

The currencies of Bizancio

The foundation by Constantino the 1 Great one (306-337) of the city of Constantinople in 330, was the concrete signal of which already it was maturing for decades in Roman world. They were numerous and complex the problems that weighed on the Roman civilization, all they of so vast and deep reach as not to find safe answer through a prolonged and winding period of crisis that would take to the aim of old world and at the beginning of which usually we define as Average Age. The dramatic economic situation, caused in ample measurement by the large estate ownership, caused a pauperización of agriculture, one of pila~ head of cattle not only economic but also social of Roman world. The commercial activity did not enjoy better health, because the wars, political instability and the financial crisis had blocked the production and the interchanges. The measures taken with the purpose of straightening the situation was pronounced like mere palliatives that, in fact, worsened the do-nothing policy of commerce and lead to the creation of coercive forms of work. The large estate ownership, always cause of obscurantismo and whose productive results are little, the abandonment of many cultivables lands and the desperate necessity of greater tributary income every time, explain the evolution towards the structure social of the servitude of gleba, typical of medieval world and in which one committed the colonos to remain assigned during generations to the Earth that worked. To the generalized anarchy the numerous Barbarian invasions were added that the State fought of contradictory way, looking for on the one hand to repel the enemies violently towards the borders, and on the other hand admitting in army to many Barbarians (surprising solution inspired by the demographic crisis). This situation damaged the unit irremediably of Empire and fed forces brought on imposing the diverse provincianismos, which, every time with greater decision and arrogance, they showed its intention to move away of the centralized organization of Rome.

the solution of Constantino I

To all these problems, very present in Roman world already in second half of century III, tried to give Constantino solution them the 1 Great one, who by a time seemed to instill new life to the figure of emperor, to the way of the great sovereigns of happened. He had included/understood the importance well of letting consider the East like a province of Empire, like a mere appendix of the bar Roman. In effect, the traditions and the indómito spirit of rebellion had to find a right and worthy channel, and to be able to express themselves in agreement with its peculiar mentality. The creation of an authoritarian State, in which all the powers centralized into the hands of the emperor, political and military head undisputed, it was the principle on which Constantino 1 based its performance. If the carried out changes by the emperor in the organization of the State were revolutionary, still more radical it was his attitude in religious plane. Conscious of the political, social and moral importance of the religion Christian (more and more hard and organized, mainly in East), Constantino 1 promulgated in year 313 edicto of tolerance (or Milan, by the published city in which), according to which Christianity was gotten up to the religions of State. This proclamation of religious freedom caused a change of attitude on the part of Christian society that, a long time ago, refused to participate in the management of the public thing, prevailing with it to the power class leader of an element very described and enterprising. The Church and its ministers were acquiring every greater time to be able, secundando to emperor in the political task. Constantino 1,

demonstrating a remarkable ability, wanted to appear like chosen by God to obtain triumph of the Church. It did not take in attributing the position of head of this one, inaugurating, cesaropapismo (that is the performance of the powers politician and monk of State), that if he were not accepted in Rome yes was spread in East.

a city between two worlds

Constantinopla (the old Bizancio and present Istambul) is raised to borders of Bosphorus, in a situation of hinge between Europe and Asia, in the heart of that grecooriental civilization that knew the figure religious king-head and even considered it most suitable to management of State (we think about the Pharaohs) and paid all the honors to him. The Roman Empire was divided definitively in two parts (Eastern and western), and this one was another one of the causes of its weakness and decay. Without a doubt, the different destiny from Constantinopla with respect to Rome came determined by the favorable geographic situation from rimera of those capitals, by one better military organization and bureaucratic, and by an economic activity that Rome a long time ago had forgotten. In addition, its capacity was important to absorb to adopt the experiences of other towns, without resigning to the originality and the identity own. This schