine influence remained superficial on the religious organizations of Amalfi and Naples, yet his theory needs to be regarded critically.⁶⁹³ It seems that, as part and parcel of the Byzantine *koine*, Amalfi absorbed a certain level of Byzantine liturgical and visual vocabulary that was found in some early churches and monastic complexes. This is not to discount the validity of several points that Thoreau-Girault makes in his argumentation, such as his demonstration of the increasing impact of Rome, rather than Constantinople, on both Naples and Amalfi. In this sense, it is important to take up Avagliano's arguments, as she provides us with striking similarities that were well-rooted in the ecclesiastical traditions of Amalfi. In fact, the liturgical furnishings and sculptural remains show that visual characteristics were incorporated from Byzantine style and central Italian art of the late eighth and tenth centuries.⁶⁹⁴ Unfortunately, most

⁶⁹¹ Thoreau-Girault 2022, 307–308.

⁶⁹² Thoreau-Girault 2022, 308.

⁶⁹³ Thoreau-Girault 2022, 412–413.

⁶⁹⁴ Alessandra Avagliano, "Frammenti Vecchi e Nuovi: Arredi Liturgici ai Altomedievali in Costa d'Amalfi," in *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 27 (May 2021): 263.

of the sculptural fragments are decontextualized, yet their typologies such as ribbon patterns and peacock motifs, clearly align with the broader Byzantine *koine* as the high level of decorative repertoire show. In addition, the marble fragments and the *plutei* recovered in different churches such as the San Salvatore de Birecto in Atrani, date back to before 957, when it served as the chapel of the Amalfitan dukes, and housed significant marble fragments bearing such motifs.⁶⁹⁵ In turn, these elements reveal that Amalfitan ecclesiastical material culture drew heavily from Byzantine Christianity and visual traditions, embedding their liturgical spaces with symbols of immortality and imperial legitimacy.⁶⁹⁶ The structural evolution of the cathedral complex of Amalfi further illustrates how Byzantine influence had impacted local architecture, adornment, liturgy and administration.⁶⁹⁷ The earliest phase of the cathedral, possibly founded by the sixth century and supposedly dedicated to the Assumption of Mary, is evidenced by the aforementioned letter of Gregory I. The complex had to be reconstructed after the Salernitan sack of Amalfi in 839, then significantly refurbished after the elevation of Amalfi to the archbishopric, i.e., as the seat of archbishop, in 987.⁶⁹⁸ These episodes of renewal most likely prompted the production and installation of new liturgical furnishing in the Byzantine style, now preserved in the Museo Diocesano within the Basilica del Crocifisso, which was originally built as a part of the earlier cathedral. The adaptation of Byzantine motifs in furnishing, such as peacocks and vegetal scrolls,

⁶⁹⁵ Avagliano, “Frammenti Vecchi e Nuovi: Arredi Liturgici ai Altomedievali in Costa d’Amalfi” (May 2021): 266–267.

⁶⁹⁶ Avagliano 2021, 268.

⁶⁹⁷ Maria Andoloro, “Amalfi tra bizanzio e l’Occidenta” (1996), 287–288.

⁶⁹⁸ Andrea Carenza, “Le sedi suffraganee della Metropoli di Amalfi,” 146–148.

suggest a continued connectivity and affiliation with Byzantine influence during Amalfi's changing political situation during the ninth and tenth centuries.⁶⁹⁹

These examples can be paired with the Grotta dell'Affresco, located between Cetara and Maiori on Monte Piano, revealing striking parallels and the equally potent influence of Byzantine monasticism on the Amalfitan hinterland and monks. Although the exact date of its foundation is still unknown, the site was probably occupied between the tenth and eleventh centuries, which also coincides with the arrival of Italo-Greek monks following the reconquest of Calabria by Nicephoros Phocas in 885 and with the influx of religious refugees from Islamic-occupied Sicily.⁷⁰⁰ The nearby monastic complex, the Abbey of Santa Maria de Olearia, was founded by a certain Peter and his nephew Giovanni with the permission of the first archbishop of Amalfi, Leo (987–1029). This exemplified the fusion of Byzantine ascetic ideas and local land, as the rock-cut sanctuaries not only marked a return to Byzantine architecture but also articulated a spiritual landscape that integrated Byzantine cosmology into the local sacred space.⁷⁰¹ The central chamber of Grotta dell'Affresco contains an eponymous fresco fragment that depicts the sandaled feet of a toga-clad figure, most probably a saint, rendered in a style consistent with Southern Italian and Byzantine iconographic models.⁷⁰²

The shared religious topography of Amalfi and Atrani further substantiates the hypothesis that the sacred landscape of the Duchy of Amalfi formed a cohesive liturgical and ideological unit, in which Byzantine influences were actively

⁶⁹⁹ Avagliano 2021, 268.

⁷⁰⁰ Alfonso Mammato and Nicodemo Abate, "La 'Grotta dell'Affresco' il Fenomeno del Monachesimo sul Confine tra il Ducato di Amalfi e il Principato di Salerno," *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 27 (2021): 200.

⁷⁰¹ Mammato and Abate 2021, 201.

⁷⁰² Mammato and Abate 2021, 204–206.

cultivated. Although the San Salvatore de Birecto was documented only in 984, the architectural and functional dynamics of the ecclesiastical building suggest that it served ruling families before the tenth century.⁷⁰³ The resemblance of Atrani's urban layout, moreover, in their ecclesiastical zoning to that of Amalfi, including functional zones for aristocratic residence, supports the notion that Atrani was effectively playing the role of twin city to Amalfi. In this sense, the patronage of urban elites to construct or to adorn Christian landmarks, and furthermore the presence of imported decorative schemes, such as marble panels with rosette-filled interlace patterns, point to a sustained circulation of Byzantine liturgical patterns within a local context of urban elites' self-representation.⁷⁰⁴

Both Thoreau-Girault and Skinner suggest that Byzantine influence was either superficial or very distant, yet it is apparent that the Byzantine imprint on Amalfitan religious identity emerged not as a passive residue of imperial administration but as an actively embraced, locally transformed religious landscape and identity. From the early cathedral of Amalfi to the ducal chapel of Atrani, the religious architecture and visual culture of the region manifest a hybrid and adaptive identity, highly interactive and embedded in the Byzantine *koine*.⁷⁰⁵

Rather than a static inheritance, Amalfi's religious landscape reflects a fluid and participatory construction of sacred space shaped by diverse influences and negotiated locally through the actions of its elites, institutions, and artisans. The city's churches and monasteries were not merely sites of devotion but expressions of status, identity, and continuity within the Byzantine *koine*. Through architectural

⁷⁰³ Avagliano, "Frammenti Vecchi e Nuovi: Arredi Liturgici ai Altomedievali in Costa d'Amalfi" (2021).

⁷⁰⁴ Maria Andoloro, "Amalfi tra bizanzio e l'Occidentale" (1996), 288–289.

⁷⁰⁵ Andoloro 1996, 285–286.

choices, visual programs, and burial practices, Amalfitans embedded themselves into a shared Christian cosmology while tailoring it to their particular social and topographical context. The evidence of the frescoes, liturgical furnishings, and monastic sites underscores a deliberate and meaningful engagement with Byzantine forms, suggesting that Constantinopolitan influence was not a distant imprint but an integral part of Amalfi's religious expression. In this interplay between imperial tradition and local initiative, Amalfi crafted a sacred topography that mirrored its broader strategies of legitimacy, connectivity, and distinction.⁷⁰⁶

4.5. Micro-Harbors and Macro-Connections: The Maritime Fabric of early Medieval Amalfi

Amalfi's maritime infrastructure presents an instructive departure from traditional models of port urbanism shaped by monumental harbour architecture. Unlike the harbours of Rome, Constantinople or Naples, the port of Amalfi developed not through large-scale construction but through a nuanced adaptation to its rugged geography and limited terrestrial resources. This maritime evolution unfolded in tandem with broader processes of socio-political transformation, embedded in the local landscape and shaped by flexible strategies of navigation, risk-sharing, and coastal exploitation. By examining the interplay between geomorphology, seaborne practice, and infrastructural improvisation, this section reassesses the foundations of Amalfi's maritime success, challenging older narratives of exceptionality and reframing the city within the interconnected, decentralized logic of the early medieval Mediterranean.

⁷⁰⁶ Patricia Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800-1250*, 73-79.

The harbor of Amalfi, together with the coastal maritime nodes of the *Costiera Amalfitana*, represent a compelling case study to understand early medieval maritime adaptations in environmentally constrained settings. This has led scholars to perceive the maritime success of Amalfi as an exceptional case study in the traditional historiography, which also supports the hypothesis of the decline of networks and connectivity.⁷⁰⁷ During the period under scrutiny, Amalfi transformed from a small coastal settlement where even its bishop preferred to wander around instead of staying tethered to a significant maritime actor, trading within the Byzantine *koine*. Actually, this transformation occurred despite, and because of, the challenging geomorphology and limited terrestrial resources that characterized the *Costiera Amalfitana*.⁷⁰⁸

A close look at Amalfi's physical situation yields some surprises. This is not what we expect a port to look like. The configuration of the land does not provide any natural harbour. Where could one envision large numbers of ships? Moreover, even the tourists who flock to Amalfi today in summer cannot help but notice the lack of wind. Much of the time, even 'light air' would seem an overstatement. Yet, we have reason to believe that Amalfitan trading ships did depend chiefly on sail power, at least were not galleys. Altogether, these facts suggest a more thorough examination of Amalfi's physical setting, which might enhance our understanding not only of early medieval maritime commerce but also of general maritime expectations in the centuries before the nautical revolution which led into the modern era.

⁷⁰⁷ Kreutz, "The ecology of maritime success: The puzzling case of Amalfi," 103.

⁷⁰⁸ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800–1250*, 91–92.

(...) How was it possible for such an ill-favoured port to have any sort of maritime career at all?⁷⁰⁹

Hence, Kreutz cogently summarizes the main question concerning the port of Amalfi and the questionable features of Coestiera Amalfitana as the Duchy of Amalfi's maritime success was formed around its harbours.⁷¹⁰ The coastline, which starts from the Sorrentine peninsula (Punta Campanella) and ends up by Salerno, is composed of cliffs, hills, islets, and settlements that located on the river valleys and the coastline, therefore, the maritime routes ran from Sicily (the Strait of Messina) to Salerno, Naples, Rome, Pisa, and Genoa.⁷¹¹ But the question remains unchanged: How could a settlement so small have managed to create such a wide-range, renowned seaborne activities?

Camera claims that modern Amalfi is a lesser version of medieval Amalfi, based on analysis of one of the letters of Queen Joanna of Naples as she writes that the walls and houses of Amalfi were destroyed by a strong sea storm in in the year 1344.⁷¹² Later, historians such as Del Treppo repeated these accounts, situating them within a broader narrative of natural disasters affecting Amalfi's commercial and economic fortunes.⁷¹³

Subsequent archaeological investigations, however, challenged these interpretations. These small-scale surveys revealed underwater structures initially thought to be remnants of a medieval mole. Gargano's later topographical works

⁷⁰⁹ Kreutz, "The ecology of maritime success: The puzzling case of Amalfi," 103.

⁷¹⁰ See Gargano, "Amalfi e Pisa: nel medioevo," *Rassegna del Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana* 10 (2000): 84–86.

⁷¹¹ Gargano, "Amalfi e Pisa" (2000), 90–92.

⁷¹² Matteo Camera, *Memorie storico-diplomatiche dell'antica città e ducato di Amalfi* (Salerno, 1876).

⁷¹³ Mario del Treppo & Alfonso Leone, *Amalfi medievale*, 202–203.

corrected earlier readings, arguing that the supposed submersion was the result of a severe storm and that the mole itself dated no earlier than the early thirteenth century.⁷¹⁴ This late construction suggests a reaction to the growing need for deeper mooring facilities as ships increased in size. Nevertheless, the continued centrality of the beach for loading goods, also evidenced in the documents as the landowners asked their tenants for deliverance to the harbor, implies that smaller-size vessels remained prominent during the period under scrutiny and beyond. On the other hand, the mole was not reconstructed after its submersion, which could be related to the small-scale, adaptable coastal practices being fundamental, rather than being a large-scale infrastructural expansion.⁷¹⁵

Indeed, rather than possessing a sheltered, deep-water bay, the waterfront of Amalfi is defined by a narrow coastal strip, flanked by steep cliffs plunging almost directly into the sea. Even though the density of settlements on the Costiera Amalfitana hampers possibilities of conducting archaeological research on site, a few exceptional studies have been carried out.⁷¹⁶ Bergman's maritime surveys in 1979, further supported by Harpster's maritime and geomorphological investigations, debunked local legends of a vast submerged city or extended port structures being lost to a sea storm. The so-called anomalies identified underwater, once thought to be remnants of medieval sea walls, have been reinterpreted as natural stone accumulations or later medieval constructions, such as the thirteenth pier attributed to Cardinal Peter Capuano. On the other hand, a consistent, constrained littoral profile with a total shoreline frontage of less than 400 meters

⁷¹⁴ Giuseppe Gargano, "La città davanti al mare" (1992), 117–119.

⁷¹⁵ Gargano 1992, 120–121.

⁷¹⁶ Kreutz, "The ecology of maritime success: The puzzling case of Amalfi," 106.

appears, only partially accessible as a beach.⁷¹⁷ In this sense, the question remains unresolved: how and where were all these renowned stories of maritime success materialized?⁷¹⁸

Despite the topographical and natural limitations, Amalfi achieved maritime prominence by developing a harbor system that was inherently adaptive, decentralized, and small-scale. In fact, the ships were not dependent on heavy infrastructure. They were either beached or anchored in shallow waters, sometimes pulled ashore during inclement weather or winter seasons.⁷¹⁹ This practice aligns with contemporary depictions of lateen-rigged vessels, such as harken back to a tenth-century manuscript from Naples that depicts small, maneuverable craft.⁷²⁰ The lateen sail, with its capacity to handle variable and often weak Tyrrhenian wind patterns, was crucial for Amalfi. Winds in the region were frequently calm,⁷²¹ compelling sailors to depend on highly responsive, hybrid ship designs. Moreover, the vessels were described as small, round sailing ships, possibly supplemented with oars, which highlights the hybrid maritime strategies of the Amalfitans, as Kreutz indicates that these ships, likely to have been less than 15 meters in length and partially decked, were agile and capable of coastal cabotage, enabling flexible itineraries rather than rigidly planned direct routes across the Mediterranean.⁷²²

⁷¹⁷ Matthew Harpster et al., “Modelling the Maritime Cultural Landscape of the Costiera Amalfitana: The First Three Seasons of Research,” *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 50 (2021): 1–13.

⁷¹⁸ Harpster et al. 2021, 1–13.

⁷¹⁹ Kreutz, “Ships, Shipping, and the Implications of Change in the Early Medieval Mediterranean,” *Viator, Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Volume 7* (1976), ed. Henrik M. Birnbaum et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2023), 79–110. 84–87.

⁷²⁰ Kreutz 2023, 90–91.

⁷²¹ Kreutz, “Amalfi e il mare,” in *Istituzioni civili e organizzazione ecclesiastica nello Stato medievale amalfitano* (Amalfi: Centro di Cultura e Storia Amalfitana, 1996), 114–115.

⁷²² Kreutz 2023, 91.

Integral to Amalfi's maritime structure was its relationship with the adjacent settlement of Atrani, which became a kind of twin city to Amalfi. Atrani, although even smaller and lacking an extensive waterfront, may have offered slightly more natural shelter and thus functioned as an auxiliary or complementary harbor space.⁷²³ Early medieval charters suggest that an integrated, somewhat metropolitan maritime system, in which Amalfi and Atrani operated as a dual hub, enhanced resilience against environmental and political fluctuations. This in turn can be coupled with the increasing power of Atrani as a settlement where the ducal residency took place and shaped the landscape.⁷²⁴ This cooperative arrangement finds a social parallel in the Colonna system used to finance voyages, a partnership framework in which shipowners, sailors, and merchants shared risks and profits equally. Therefore, this system underlines the collective identity of Amalfitan urban society, which provided an ethos of Amalfitan seaborne activities that reflected a localized adaptation to high operational risks as well as creating bonds within the Duchy and with its diasporas, which I will discuss in the next chapter.⁷²⁵

In this light, the wider *Costiera Amalfitana* provides us with similar patterns of micro-harbor usage and coastal exploitation. Harpster illustrates that scattered findings of ceramics and anchor elements across multiple small coves between Li Galli and Amalfi, which reveal a pattern of dispersed maritime landscape, characterized by small, seasonal anchorage points rather than centralized, fortified ports such as the harbor of Naples.⁷²⁶ Coastal caves, such as the Grotta di Sant'Andrea near Amalfi, functioned not merely as a sacred space but also as a

⁷²³ Giuseppe Gargano, "La città davanti al mare" (1992), 120–123.

⁷²⁴ Kreutz, "Ghost ships and phantom cargoes" (1994), 348.

⁷²⁵ Harpster et al., "Modelling the Maritime Cultural Landscape of the *Costiera Amalfitana*", 4

⁷²⁶ Alessandro Luciano (year?) ?–?

pragmatic shelter and temporary storage site. Indeed, these natural features were intimately integrated into local navigational practices, embodying both symbolic and functional dimensions of maritime space.⁷²⁷

The interaction between geomorphology and maritime culture in Amalfi alongside Costiera Amalfitana allows us to underscore the level of adaptability of the Amalfitan community. The peninsula's ridged slopes, limited arable land and visual dominance of the sea effectively islanded settlements, necessitating a maritime orientation even for subsistence activities.⁷²⁸ The convergence of terrestrial and maritime resources within a constrained ecological niche shaped a distinctive seafaring society, one that operated not through infrastructural monumentality but through communitarian flexibility, environmental knowledge and dynamic networks of exchange.⁷²⁹

In other words, the reconstruction of Amalfi's harbour and its regional and interregional maritime system between 6th and 10th centuries presents a sophisticated model of seafaring resilience and adaptability. The absence of large harbours should not be perceived as resulting from disaster, and the lack of a monumental harbour should not be read as evidence of commercial exceptionality.⁷³⁰ Rather, it signifies a deliberate adaptation to local environmental and social realities, reflecting a broader Mediterranean pattern of vernacular maritime landscape. The example of Amalfi challenges deterministic views of port development as well as the marginalization of its success, inviting a re-evaluation

⁷²⁷ Matthew Harpster et. al. 2021, ?–?

⁷²⁸ Gargano, "La ricostruzione della forma urbana di Amalfi nel Medioevo: metodologia ed esiti della ricerca," in *Le Pianta Ricostruttive dei Tessuti Urbani Medievali e Moderni*, ed. Teresa Colletta (Edizioni Kappa, 2006), 17–18.

⁷²⁹ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi and Its Diaspora, 800–1250*, 101–102.

⁷³⁰ Kreutz, "Amalfi e il mare" (1996), 120–122.

of early medieval Amalfi's maritime connectivity as a tapestry woven from myriad small-scale, adaptive nodes, interacting within the Byzantine *koine*.⁷³¹

The port of Amalfi was not carved from the ambitions of empire or the hands of engineers, but rather from the cumulative knowledge of sailors, the rhythms of trade, and the constraints of the coast. Its success cannot be reduced to fortuitous geography or commercial luck; instead, it rested on a careful balance between environmental awareness, micro-harbour practices, and adaptive shipping technologies. The absence of monumental port structures or deep-water facilities did not hinder Amalfi's connectivity, on the contrary, it encouraged maritime decentralization, social collaboration, and the emergence of a fluid network rooted in small-scale but wide-ranging mobility. Anchored in the vernacular logic of coastal life, Amalfi's maritime system exemplifies the resilience and ingenuity of a seafaring society negotiating its place between the local and the imperial, the environmental and the economic, the marginal and the central within the Byzantine Mediterranean.⁷³²

As this chapter closes, the Duchy of Amalfi had protected its relationship with the Byzantines, as a source of legitimacy and as a valuable ally and customer, and imperial influences deeply impacted Amalfitan identity. In turn, perceiving the Amalfitan-Byzantine relationship only in relation to commerce, which was solid, could lead us to misunderstand the active role of Amalfi within the Byzantine *koine*. The historical arc of the Duchy of Amalfi during the period under scrutiny presents a landscape of constant dialogue and negotiation, between isolation and

⁷³¹ Michael Jones & Matthew Harpster, "Two Views of Ports and Maritime Communities in the Byzantine Mediterranean: Constantinople and Amalfi" 2024, 352–368.

⁷³² Barbara M. Kreutz, "The ecology of maritime success: The puzzling case of Amalfi, 103-107.

connectivity, space governance and imperial traditions, commerce and community. Far from existing at the margins of the Byzantine koine, Amalfi positioned itself as a dynamic node within a network of relationships that spanned the Tyrrhenian Sea and extended deep into the eastern and western Mediterranean.⁷³³ Its political structure, framed through Byzantine influence and co-rule strategies, its fragmented urban space shaped by the tension between slope and sea, and its religious landscape, punctuated by chapels, monasteries, and liturgical programs drawn from both Constantinopolitan and Roman models, all suggest a duchy simultaneously rooted and outward-looking. Amalfi's maritime fabric, reliant on micro-harbours, collective financing, and a knowledge of wind, tide, and partnership, subverts traditional models of port development and economic centrality. By examining Amalfi through the lens of resilience, adaptation, and negotiated authority, this chapter has sought to demonstrate that its success was not an exception to the early medieval condition but emblematic of the creative strategies available to communities navigating in a deeply interconnected Mediterranean. In this light, the Duchy of Amalfi appears not merely as an exceptionally successful maritime power, but as a shaper of Mediterranean dynamics, anchored in its own local features while propelled by wider currents of imperial, commercial, and religious exchange.⁷³⁴

⁷³³ Mario del Treppo & Alfonso Leone, *Amalfi medievale*, 207-209.

⁷³⁴ See Barbara M. Kreutz, "Amalfi e il mare" in *Istituzioni civili e organizzazione ecclesiastica nello Stato medievale amalfitano*, Amalfi: CCSA, 1996.

CHAPTER V: Navigation in the Byzantine *koine*: Naples and Amalfi in Byzantine Mediterranean

This chapter examines the Duchy of Naples and the Duchy of Amalfi in their multifaceted relationships with the nodes of the coastal and insular world of the Byzantine *koine*, emphasizing their roles within the interconnected Mediterranean networks in the passage between the sixth and tenth centuries. As previously stated, far from being isolated coastal enclaves, Naples and Amalfi were deeply embedded in a dynamic system of exchange and communication that spanned from Constantinople to Butrint, from Jerusalem to Cherson.⁷³⁵ On the other hand, Neapolitans and Amalfitans maintained their mutual relations. For example, Naples had housed Amalfitan merchants as well as those of its other next-door neighbor, Byzantine Duchy of Gaeta.⁷³⁶ The administrative and religious traditions such as titles, Byzantine law and the importance of relics and the continuous liturgical traditions illustrate a continuous negotiation of local identity and agency within the broader imperial and mercantile spheres. In this sense, this chapter elaborates the administrative, economic and cultural entanglements that tied Naples and Amalfi to the Byzantine *koine*, highlighting their capacities for adaptation and resilience in navigating the political and economic realities. By situating Naples and Amalfi within this shared maritime context, the analysis demonstrates how these cities functioned not as marginal outposts but as active, adaptive nodes in a vibrant and complex Mediterranean network, a network that exemplified the fluidity and integrative potential of the Byzantine *koine*. Hence, this final chapter offers a synthetic interpretation of their historical trajectories,

⁷³⁵ Arthur 2012, 340–348.

⁷³⁶ Paolo Delogu, “Il Ducato di Gaeta” in *Storia del Mezzogiorno d’Italia, Dall’antico regime alla società borghese*, vol. 2 (Liguori, 1986), 194–195.

underscoring their roles as both contributors to and beneficiaries of a continuously evolving imperial coastal and insular world.⁷³⁷

5.1. ‘At Peace with the Saracen’⁷³⁸: The Complex Matrix of Neapolitans, Amalfitans, Byzantines, and Arabs (9th–10th Centuries)

Throughout the ninth and tenth centuries, the Tyrrhenian coast of Southern Italy was marked by intensifying geopolitical fluidity and cross-cultural entanglements that challenged conventional binaries of alliance and enmity. In this shifting landscape, Naples and Amalfi asserted themselves as distinct yet interrelated maritime powers, operating within a matrix defined by the competing claims of Byzantines, Lombards, and Muslims. Their political trajectories were not framed by strict ideological alignments but by a calculus of autonomy, access, and adaptability. This context allowed both cities to maintain strategic connections to Constantinople while simultaneously pursuing commercial and military engagements with Muslim forces, local rivals, and, at times, the Papacy. The resulting strategies and tactical pragmatism reveal the ways in which these urban centres forged their agency not in isolation but through continuous negotiation with multiple spheres of influence within the Byzantine *koine*.

As mentioned already, the ninth and tenth centuries marked an era of extraordinary complexity and realignment in the political, economic and cultural reconfigurations of Southern Italy, particularly along the Tyrrhenian coast. Within this dynamic context, Naples and Amalfi emerged as key maritime actors, each

⁷³⁷ Zavagno 2024, 184.

⁷³⁸ Erchembert, 38.

navigating a delicate balance between local interests, external pressures, and broader Mediterranean transformations.⁷³⁹

Naples, under the leadership of Bishop/Duke Athanasius II (r. 878–898), exemplified a highly pragmatic approach to the regional geopolitics, while maintaining formal relationships with the Byzantine Empire. This is reflected in coinage inscribed with the words *Basil imperator*, and in sporadic appeals for military assistance, as Naples simultaneously engaged in alliance with Arab forces.⁷⁴⁰ The Neapolitan tendency to cooperate with Muslim troops, including allowing them to settle at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, underscores a strategy centered on immediate security and economic advantage, rather than strict ideological consistency. In this period, Neapolitans did not hesitate to deploy Byzantine troops alongside Muslim mercenaries in campaign against Lombards of Benevento and Capua. This oscillation between alliances showed Naples' acute awareness of the shifting balance of power, and its readiness to exploit external resources to fortify its local position.⁷⁴¹ At the same time, Athanasius II was a patron who collected Byzantine manuscripts, founding a scriptorium for the monks who studied Greek, translated or copied Byzantine hagiographies. This cultivated a refined environment where Byzantine culture and traditions and local traditions intersected, further embedding Neapolitan society within Byzantine elements.⁷⁴² In this light, one can see that despite its complex entanglement with Arab forces, Naples maintained a fluid yet persistent Byzantine connection. This is not to deny that, by the time of Athanasius II (late ninth century), the Duchy of Naples was no

⁷³⁹ Mario Gaglione 2011, 38–39.

⁷⁴⁰ Kreutz 1996, p. ?

⁷⁴¹ Cosentino 2008, 345–348.

⁷⁴² Fred E. Engreen, "Pope John the Eighth and the Arabs," *Speculum* 20, no. 3 (1945): 318–330, pp. 316–317.

longer a formal dependency, but the city continued draw upon Byzantine culture, and having this hybrid identity allowed Naples to navigate the fractious landscape of Southern Italy, balancing itself between Lombard, Arab, and Byzantine interests.⁷⁴³

Similarly, Amalfi demonstrated remarkable flexibility and economic acumen in its dealings with all parties of this complex matrix, despite its participation in papal and anti-Muslim coalitions. These included the alliance Pope John VIII orchestrated while offering generous financial incentives and trade privileges in exchange for naval support, whereby Amalfi persistently preserved its independent maritime strategy. In fact, the Amalfitan readiness to accept papal promises while providing minimal military assistance illustrates its sophisticated diplomatic skills and prioritization of economic gain over confessional solidarity, resembling Byzantine diplomatic skills honed to perfection. For instance, the Byzantines had an agreement with the Principality of Salerno, through which Salerno received money, wheat and soldiers from Byzantines against Naples in 887.⁷⁴⁴ When confronted with papal demands to sever ties with the Arabs, the Amalfitans repeatedly prioritized commercial autonomy and maintained their networks with the Islamic world. Even the threat of excommunication did not deter Amalfi, which clearly understood the centrality of Mediterranean trade, including lucrative contacts with Muslim markets.⁷⁴⁵

Indeed, Byzantine interventions during this period further complicated the regional matrix, during the reign of Basil I (867–886) followed by that of Leo VI

⁷⁴³ Berza 1938, 394–395.

⁷⁴⁴ Kreutz 2008, 349.

⁷⁴⁵ Vera von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina nell'Italia meridionale dal IX all'XI secolo* (Ecumenica Editrice, 1978), 36–37.

(886–912), the empire sought to reassert its authority in Southern Italy, culminating in the campaigns of Nicephoros Phocas in the 880s. Although these campaigns largely avoided Campania, their broader impact reverberated throughout Naples and Amalfi.⁷⁴⁶ The re-establishment of Byzantine control in Apulia and Calabria, the creation of the theme of Langobardia, and the distribution of territories previously dominated by Lombard rulers signaled a renewed imperial presence in the region. In response, Naples for instance acted once again in a fashion more related to the imperial sphere as aforementioned.

At the same time, these cities remained deeply entangled in local and regional conflicts, and Naples' alliance with the Arabs ultimately provoked violent reactions and internal instability, leading to fluctuating coalitions and military confrontations. Amalfi, while less militarily aggressive, faced similar pressures as it balanced relationships with the neighboring Principality of Salerno and with Byzantine officers. The interplay of rivalry and cooperation among Salerno, Capua, Benevento, Amalfi, and Naples created a constantly shifting landscape where allegiances were tactical and contingent upon immediate political and economic benefits.⁷⁴⁷

The emergence of the Garigliano Arab stronghold in the late ninth century further highlights this fluidity. Although initially tolerated or even initiated by local rulers, such as those in Gaeta, these settlements became destabilizing forces that threatened nearby territories. In turn, their presence forced local leaders to reassess alliances, occasionally prompting joint military action to expel or contain these groups when they became too powerful or unpredictable. In this light, the Battle of

⁷⁴⁶ Warren Treadgold 1997, 203–214.

⁷⁴⁷ Giuseppe Galasso (1995), 112–118.

Garigliano (915) carries significant symbolic weight for its defeat of Arabs, as it brought together all the major powers of the period. But can we truly call it a turning point? This is dubious as a turning point since the settlement was not unique, the same type of settlements existed in places like Nocera and Cetara as well, and Amalfi — one of major powers of Campania, did not take part in the joint action.

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By the end of the ninth century, the Byzantine reconquest and the evolving Arab presence had effectively reconfigured the balance of power in Southern Italy. Naples and Amalfi retained substantial autonomy and continued to act as maritime intermediaries, linking the Tyrrhenian world within the Byzantine *koine*. Their adaptive strategies, oscillating between cooperation and competition with both Christian and Muslim powers, provide us with sophisticated models of urban resilience and agency. Their strategic pragmatism allowed Naples and Amalfi not only to ‘survive’ but also to thrive, embedding themselves firmly within the interconnected frameworks of the Byzantine *koine*. Their capacities to navigate these complex relationships reveals their pragmatic negotiations, commercial opportunism, and flexible identities, also harnessed by the Byzantines at the same time. As previously discussed, this is visible in Guaimar, the Lombard prince of Salerno, receiving the title *patricius* after his visit to Constantinople in 887; and in Landolf of Capua visiting Constantinople to secure an alliance and returning to Capua with the title of *patricius*.⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁸ Di Bianco, Matullo, and Wolf, “Nouve ricerche sull’isediamento islamico presso il Gargliano (883–915),” in *Lazio e Sabina 10, Atti del convegno “Decimo incontro di studi sul Lazio e la Sabina,”* (ed.) E. Calandra & G. Ghini & G.Z. Mari, Rome, 2014, 273–280.

⁷⁴⁹ Von Falkenhausen 1978b, 36–37.

Rather than passively responding to the encroachments of empire of the threat of occupation, Naples and Amalfi operated with acute awareness of the political volatility that characterized Southern Italy at the close of the first millennium. Their approaches to Muslim settlements, Byzantine interventions, and regional rivalries were shaped less by fixed royalties than by a pragmatic pursuit of local advantage and transregional connectivity. The resilience of these cities lay in their ability to manage overlapping affiliations, deploying Byzantine symbolism, tolerating or profiting from Muslim world, and recalibrating allegiances as the situation demanded. Even the celebrated coalition at Garigliano, often presented as a decisive rupture, did not represent a lasting reorientation for these cities, particularly for Amalfi, which withheld participation. In navigating these currents, Naples and Amalfi reaffirmed their place within the Byzantine koine, not as peripheral dependents, but as integral nodes of a Mediterranean system where adaptability was the key to survival and influence.⁷⁵⁰

5.2. Integration, Adaptation and Local Agency: Naples and Amalfi in the Byzantine *koiné*

The entangled histories of Naples and Amalfi in the seventh and tenth centuries reflect not a shared trajectory but two distinctive modes of engagement with the Byzantine koine. While both cities evolved as part and parcel of Byzantine world, and drew on the imperial administrative, religious, and cultural frameworks, their paths diverged in how these influences were absorbed, reconfigured, and projected. Naples, with its deeply rooted urban infrastructure and ecclesiastical institutions, retained a stable yet hybrid alignment with Byzantine models, evident

⁷⁵⁰ Engreen, 1945, 318-330.

its liturgical practices, administrative structures, and continued cultural affinities. Amalfi, by contrast, cultivated a more mobile and maritime-oriented identity, one shaped by expansive diasporic ties, commercial pragmatism, and a nuanced appropriation of Byzantine prestige. Examining their respective relationships with Byzantium within the wider Mediterranean setting, and through comparisons with cities like Cherson, Attaleia, and Comacchio, reveals both the diversity of Byzantine *koine* and the adaptability of coastal urban centres operating within and beyond imperial borders.⁷⁵¹

The early medieval history of Naples and Amalfi is tightly interwoven, especially in the context of their shared Byzantine experience. The close political and military ties between the two cities unfolded against the backdrop of their inclusion first within the Duchy of Naples, then in two separate, independent duchies, but they still maintained strong ties with the imperial *oikumene*. During the seventh and tenth centuries, the historical trajectories of Naples and Amalfi — which was first a part of the Duchy of Naples, then a de facto independent duchy — evolved within the gravitational pull of Constantinople, instead of perceiving the Byzantine Empire as a faraway power.⁷⁵² This nuanced interplay of local autonomy, imperial oversight, and maritime adaptability led the Duchy of Naples and the Duchy of Amalfi to forge their own relationships within the Byzantine *koine*.

From the seventh century onwards, we are confronted with Naples occupying a distinctive position as a Byzantine duchy, formally subordinated to

⁷⁵¹ See Mario del Treppo, “Medioevo e Mezzogiorno: appunti per un bilancio, storiografico, oroposte per un’interpretazione”, in *Forme di potere e strutture sociali Italia nel Medioevo*, (ed.) G. Rossetti, Bologna, 1977.

⁷⁵² Patricia Skinner 2013, 112–113, von Falkenhausen 2021, 560–562.

Constantinople yet increasingly asserting local autonomy. It is true that the imperial administrative control was gradually weakening in the passage from the seventh to the ninth centuries, yet Naples retained a special administrative status as a ducal city, governed by a *dux* who was appointed, at least nominally, by imperial officers until the mid-ninth century, when the Neapolitans drove out two Byzantine officers who were sent by the *strategos* of Sicily — and his expulsion in turn served to maintain a delicate balance between imperial loyalty and pragmatic independence.⁷⁵³

The complex relationship between Naples and the Byzantine Empire during the period under scrutiny can be traced through the narrative of the *Gesta Episcoporum Neapolitanorum* since it reveals the interaction between urban agency, political dependence, and loyalty, both in religious and urban aspects. Obviously, the Church of Naples occupied a central position in the narrative, and its defence against the external interference underscores both its local autonomy and delicate ties to Constantinople. Ecclesiastical records give us a rare insight to the Neapolitan stance with the Byzantines.⁷⁵⁴ On the one hand, Constantine V received severe condemnation from John the Deacon, who blames him singularly for the hardships inflicted on the Neapolitan Church and highlights the tension that arose from the imperial enforcement of Iconoclasm. By describing Constantine V's policies as most repellent madness and imputing to him devilish inspiration, John explicitly absolves the Neapolitans of the so-called heresy, portraying them instead as passive subjects suffering under Byzantine rule.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵³ Mario Del Treppo, "Medioevo e Mezzogiorno: appunti per un bilancio, storiografico, oroposte per un'interpretazione", in *Forme di potere e strutture sociale Italia nel Medioevo*, ed. G. Rossetti, Bologna, 1977, pp. 268

⁷⁵⁴ Luigi Andrea Berto, "Introduction" (2023), 63.

⁷⁵⁵ John the Deacon, *History of the Neapolitan Bishops*, 51–54.

Indeed, the *Gesta* illustrates the shifting perceptions of Byzantium within Neapolitan society. While John the Deacon maintains his harsh stance towards Constantine V (r. 741–775) and the officers connected with Iconoclasm, his broader portrayal of the Byzantine is not negative. He does not systematically condemn the Byzantines; his criticism is largely reserved for individual rulers and specific policies.⁷⁵⁶ Moreover, the nuances in his critiques suggest that even as Naples gradually moved towards greater autonomy, its historical and cultural connections to the Byzantine sphere remained strong. The narrative also indicates that despite episodes of military and political turmoil, such as the Muslim conquest of Sicily, Naples maintained an awareness of events in Constantinople, reflecting continued, if intermittent, channels of communication.⁷⁵⁷ Here, one may bring into the picture the detailed appendix that Skinner prepared, collected from Neapolitan archives, to show that even though Naples gradually became an independent duchy after the ninth century, the relationship between Naples and Byzantines was not severely broken, as the Byzantine presence is vivid in the documentation from between ninth and tenth centuries. In this appendix, one aspect that calls for attention is that the signatures mainly related to ecclesiastical officers — for example, a certain Theodore, deacon of Vitalis, signed his document in 928. On the other hand, Skinner's appendix also highlights the offering by the people — for instance, a certain Caesarius, once again a deacon, dedicated an offering to Saint John I of Naples in 965.⁷⁵⁸

With these preliminary remarks, one may mention that the commonly emphasized narrative of Neapolitan independence seems somewhat overstated.

⁷⁵⁶ John the Deacon, *History of the Neapolitan Bishops*, 56–58.

⁷⁵⁷ Luigi Andrea Berto, “The ‘Other’ Identity” (2023), 12–13.

⁷⁵⁸ Skinner, *Family Power in Southern Italy* (1995), 305–306.

Despite its administrative autonomy, Naples consistently maintained an enduring connection with the Byzantines, as the deep-rooted imperial influences remained on display through the ninth and tenth centuries.⁷⁵⁹ A striking indicator of this connection is the enduring presence of Byzantine religious practices and institutions, which can be paired with the regions of Calabria and Apulia, which formally remained under Byzantine authority.⁷⁶⁰ Naples hosted a Greek congregation, with SS. Sergius and Bacchus merged in SS. Theodore and Sebastian in the mid-tenth century, which was furthermore governed by an *hegumenos*, a typical Byzantine monastic title to define the head of the monastery.⁷⁶¹ The coexistence of the Byzantine rites within the city underscores the cultural duality that Naples maintained; Christian practices coexisted alongside strong eastern liturgical traditions, which shaped communal religious identity.⁷⁶² Yet there is no documentary evidence on these Greek-speaking people who hailed from the eastern Mediterranean, the monks and nuns of the monasteries (St. Demetrius, St. Anastasius, St. Antonius and the nunnery of St. Marcellinus and Petrus) were Neapolitans, leaving instead refugees coming from other regions.⁷⁶³ On the other hand, von Falkenhausen underscores the fact that the practice of Byzantine liturgy in Naples was widespread and is frequently attested in medieval sources, which

⁷⁵⁹ Skinner 1995, 296.

⁷⁶⁰ Von Falkenhausen, *Greek Monasticism in Campania and Latium from the tenth to the fifteenth century* in *Greek Monasticism in Southern Italy: The Life of Neilos in Context*, ed. Barbara Crostini & Ines Angeli Murzaku (Routledge, 2017), 78–95. See also: Vera von Falkenhausen, “Chiesa in greca e Chiesa latina in Sicilia prima della conquista araba,” *Archivio Storico Siracusano* 5 (1978–1979): 137–166; eadem, “Bari bizantina: profilo di un capoluogo di provincia (secoli IX–XI),” in *Spazio, società, potere nell’Italia dei Comuni* (Naples, 1986), 125–227.

⁷⁶¹ Paul Oldfield, *Sanctity and Pilgrimage in Medieval Southern Italy, 1000–1200*, (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 8–9.

⁷⁶² Paolo Bertolini, “La serie episcopale napoletano nei secoli VIII e IX. Ricerche sulle fonti per la storia nell’Italia meridionale nell’alto Medioevo,” *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* XXIV (1970): 339–440.

⁷⁶³ Von Falkenhausen, “I documenti napoletani come fonte lo studio delle interferenze greco-latine (IX–XII secoli) in *La lingua dei documenti notarili alto-medievali dell’Italia meridionale, Bilancio degli studi e prospettive di ricerca*, ed. Paolo Greco & Rosanna Sornicola (Cimitile: Tavolario Edizioni, 2012), 109–115.

describe bilingual (Greek and Latin) services and choirs singing in both languages in the passage between the ninth and tenth centuries. Although local hagiographies were composed in Latin, Neapolitans showed a strong interest in Byzantine hagiography and saints as well, and this is reflected in church dedications and liturgical calendars. This engagement was further supported by numerous Latin translations of the lives of Byzantine saints, prepared by skilled bilingual clerics.⁷⁶⁴

The persistence of Greek language and culture throughout the Byzantine period reveals the city's continuous and complex relationship with the Byzantine *koiné*. For example, the portrayals of Duke Sergius I of Naples and his son Gregory allow us to see that eighth-century Naples exhibited a remarkable revival of Greek language and traditions in Naples. On this basis, one can conclude that the high level of interest was not coincidental, since it was an offspring of Constans II's bestowal of confirmation on the Duchy of Naples.⁷⁶⁵ The material evidence further reinforces this connection: Greek inscriptions from the period between the seventh and eighth century survive, for instance the funeral epigraph of Duke Theodore (721) and a dedication by Kampoulos and his wife Constantina to an unnamed church.⁷⁶⁶ In an administrative sense, from Cosmas (r. 670–672) to Stephen III (r. 897–911), the Neapolitan dukes had lead seals, indicating strong administrative and symbolic alignment with Byzantine models.⁷⁶⁷ Their knowledge of Greek language and traditions was attested not only by the dukes but also by ecclesiastical leaders such as Bishop Athanasius and Bishop Stephen in the late ninth and early tenth

⁷⁶⁴ Domenico Mallardo, "Il calendario marmoreo di Napoli," in *Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae*, 18 (Rome, 1947), 1–24.

⁷⁶⁵ Luganà 1983, 331.

⁷⁶⁶ Bartolommeo Capasso, *Monumenta ad neapolitani ducatus historiam pertinentia*, vol. II, Naples, 1885, 303–306.

⁷⁶⁷ Von Falkenhausen 2021, 553.

centuries.⁷⁶⁸ On the other hand, as aforementioned, the practice of signing documents in Greek letters was a common practice in Naples from the seventh to the eleventh centuries, which also highlights the hybrid identity of Neapolitans, since they composed most of their documents in Latin, and only one-of-third of the known signatures during the ninth and tenth centuries employed Greek script among the urban and ecclesiastical elites.⁷⁶⁹ By the mid-tenth century, we are confronted with a sort of socio-cultural synthesis, with such religious terms as *hegumenos*, *dipticus*, and *naupегius* demonstrating the vibrant interconnections.⁷⁷⁰

In contrast, the relationship between Amalfi and the Byzantines was more ambiguous than the relationship between Naples and the Byzantines. While the Amalfitans were also heavily influenced by the Byzantines and thrived as part and parcel of the Byzantine *koine*, their position was still more interesting than that of the Neapolitans.⁷⁷¹ Amalfitans favoured seaborne activities, and their diasporas in diverse Mediterranean cities such as Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Alexandria, more than the power play in Campania, Byzantium, remained significant throughout the ninth and tenth centuries. Rulers received Byzantine titles, and as previously stated, they did not issue new laws during the period under scrutiny but ruled in relation to Byzantine law.⁷⁷²

Yet, the relationship between Amalfitans and Byzantines stands out as distinct from that of the Neapolitans, to such an extent that Liutprand of Cremona

⁷⁶⁸ Vitalien Laurent, *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin*, vol. 5 (Paris: L'Eglise, 1963), 725–777.

⁷⁶⁹ Francesca Luzzati Laganà, “Le firme greche nei documenti del Ducato di Napoli,” in *Studi Medievali* III, ser. 3, 23 (1982): 729–752.

⁷⁷⁰ P. Chiesa, “Le traduzioni dal greco: l'evoluzione della scuola napoletana del X secolo” in *Lateinische Kultur im X. Jahrhundert*, ed. W. Berschin (Stuttgart, 1991), 69–82.

⁷⁷¹ Hofmeister, 1920, 120–123.

⁷⁷² Matteo Camera, “Memories...” 2876, 307–324.

(c. 920–972), the Lombard diplomat and chronicler known for his sharp observations regarding Byzantine court life, famously remarked on the prominent presence of Amalfitan merchants and the luxury goods they traded in Constantinople. According to Liutprand, the Amalfitan merchants were so prevalent in the Byzantine capital that luxury items intended for emperors found their way even to prostitutes in Italy.⁷⁷³ Byzantine elements were powerful in religious life, for instance Grotta dell’Affresco exemplify both in religious and liturgical aspects.⁷⁷⁴ Yet, the question remains, why was the Amalfitan and Byzantine relationship different from that between Naples and Byzantium? The titles used by those in power certainly reflected the nature of these relationships; however, similar titles were granted to Lombard rulers such as Landolf of Capua or Guaimar of Salerno after their respective visits to Constantinople, as a token of alliance and support, a part of diplomacy.⁷⁷⁵ The importance of religious interaction cannot be denied, but, as discussed above in the example of Arechis II and the Church of Santa Sophia in Benevento, which is a replica of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, Byzantine liturgy and architecture were not unique to Naples and Amalfi.⁷⁷⁶ Nor do I dismiss the significance of cultural exchange, yet, the Duchy of Gaeta, which also broke away from Naples and became independent in the ninth century, proudly emphasized its notaries who continued to write in Greek and dated their documents in relation to the Byzantine imperial regnal year until the early eleventh century.⁷⁷⁷ What factor, then, was compelling enough about Amalfi’s

⁷⁷³ Kreutz, *Before the Normans* (1991), 83.

⁷⁷⁴ Bergman 1986; Mammato & Abate 2018.

⁷⁷⁵ Von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina nell’Italia meridionale dal IX all’XI secolo* (Ecumenica Editrice, 1978), 36–37.

⁷⁷⁶ Von Falkenhausen 1978, 38–39.

⁷⁷⁷ Armand O. Citarella, “Patterns...” 1968, 503.

relations to lead the dukes to seek protection in Constantinople, after they were driven off Amalfi in the eleventh century?

The answer lies at the heart of Amalfitan trade activities, which led them to build more connections within the maritime cities of the Byzantine *koine* while at the same time maintaining their relations with the Muslim world. One may note that the Neapolitans also forged strong relations with the Muslim world, yet to quote Ibn Hawqal again, one may also assert that the Amalfitan profile was different from the Neapolitan, since Amalfi was praised as the most beautiful of the Tyrrhenian towns, while Naples found a niche for itself as a fine place that, while not as beautiful as Amalfi, boasted Neapolitan linen, which was more highly praised than the city itself, on account of the superior quality of the fabric.⁷⁷⁸ Of course, Neapolitans were also taking part in seaborne activities, but as Abulafia and Skinner remind us, the question we have to ask is not only related to the economic activity itself but also its impact on the social transformations.⁷⁷⁹

Such an argument inevitably raises questions regarding the nature and mechanism of these sustained interactions. On this point, it is worth recalling Citterella's four-corner system, which emphasizes that the Amalfitans' networks system comprised the Byzantine *koine*, Muslim North Africa, Egypt, and Amalfi itself.⁷⁸⁰ At the same time, the Amalfitans' success did not derive exclusively from their mercantile skills but also from their ability to establish multifaceted communications and manage complex networks of relations.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁸ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi* (2013), 113–114.

⁷⁷⁹ Skinner 2013, 114.

⁷⁸⁰ Citterella 1968, 502–504.

⁷⁸¹ Citterella 1968, 504–505.

The core of my argument here is not simply about trade itself — the fact that Amalfi was renowned for its maritime prowess and commercial dynamism is beyond doubt and widely acknowledged through its evolution into a maritime republic.⁷⁸² Rather, I wish to highlight that the Amalfitan ships were bearers not only of material culture, but also of the intangible elements of culture. Indeed, the Amalfitans transported commodities, but they also transmitted the socio-cultural norms and traditional religious habits that traversed Tyrrhenian coastlines in relation to the Byzantine *koine*. As will be further explored in the final section of this chapter, Amalfitan ships were celebrated for the sake of seaborne activities, yet simultaneously served as vehicles of cultural exchange, exploring the Byzantine customs and habits, and mirroring a different dynamic than those of the Neapolitans.⁷⁸³ An illustrative example supporting this argument lies at the heart of the religious sphere, which also underscores Byzantine socio-cultural influence over the Amalfitans. The Neapolitan example of Bishop/Duke Athanasius II testifies to the Byzantine religious and cultural impact, and simultaneous echoes can be traced in the Duchy of Amalfi, both within its own borders and in Constantinople. While the Amalfitan church in Constantinople falls slightly outside the timespan of my dissertation as it was established in the later eleventh century, its existence nonetheless indicates a longstanding Amalfitan presence in the imperial capital before 1054.⁷⁸⁴

Yet, the monastery on Mount Athos which is traditionally associated with Amalfitan patronage presents us with a rare opportunity. While its precise origin

⁷⁸² Barbara M. Kreutz, “The ecology...”, 106

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⁷⁸⁴ Liliana Simeonova, *ibid*, 2021, pp. 201-203

remains debated, its foundation seems to date back to the tenth century.⁷⁸⁵ The debate is not limited to the date of its foundation, but also extends to whether the monastery was not exclusively Amalfitan-owned but patronized by the Amalfitans as well, while some link the monastery with a group of Southern Italians, including Amalfitans.⁷⁸⁶ One compelling hypothesis suggests that this monastery functioned as a spiritual nexus, shaped by itinerant Byzantine monks circulating through the region of Campania, an idea that aligns with the resurgence of Byzantine socio-cultural and religious traditions in Naples, Amalfi, Gaeta, and Calabria and Apulia during the period under scrutiny.⁷⁸⁷

Unfortunately, the current evidence suggests that the only attested church in Amalfi known to have practiced Byzantine rites is St. Nicola di Gallucanta, located on the border between Amalfi and Salerno, dated back to the tenth / eleventh century.⁷⁸⁸ The literary sources tell us that St. Nicholas Gallacanta performed Byzantine rites and that he had imported gold-painted icons and glass lamps from Constantinople, which presents a good example of the cross-cultural relationships.⁷⁸⁹ These connections resonate with the intense Byzantine-influenced decorative program of San Salvatore di Birecto in Atrani, whose materials are conclusively dated to the ninth century, while its strategic position in Atrani, increasingly associated with ducal authority, underscores the enduring strength of Byzantine legitimacy and the cultural framework of the Amalfitan elites, even after formal political separation.⁷⁹⁰

⁷⁸⁵ A. Pertusi, “Monasteri e monachi italiani all’Athos nell’alto medioevo” (1963), 217–51, 223–224.

⁷⁸⁶ Abulafia, “Trade and Crusade, 1050–1250,” in *Mediterranean Encounters, Economic, Religious, Political, 1100–1550* (Routledge, 2000), 13–14.

⁷⁸⁷ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi* (2013), 176.

⁷⁸⁸ Skinner 2013, 176.

⁷⁸⁹ Skinner 2013, 176–177.

⁷⁹⁰ Avegliano 2021.

Returning to Citarella's theory, in which the Amalfitans consistently moved between their city and other nodes of Byzantine *koine*, it seems that the Amalfitan-Byzantine relationship was molded in a different, peculiar cauldron than that of the Neapolitans.⁷⁹¹ Circulating social and ritual practices could not be understated, as both elites and ordinary could be 'at sea' for different reasons. For example, the prominent Manso family, whose members maintained an active presence in both Constantinople and Alexandria, had members frequently traveling. A certain Leo, son of Sergius, travelled to Egypt then returned to Amalfi, and resettled when he took his land back.⁷⁹² Thus, this continuous human movement offers a valuable opportunity to integrate a 'people on the move' framework, to reinforce the argument that the flows shaping Amalfitan society were as much about human agency and cultural entanglement within the Byzantine *koine* as they were about material exchange.⁷⁹³

One may ask a simple question: Who kept moving? Why do we need to travel? Today, it may be hard to believe that traveling during the early Middle Ages was recommended, yet as Wickham indicates, there was no time in Mediterranean history when people did not travel on the sea.⁷⁹⁴

This complexity and structural difference between the two duchies and the nature of their relationships with the Byzantine *koine* can be better perceived when compared to other maritime cities within the same Mediterranean network. In this light, Naples shares notable parallels with capital cities such as Attaleia and Cherson, offering counterpoints to Naples for understanding urban resilience and

⁷⁹¹ Citarella, *Il commercio di Amalfi nell'alto medioevo* (1977), 47–69.

⁷⁹² Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi* (2013), 113.

⁷⁹³ McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (2001).

⁷⁹⁴ Wickham, "On the brick of the Second Cycle..." (2004).

agency within the Byzantine *koine*. While each city operated in a distinct geopolitical and cultural context, all three negotiated imperial frameworks to assert local autonomy and sustain urban vitality.⁷⁹⁵ Attaleia, located on the eastern Mediterranean, played the role of thematic capital city of Kibyrrhaiotai, and blended administrative-military strength with commercial dynamism. Its strategic position linking Anatolia to the eastern Mediterranean as well as facing the Muslim world, with fortified walls and an active harbor, highlights a city deeply engaged in imperial naval policies while maintaining local agency, playing its role both as a military bulwark against the Caliphate and as a maritime hub.⁷⁹⁶ Cherson⁷⁹⁷, situated on the southwestern Crimea on the Black Sea, provides us with a different picture, as a city of the transitional type⁷⁹⁸ rather than as a place for exile.⁷⁹⁹ Mediating between the Byzantines, Khazars, and other regional actors, Cherson also played a key role as a city on the extremes. Therefore, its enduring Roman urban street plan, its local production of amphorae, with two kilns dated to eighth / ninth centuries,⁸⁰⁰ and its rich material culture reveal a resilient center adept at absorbing external influences and facilitating urban vitality. Despite its ambiguous administrative status, Cherson exemplified a flexible, permeable model of Byzantine integration, acting as both gateway and buffer along the imperial's northern frontier.

⁷⁹⁵ Arthur, "Pots and Boundaries" (2007).

⁷⁹⁶ Dimitris Krallis, *Serving Byzantium's Emperors: The Courtly Life and Career of Michael Attaleiates*, Palgrave, 2019.

⁷⁹⁷ The nature of Cherson as a thematic capital remains debated. While Treadgold links its creation to Theophilos (813–842) in response to Khazar reports of Slavic threats, sources like *De Administrando Imperio* and *Theophanes Continuatus* also mention it as the *thema of Klimata*. The term *klimata*, first attested in Theodore the Studite's letters (early ninth c.), appears variably in contemporary chronicles to denote districts with local archontes and *kastra*, though this does not confirm the existence of a fully established thematic structure in Cherson.

⁷⁹⁸ Florin Curta, "Postcards from Maurilia, or the historiography of the Dark-Age cities of Byzantium," in idem, *Medieval Europe from Another Angle* (Routledge, 2016), 33.

⁷⁹⁹ Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy* (2001), 854–867.

⁸⁰⁰ Curta, "Postcards from Maurilia" (2025), 28.

While Naples, Attaleia and Cherson each developed along distinct geographical and political frontiers, they shared a remarkable structural commonality: all three were long-established urban centers that had pre-existing administrative traditions and roles as regional capitals prior to their deeper integration into the Byzantine *koine*. These cities skilfully navigated their way to preserve autonomy while drawing legitimacy from their connection to Byzantium and operating actively in the imperial *oikumene*. Naples, through often highlighted for its local autonomy and later independence, consistently relied on Byzantine governance and socio-cultural frameworks, using imperial ties to reinforce its authority and social cohesion.⁸⁰¹ Similarly, both Attaleia and Cherson, of which the first was certainly, and the latter more dubiously a thematic capital, exercised substantial local autonomy, yet remained anchored within the imperial administrative, cultural, and economic orbit. Attaleia functioned as a military bulwark against the Caliphate, Cherson as a crucial node mediating between Byzantines and the Khazars, resembling Naples and the Neapolitan diplomatic or military relationship with the Byzantines, Lombards and Arabs.⁸⁰² On the other hand, their locations on the extremes fostered a shared mode of operation: balancing local initiative with imperial allegiance. In fact, the long-standing urban legacy of these three cities, their administrative capacity, and active engagement in seaborne activities wove them into the exchange networks of Byzantine *koine*. For instance, local ceramics were in tune with the pottery of Naples and Rome, and had

⁸⁰¹ Federico Marazzi, “Byzantine Naples and Gaeta” (2021), 421.

⁸⁰² Marazzi 2021, 421–422.

been produced in Cherson as a part of globular amphorae within the maritime networks of Mediterranean.⁸⁰³

Amalfi could also be paired with Comacchio: although they emerged from distinct geographical contexts, their development between the sixth and tenth centuries reveals profound structural parallels. Here, the question may arise as to why Amalfi is not more directly compared with Gaeta and Venice. Such comparisons are by no means incorrect, and they remain highly relevant and instructive. Gaeta, like Amalfi, achieved independence from the Byzantines via the Duchy of Naples, yet demonstrated a consistent and profound commitment to Byzantine traditions throughout its political and cultural development, arguably to an even greater extent than Amalfi.⁸⁰⁴ Moreover, Gaetan merchants actively participated in Mediterranean trade networks and were among the merchant groups best documented in Constantinople.⁸⁰⁵ Similarly, Venice employed a strategy of self-fashioned independence, skillfully drawing legitimacy from Byzantium while simultaneously constructing a powerful maritime presence within the Byzantine *koine*. Although these parallels are significant and well-established in the historiography, it is argued here that further insights can be gained by engaging with alternative comparative frameworks. In this respect, examining Amalfi alongside example such as Comacchio offers an opportunity to highlight other dimensions of coastal urbanism, regional connectivity, and hybrid identity formation within the coastal and insular world.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰³ Chris Wickham, "Comacchio and the Central Mediterranean," in *Da un mare all'altro. Luoghi discambio nell'Alto Medioevo europeo e mediterraneo: Atti del Seminario Internazionale Comacchio, 27–29 marzo 2009*, ed. S. Gelichi and R. Hodges (Brepols, 2012), 509.

⁸⁰⁴ Kreutz, "Ships, Shipping," 81–82.

⁸⁰⁵ Skinner, *Family Power*, 101–104.

⁸⁰⁶ Zavagno, *The Byzantine City* (2021), 125.

Comacchio is situated in the northern Adriatic lagoon within the Po River delta, and its liminal position between the Adriatic Sea and hinterland allowed Comacchio to function as regional *emporium*. In addition, Comacchio was made a bishopric by the eighth century.⁸⁰⁷ Both of them shared a liminal coastal identity and functioned as intermediary nodes in the Byzantine *koine*. Amalfi's emergence as a maritime duchy and Comacchio's role as an Adriatic *emporium* reflect a shared logic of exploiting coastlines to integrate them into wider imperial and commercial networks. Each settlement, though locally autonomous to varying degrees, retained deep connections with through different canals. Zavagno's illustration on Monemvasia and Venice can be applied to Amalfi and Comacchio: "protected from land incursions, depending on the sea for their survival, and, finally, boasting semi-independent local aristocratic families who invested in mercantile activities."⁸⁰⁸ As has been stated above, Amalfitan urban elites played active roles in maintaining the seaborne activities as well as the families of Comacchio, yet it is clear that this was a dynamic shared by many medieval urban elites.⁸⁰⁹ Both cities relied on maritime activities, trade and artisanal production and both Amalfi and Comacchio had workshops that are documented and that connected them to Byzantine *koine*. Their shared emphasis on maritime exchange and the mediation of goods such as oil, salt and luxury imports underscore a common pattern of leveraging Byzantine networks to consolidate power and economic resilience.⁸¹⁰

Both Amalfi and Comacchio demonstrated an ability to adopt and adapt Byzantine cultural and symbolic capital to reinforce their regional prominence. In

⁸⁰⁷ Wickham, "Comacchio..." (2012), 503–604.

⁸⁰⁸ Zavagno 2021, 125.

⁸⁰⁹ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi*, 2013.

⁸¹⁰ Wickham 2012, 505–506.

Amalfi, this is visible in the incorporation of Byzantine titles, law, and liturgical elements into daily life and elite circles, in constant cultivation by connectivity to the Byzantine *koiné* as well as facing the Muslim world. Comacchio, operating as an Adriatic emporium, served as a gateway linking Byzantine trade routes with inland Lombard and Frankish markets, illustrating its participation in a shared material and economic culture influenced by Byzantine practices.⁸¹¹ In turn, Amalfi and Comacchio together reveal how newly emerged, smaller coastal settlements could function as dynamic participants in the Byzantine *koiné*, illustrating the flexibility and permeability of imperial influence in early Medieval Mediterranean.⁸¹²

In this sense, the intertwined yet distinct trajectories of Naples and Amalfi during the period under scrutiny illustrate two complementary yet divergent models of interaction with the Byzantine *koiné*. Naples, firmly anchored in the Byzantine administrative, religious and cultural framework, maintained a hybrid identity that combined local autonomy with enduring imperial affiliations, as reflected in its administrative and liturgical practices as well as in its bilingual ecclesiastical culture.⁸¹³ On the other hand, Amalfi pursued a more fluid, dynamic engagement, emerging as a maritime hub within a multi-nodal Mediterranean network that encompassed maritime cities of the Byzantine *koiné* and beyond. This is not to deny that Amalfi had also been administratively impacted by the Byzantines, yet in contrast to Naples, Amalfi leveraged its status by transmitting and staying on the move.⁸¹⁴ Together, these cases that Naples and Amalfi were not passive peripheries

⁸¹¹ Wickham 2012, 505.

⁸¹² Del Treppo and Leone, *Amalfi medievale*.

⁸¹³ von Falkenhausen, Greek Monasticism in Campania and Latium from the tenth to the fifteenth century,” in *Greek Monasticism in Southern Italy* (2017), 78–79.

⁸¹⁴ Kreutz, “Ships, Shipping” (2023), 88–89.

but active participants in the Byzantine *koine*, forging adaptive identities through negotiation, mobility, and continuous socio-cultural entanglement, thus underscoring the vibrant complexity of these two duchies' Byzantine connectivity.⁸¹⁵

The contrasting trajectories of Naples and Amalfi underscore the multiplicity of ways in which cities could participate in the Byzantine *koine* without adhering to uniform models of governance or identity. Naples remained closely tethered to Byzantine structures, retaining elements of imperial administration, bilingual ecclesiastical traditions, and symbolic allegiance, despite its gradual political autonomy. Amalfi, in contrast, expanded its influence through maritime connectivity, embedding itself within multiple Mediterranean circuits that included Byzantine, Muslim and Latin Christian worlds. Its cultural entanglements, from Constantinople to Mount Athos patronage and cross-regional networks, reflect a more decentralized yet equally potent articulation of Byzantine affiliation. Viewed alongside other coastal and liminal cities such as Attaleia or Cherson, both duchies illustrate the elasticity of imperial integration and the agency of local actors in mediating empire. Rather than provincial outposts, Naples and Amalfi emerge as dynamic intermediaries, negotiating power, exchanging traditions, and sustaining urban vitality through the connective tissue of the early medieval Mediterranean.⁸¹⁶

⁸¹⁵ See Paul Arthur, "Pots and Boundaries" 2007.

⁸¹⁶ Armand O. Citarella, *Il commercio di Amalfi nell'alto medioevo*, 1977, Vera von Falkenhausen, *La dominazione bizantina nell'Italia meridionale dal IX all'XI secolo*, Ecumenica Editrice, 1978.

5.3. Weaving the Byzantine *koine*: Naples, Amalfi and the Threads of Mediterranean Connectivity

But for whom does it contain wealth, or embody the untamed environment? Who values the sea, how do people attempt to control it, and who fear what the sea may bring?⁸¹⁷

In their comparative study of the ports of Amalfi and Constantinople, Jones and Harpster pose the simple yet effective question I quoted above, emphasizing one of the fundamental qualities of the relationship between humans and the sea. Indeed, this question highlights the liquid sphere as a medium of communication and connectivity. The wider system I refer to as the Byzantine *koine* found its most vivid and dynamic expression precisely through the coastal and insular world. At this point, the final aspect to be addressed regarding Naples and Amalfi is how these two duchies engaged and interacted with the Byzantine *koine*, articulating their modes of connection within this wider maritime and cultural framework.⁸¹⁸

Throughout its long history, the Mediterranean was never devoid of human movement. Certain periods may have been more perilous than others; yet even during those times, the sea remained an essential part of human life and the sphere of exchange.⁸¹⁹ The Mediterranean ports and harbours connected the micro-regions together, creating socio-cultural bonds between different societies, and so these interactions forged their communities.⁸²⁰ Trade does not signify only economic

⁸¹⁷ Jones and Harpster 2024, 258.

⁸¹⁸ Zavagno, "No Island is an Island," 2020.

⁸¹⁹ Wickham, *Framing the Middle Ages*, 2005.

⁸²⁰ Veikou, "Mediterranean Byzantine Ports and Harbours in the Complex Interplay between Environment and Society," 2014.

activities but also reinforces the mutual language shared between different parties, and material culture in this sense provides the key that can unlock the opportunity of tracing the relationships, in this case the relationship of Naples and Amalfi within the Byzantine *koine*.⁸²¹

During the period under scrutiny, Naples stands as a vivid testament to the enduring vitality and adaptability of Mediterranean urban center, emerging as a crucial intermediary that actively shaped and was formed by the commercial, religious and administrative circulations that defined the early Medieval Mediterranean. Yet, this is not related only to trade, as the officers and pilgrims also frequently used the harbour of Naples. Indeed, in his detailed analysis tracing the humans who traveled, McCormick situates the harbour of Naples as one of the most bustling sites, and in this light, one can affirm that Naples was an active part of the Tyrrhenian Sea route which connects Rome to Constantinople and vice versa. Not just a relay station connecting the wider Mediterranean nodes, the harbor of Naples itself welcomed neighboring peoples such as Gaetans, Amalfitans, Romans, and Sicilians as well as, later on, Arabs.⁸²² People's mobility played a central role in cultivating the cosmopolitan nature of the Neapolitan character, as literary sources describe pilgrims from Asia Minor integrating Naples into their journey to Rome, or passing through Naples on their way to Rome, such as in the case of the pilgrim from Asia Minor, which showcases the central position of Naples within trans-Mediterranean pilgrimage routes.⁸²³ In other words, these integrations show the practical utility of the harbour as well as its symbolic weight as a spiritual waypoint, where East and West converged in devotion and travel. On the other

⁸²¹ Zanini, "Non-Agricultural Items," 2021.

⁸²² McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 2001.

⁸²³ McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 492–493.

hand, the story of St. Nicon, a sort of imaginary native, accentuates Naples as a liminal departure point between land and sea, embodying the duality of chance and providence that characterized medieval spiritual journeys, resembling Byzantine hagiographical elements.⁸²⁴ This in turn has led us to think about the vitality of Naples, as Wickham highlights, as the Tyrrhenian Sea route remained one of the most active maritime corridors, linking the Aegean basin, Sicily and the Italian coastal cities, among which Naples played a prominent role.⁸²⁵ This could be seen in examples such as when Pope Constantine disembarked in Constantinople at the beginning of the eighth century, as he and his envoys left the Italian coastlines from the harbour of Naples. St. Willibald, on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, took the ship from Gaeta, landed in Naples and visited the shrines of the city before boarding an Egyptian ship. Furthermore, the urban elites held a key role on these maritime travels when the Byzantine officers disembarked in the harbor of Naples in the ninth century. As stated before, the harbor of Naples had workshops and facilities, the emphasis on the merchant ships, granting licences to navigate or houses as well as for storage illuminate Naples as a maritime haven, where diverse layers of human mobility — devotional, aristocratic, commercial and sometimes accidental — continuously developed.⁸²⁶

Over these centuries, the materials yielded from Naples also underscore its integration into a thread of the Mediterranean characterized by strong connection to the Byzantine economic, cultural and religious sphere. In this regard, the pottery assemblages uncovered in Naples from between the sixth and tenth centuries offer a vivid and multidimensional lens into the integration of Naples within the

⁸²⁴ McCormick, *ibid*, 494.

⁸²⁵ Wickham, *Framing the Middle Ages*, 2005.

⁸²⁶ McCormick 2001, 353–365.

Byzantine *koine*. Indeed, we are confronted with the artisanal and commercial activities in Naples, and these findings articulate the role of Naples as a dynamic contact zone and redistribution center. The fragment of an amphora handle of the Keay LII, primarily produced in Calabria and Sicily and widely used in wine transportation until the late sixth century, yet slightly extended into the early Byzantine period, stamped with a symbol of menorah discovered in Piazza Municipio, embodies Naples' participation in specialized and religiously coded trade circuits.⁸²⁷ As the letters of Gregory I also testify, Naples had housed a Jewish community, and the presence of menorah stamp (a rare feature) suggests that the amphora was sold to the Jewish community, signifying kosher certification and hinting at religiously regulated supply chains. This amphora not only reveals direct links between Naples and production centres in Southern Italy but also connect the city to the wider Mediterranean Jewish diaspora, including Rome and potentially further east.⁸²⁸ Another object which is a lamp, stamped with a candelabrum motif, harkens back to the early eighth century. This lamp was unearthed in the excavations of the Piazza Bovio, one of the critical quarters of Byzantine Naples. Sharing similar typology with North African and eastern Mediterranean lamps, it falls within the broader corpus of Byzantine ceramic lamps: Small, wheel-made, having a single nozzle and decorated disc, and imprinted with its production date, this lamp also coincides with the integration of Naples into the Byzantine *koine*. These also indicate the hybrid identities of Neapolitan community, reflecting diverse religious affiliations.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁷ Giancarlo Lacerenza, "Bolli con *menorah* su anfore Keay LII lucerne di età bizantina da Napoli," *Sefer Yuhasin* (2021): 7–8.

⁸²⁸ Lacerenza 2021, 9.

⁸²⁹ Lacerenza 2021, 10–12.

On the other hand, pottery is far more than inert material debris; it is a dynamic archive of human relationships, and because of this, pottery serves as a crucial indicator of the relationships between early medieval communities. Its production, formation, distribution and use reveal trade networks, cultural exchanges, and social identities in ways that texts alone often cannot. Ceramic forms and motifs reflect shared habits and customs, religious affiliations, and economic ties, tracing connections across regions and between diverse communities. As everyday objects deeply embedded in daily life, pottery offers a tangible and enduring record of how communities interacted and integrated.⁸³⁰

The archaeological investigations conducted in Naples, particularly in the areas of Piazza Municipio, Piazza Bovio or Carminiello ai Mannesi as well as Miseno, have yielded substantial evidence of ceramic and amphora production and consumption from the mid sixth to the eighth century. Carminello ai Mannesi presents Naples' role as a distributor since CM 18 amphorae, from the fifth to early seventh century, used for wine transportation, have been found in the area. The distribution remains primarily regional, as it is also found in Sicily and Campania.⁸³¹

By the seventh century, a gradual decline in African imports conceded with an increased presence of eastern Mediterranean amphorae, notably LR 1 (Syria-Palestine), LRA 2 (Chios) and LRA 4. The LR 1 amphorae in particular frequently carried *tituli picti* in red, denoting producer names, capacities and lot numbers, emblematic of a well-regulated Byzantine trade network.⁸³² Meanwhile, globular

⁸³⁰ Joanita Vroom, "The Byzantine Web ...", 2017.

⁸³¹ Maria Cosentino, "La produzione locale a Napoli: Carminelli 18..." in *LCRW6: Late Roman Coarseware*, ed. V. Caminneci et al. (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2023), 270–278.

⁸³² Vittoria Carsana & Franca Del Vecchio, "Contesti ceramici da un edificio ..." (2023), 77–89, 880–81.

amphorae from Chios (LRA 2) and smaller containers from Asia Minor such as LRA 3 and LRA 5/5 reveal the breadth of Neapolitan links to the Aegean and Anatolian as well as Levantine worlds.⁸³³ Amphorae of Southern Italian origin, particularly the Keay 52 type for carrying local Bruttian wine, saw a boom from the fifth to the seventh century, reflecting a tendency toward regional production of the urban elites.⁸³⁴ The excavations also revealed a rich assemblage of over 55.000 ceramic fragments, dominated by ARSW (African Red Slip fine wares) and locally produced cooking wares, reflecting both long-standing Campanian traditions and continued African influence until the seventh century.⁸³⁵

In this sense, Naples provides us with an opportunity to situate it within the Byzantine *koine*. Between the sixth and seventh centuries, there was a significant change in Neapolitan ceramic record, as closed cooking pots gave way to open forms, especially lug-handled casseroles.⁸³⁶ Arthur interprets the introduction and spread of lug-handled casseroles in Naples as as well as other Southern Italian settlements as a new culinary tradition, possibly inspired by North African and eastern Mediterranean practices. These open casseroles were used until the re-emergence of closed forms. The distribution of chafing dishes, which began circulating widely, from the eighth century onwards, is strongly associated with Byzantine culinary practices and these are found predominantly in areas of direct Byzantine influence or in regions aligned with Constantinople, such as Naples, Rome and Cherson. In turn, the emergence of such dishes in Naples underscores

⁸³³ Carsana & Del Vecchio, “Contesti ceramici da un edificio ...” (2023), 82.

⁸³⁴ Carsana & Del Vecchio 2023, 83.

⁸³⁵ Carsana & Del Vecchio 2023, 84.

⁸³⁶ Arthur, *Pots and Boundaries*, 2006.

the participation of Naples in the Byzantine *koine*, beyond strictly administrative or economic exchange, in a cultural sense as well.⁸³⁷

On the other hand, Naples also had played a role in production of the amphorae, as two kiln centres have been yielded. In Miseno and on the island of Ischia, there was sustained active manufacture of amphorae, exemplified by the anfora di Miseno. Excavations at Miseno revealed kilns and production debris that confirmed consistent activity into the eighth century, while wasters beneath San Restituta at Lacco Ameno on Ischia attest to similar ceramic traditions.⁸³⁸ These amphorae also served to transport Campanian wine, a product celebrated since antiquity, attested also in the vineyards of Amalfi in the early periods of the duchy as mentioned before.⁸³⁹ Due to the discovery of Neapolitan amphorae in the Crypta Balbi at Rome, supported by the relevant documentary evidence, it is possible to say that Duke Theodore of Naples sent 100 amphorae of wine to Pope Gregory II, and this fact further confirms Naples as a key supplier within ecclesiastical networks.⁸⁴⁰

Naples' status as a trade hub is affirmed by several references into its bustling market place and the presence of negotiators, sailors and different groups such as Amalfitans, Gaetans and Pisans, for example Sergius the Amalfitan, a merchant whose will, which included luxury goods like fine linen, indicated the city's role in redistributing Mediterranean products.⁸⁴¹ The residential architecture, comprising multi-storeyed houses resembling their Amalfitan counterparts, reveals

⁸³⁷ Arthur 2006.

⁸³⁸ Gianfranco de Rossi et al. "Il Porto di Miseno: In Età Tardoantica: Analisi dei Contesti Ceramic" in *LRCW* 3, ed. Simonetta Menchelli et al. (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010), 487.

⁸³⁹ Gianfranco de Rossi et al. (2010), 488.

⁸⁴⁰ Gianfranco de Rossi et al. (2010), 490.

⁸⁴¹ Skinner, "Urban Communities ..." (1999), 287.

a complex and dense structure that went hand in hand with occupations such as those of smiths, goldsmiths, soap-makers, spinners, as well as merchants, priests, monks and nuns, and illuminate a vital urban life in a bustling maritime city.

Hence, while Naples maintained a lively and strong connection with the Byzantine *koine*, clearly connected in its material culture, a question that may arise is, why did Ibn Hawqal nevertheless elevate Amalfi so highly above Naples? Kreutz claims that the answer lies at the heart of Amalfitan relationships with the Muslim world, following the lead of Citarella, while Skinner argues on different possibilities such as the nexus that Amalfitans created in their diaspora.⁸⁴² This in turn is what Jones and Harpster suggest as they argue that what makes Amalfi essential lies at the heart of their outlook and fleet.⁸⁴³

The maritime surveys on the Costiera Amalfitana revealed three underwater bodies of ceramics dated back to the early Middle Ages, but these have yet to be studied.⁸⁴⁴ Unfortunately, most of the materials that pertain to the Byzantine and Amalfitan relationship, such as the bronze doors, Farfa Casket or the relics of St. Andrew only date back to the early eleventh century.⁸⁴⁵ Arthur writes as follows: “Amalfi is one of those sites for which archaeological evidence is almost totally lacking yet highly desirable, given the site’s role in early medieval exchange evidenced through the texts.”⁸⁴⁶ Because of this, I focus on the literary sources to draw a portrait of Amalfitan movements within the Byzantine *koine* during the passage under scrutiny.

⁸⁴² Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi* (2013), 117–123.

⁸⁴³ Jones and Harpster (2024), 360.

⁸⁴⁴ Jones and Harpster (2024), 358.

⁸⁴⁵ Klein, “Amalfi, Byzantium ...” (2015), 143–144.

⁸⁴⁶ Arthur, “From Italy to the Aegean and Back” (2012), 342.

One of the earliest records concerning the Amalfitans acting within the Byzantine *koine* is a reference to an anonymous Byzantine officer who delivered the message of Byzantine *strategos* of Sicily for naval aid to drive Muslims off the island to Naples, Amalfi, and Gaeta.⁸⁴⁷ The joint operation went all the way to Lampedusa, an island between Sicily and North Africa, reflecting Amalfitan familiarity with long sea voyages and powerful ships by the ninth century.⁸⁴⁸

Yet, the earliest records, as mentioned above, are obscure. One of the primary sources, the *Chronicon Salernitanum*, states that the foundation of Amalfi harkens back to the people from Rome, who while sailing to Constantinople, were shipwrecked and settled in Amalfi. This narrative is surely a legend, yet it is an important indicator of how people forged imaginary bonds with a story including old and new capitals, in a world where the stories had been heard ear to ear.⁸⁴⁹ While the Amalfitans were actively taking part in seaborne trade, for instance in the early ninth century, we find an Amalfitan presence in Taranto selling amphorae.⁸⁵⁰ Unfortunately, a lack of relevant archaeological work hinders obtaining a better grasp of these activities. It is certain that they were seafarers and mariners, but in Amalfi, the term ‘at sea’ could have been applied anyone who wished to make money in maritime trade, then come back and own land in or around Amalfi, as the case of a certain Leo demonstrates.⁸⁵¹ Amalfitans pragmatically pursued extensive administrative, religious, and commercial ties with Byzantines. They traded spice, luxury goods, silk, and ceremonial garments, especially from the Byzantines; and jewels and icons within the maritime routes of

⁸⁴⁷ McCormick, 2021, 859.

⁸⁴⁸ Kreutz, *Before the Normans*, 1991, 89–90.

⁸⁴⁹ *Chronicon Salernitanum*.

⁸⁵⁰ Arthur 2012, 343.

⁸⁵¹ Skinner, *Medieval Amalfi* (2013).

the Byzantine *koine*, gradually becoming intermediaries between the western and eastern Mediterranean, especially after ninth century. Yet, materializing the Amalfitan activities within the Byzantine *koine* calls for further studies due to the lack of archaeology. Yet, one may conclude that the Amalfitans were close enough to the Byzantines to make Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (905–959) write that Amalfi had always have been under the basileus of the Romans with Naples and Gaeta, while Niketas Choniates reluctantly admits that the Amalfitans were closest to the Byzantines as they were nurtured in Roman customs. Both statements are powerful indicators of how Amalfi was perceived by the Byzantines.⁸⁵²

As this chapter reaches its end, the historical trajectories of Naples and Amalfi during the sixth and tenth centuries offer a compelling illustration of the flexibility and vitality inherent within the Byzantine *koine* and reveal two distinct yet profoundly interconnected models of urban adaptation and connectivity. Naples, anchored in the Byzantine administrative and liturgical spheres, maintained a hybrid identity that deftly balanced local autonomy with enduring imperial affiliations, evident in its material culture, ecclesiastical life and socio-political frameworks. Amalfi emerged as a more fluid maritime city, leveraging its strategic mobility to weave intricate networks across the Mediterranean, and embodied a dynamic, multifaceted engagement with both the Byzantine and Muslim worlds. Together, these duchies exemplify how coastal cities did not just passively absorb imperial influence and were not perceived in their time as extreme outposts by the Byzantines, as constant dialogue between the Duchy of Naples, Duchy of Amalfi and Byzantium continued throughout the period under scrutiny. By situating Naples and Amalfi within the threads of the interconnected Byzantine *koine*, this chapter

⁸⁵² Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*.

has endeavored to illuminate how these duchies not only survived, but thrived as adaptive, resilient, integrative models, affirming their enduring significance in the evolving nature of the early Medieval Mediterranean.



CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined the Duchy of Naples and the Duchy of Amalfi during the transitional period from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages, analysing their historical trajectories, peculiar features and characteristics, and urban transformations within the broader network of the Byzantine *koine*. This system, composed of shared habits, traditions, and practices, was significant in that it allowed diverse communities across the Mediterranean to converge within a common socio-political, economic, and cultural framework. In this light, the primary aim of this study has been to explore how Naples and Amalfi developed within the Byzantine *koine* and how they interacted with other cities and regions. In turn, beyond explaining the historical development of Naples and Amalfi, the broader perspective, that the idea of the Byzantine *koine* presents us, it has sought to illuminate how Naples and Amalfi functioned in the wider mechanism of the Byzantine Mediterranean. As the Mediterranean was characterized by fragmentation and turbulent times in the passage from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages, these maritime cities emerged as the offspring of this fragmented yet connected liquid sphere that led them to develop resilient, adaptive urban identities and to forge their administrative, socio-economic and religious relationships within this broader world.⁸⁵³

Much has been said on the Byzantine Duchies of Naples and Amalfi in terms of transformation, extraordinary maritime success, the complex matrix of Lombards, Muslims, Neapolitans, Amalfitans and partially Byzantines. Yet, little room has given in the existing literature to the Byzantine influence on Naples and

⁸⁵³ Luca Zavagno, “The sublime objects of liminality” (2024), 26.

Amalfi and the roles actively played by Amalfi and Naples as part and parcel of the Byzantine *koine*, rather than being administrative centers or exceptional mercantile societies. On the contrary, the Byzantine period of Naples and Amalfi is generally perceived as a transitional period between Classical Age to the first millennium, as if these cities were under a sort of distant power that only remembered the existence of these two duchies when the occasion called for it. In this light, it seems to me that some conclusive remarks have to be driven home.

First and foremost, the notion of a distant power nestled on the historiography of the Byzantine Duchy of Naples and Duchy of Amalfi should be reconsidered. While Byzantium was certainly an empire centred in Anatolia and Aegean, which made up its heartland, characterizing the connection between Naples, Amalfi, and Byzantium as a nominal allegiance to a distant authority still obscures our understanding of the developmental trajectories of these two duchies. Such a perspective disregards the broader mobility, adaptability and interconnectivity of the Neapolitans and Amalfitans, reducing their relationship with each other and within the Byzantine *koine* to a purely transactional dynamic, and this has led us to overlook the complex and multifaceted processes at play. In this sense, it is crucial to emphasize that Byzantine influence did not merely emanate from the emperor residing in Constantinople and governing the empire. If we conceptualize Byzantine influence as limited merely to Constantinople and its immediate surroundings, the risk of overlooking many essential aspects of Mediterranean dynamics. In this context, the frequently invoked notion of a ‘distant power’, which appears prominently in many studies on Amalfi and Naples, becomes potentially misleading. It is undeniable that both of these duchies were located on the western frontier of Byzantium and were geographically distant from

the imperial centre. However, as illustrated by the examples of Pope Constantine, St. Willibald or imaginary St. Nicon, the Mauro family or even an ordinary individual such as Leo, son of Sergius, the Mediterranean was not a space devoid of human movement.⁸⁵⁴ In 778, envoys carrying news from Rome to Constantinople embarked from Naples, while Byzantine officers sailed from Constantinople to Naples. In 10th century Naples, church donations and notary documents could have been signed in Greek while the Amalfitans traced their family lineages to ancestors who held, or claimed to hold, Byzantine titles to underscore the elite status in the community. Even when the dukes of Naples and Amalfi made autonomous decisions and asserted their independence, they continued to employ Byzantine administrative models and did not disregard Byzantine influence. This is evident in their persistent use of imperial titles, in the reigns of Neapolitan dukes, such as Sergius, Gregory and Athanasius II whose reigns reflected Byzantine administrative, socio-cultural and religious codes in their governance, or in the case of the Amalfitan dukes who consistently ruled in relation to Byzantine law, instead issuing their own in general. This influence can also be traced in Atrani, where the church of San Salvatore de Birecto was adorned with Byzantine motifs. Although a later example, yet the instant change of the patron saint of Amalfi, following the arrival of St. Andrew was not solely due to the saint's high position in the celestial hierarchy but also significantly related to the fact that his relics had been brought from Constantinople.

The second point that warrants our consideration is the urban transformation of these two maritime cities. Although the lack of comprehensive archaeological evidence prevents us from constructing a complete panorama of

⁸⁵⁴ Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 2001

early Medieval Amalfi, it is nonetheless possible to state that both cities were fortified settlements, formed around churches and main cathedrals, equipped with different type of harbours and workshops. However, the fundamental point here, indeed, the defining nature that shaped the destinies and marked the transformative trajectories of Naples and Amalfi, is that the former was a deeply rooted in urban practices since the Classical Age, while the latter, despite the foundation legacies harken back to the earlier times than the reality, emerged as an early Medieval settlement with no Roman roots. Furthermore, the natural resources and arable lands that Naples had made the city as self-sufficient whereas Amalfi lacked those possibilities due to her geographical position. In fact, one of the characteristics that significantly impacted their respective transformations recalls one of the famous dictums, attributed to Ibn Khaldun, “geography is destiny”. Naples, with her vast territories, urban tradition and vibrant marketplaces developed more administrative and socio-cultural bonds within the Byzantine koine. Amalfi, where anyone could seize an opportunity at sea (if the weather conditions were in favour), followed a markedly different path, shaped by the possibilities of the sea. This is not to deny that Naples also had conducted seaborne activities, yet their role ‘at sea’ was lesser than the Amalfitans, as it seems to me that Naples tended to control the maritime trade and distribute the goods, rather being actively on the ships.

Third point which needs to be taken into consideration is the complex matrix of the relationships which include three main powers of the early Medieval Age: Byzantines, Arabs and in a later period Carolingians went hand in hand with Neapolitans and Amalfitans as well as Lombards. In my view, this hexagonal framework offers a valuable opportunity to understand the mobility, diplomatic skills and adaptation that characterized Neapolitan and Amalfitan identities. Amalfi

and Naples emerged as two cities that continuously renewed and sustained their networks of connection. If we include also the Papacy within this matrix, we are confronted with a mosaic of diverse Mediterranean intersections, and throughout the period under examination, both Naples and Amalfi exhibited a progressive trajectory characterized by the consistent reconfiguration and reconstruction of their identities and urban forms within this dynamic matrix. It can be argued that the key of Amalfi's so-called exceptional success and the ability of Naples to preserve her urban structure and continuity, lay precisely in this capacity for consistent reinvention, rapid adaptation to change and the development of strategies attuned to new circumstances. During the 8th and 9th centuries, the ability of Naples, Amalfi as well as Byzantium to safeguard their interests and deploy their diplomatic skills to the fullest extent can be attributed to the shared customs and habits both in administrative, socio-cultural and economic frameworks provided by the Byzantine *koine*.

Last but not least, as this thesis conducts research on the connected maritime nodes throughout Byzantine *koine*, therefore, the material culture provides us with the possibility of giving a form to these relationships. In this sense, one can safely conclude that we are confronted with two maritime settlements where their inhabitants were actively performing within the Byzantine *koine*. The materials allow us to say that Naples and Amalfi, located on the western extreme of the Byzantine world, connected with the other maritime cities and beyond by seaborne activities, communicating with the other cities by trade. Not only by trade but also by sharing their dietary regimes, circulating around the coastlines of the Byzantine *koine*, adapting their religious practices, liturgical elements, and performing these rites in their respective churches, Naples and Amalfi emerge as urban portraits of

high adaptability, interconnectivity and resilience, rather outposts on the extreme where Byzantines did not pay attention and vice versa.

Cesare Pavese, one of the renowned Italian authors, writes as the following: “If it were not for this difficulty, we would all die of boredom. Indeed, the essence of lie lies at the heart of one’s struggles and reconciliation with this feeling, and in the effort to confront and resolve the challenges it brings.” It seems to me that he cogently encapsulates the conclusion of this thesis as Naples and Amalfi challenged the difficulties of a fragmented, yet connected Mediterranean, rather than being exceptionalities or survivors the Duchy of Naples and Duchy of Amalfi confronted and resolved the challenges, occupied prominent places in the Byzantine *koine*.⁸⁵⁵

⁸⁵⁵ Cesare Pavese, *Yaşama Uğraşı: Günlükler (1935-1950)*, İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2000, 222.

FIGURES



FIG I. Byzantine Mediterranean, 6th-10th centuries (Author)

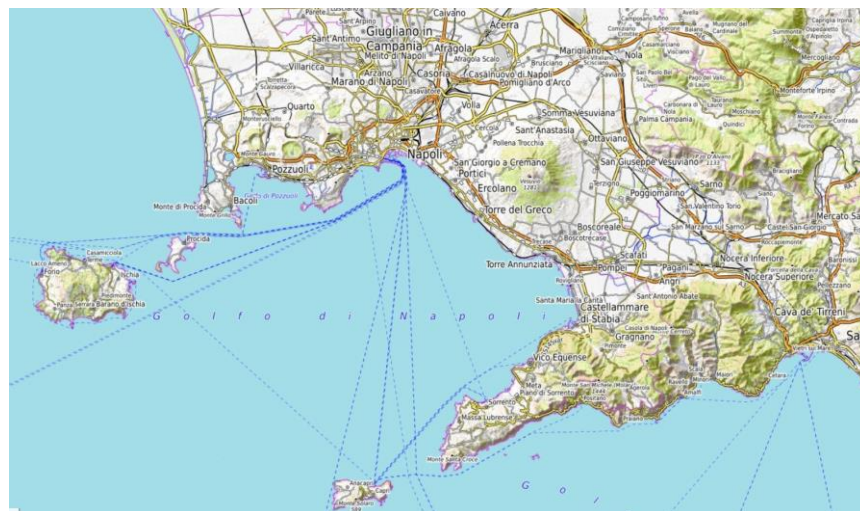


FIG II: Naples and the Gulf of Naples (Author)

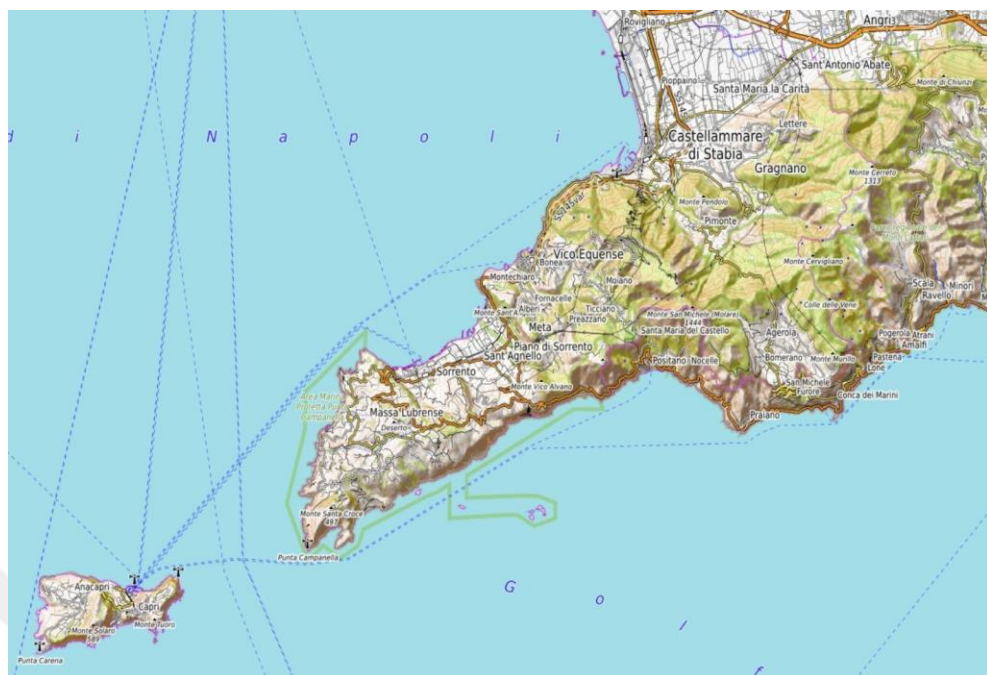


FIG III. Amalfi and the Bay of Salerno (Author)



FIG IV. Leo III, Nomisma, Naples (Dumbarton Oaks the Coins Collection)

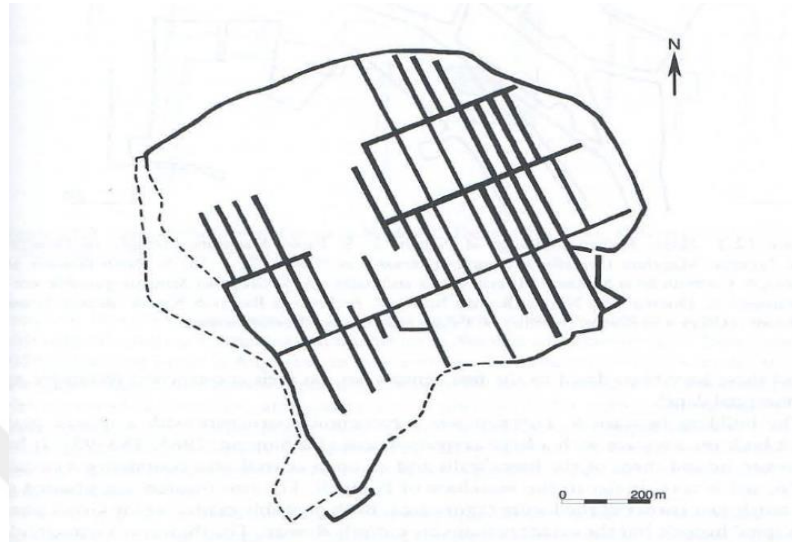


FIG V: Naples, Street Plan (After Kathryn Jones)



FIG VI: Earring, 6th-7th century, Naples (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli)



FIG VII. The Family of Ilaritas, 6th century, Naples



FIG VIII: Bishop Quodvultdeus, 6th century, Naples



FIG IX. Fresco, 10th-11th century, San Maria d'Olearia, Amalfi



FIG X: Fresco, 9th-10th century, San Mario di Pattano, Amalfi

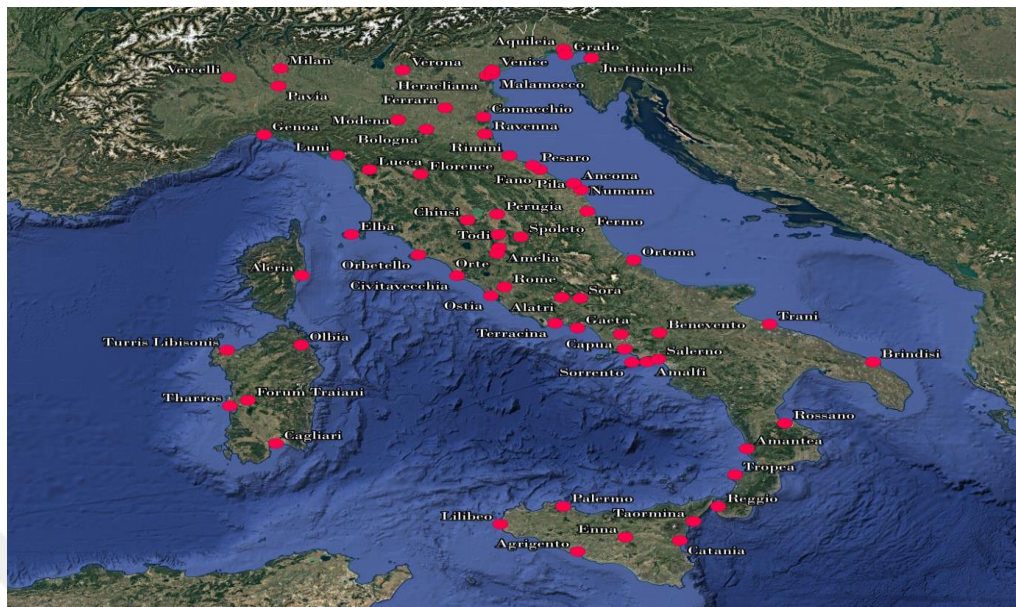


FIG XI. Byzantine Italy, 6th-10th Centuries (Author)



FIG XII: Byzantine Mediterranean 9th-10th Centuries, (Author)



FIG XIII: Amalfi (Author)



FIG XIV: Duomo di Amalfi (Author)

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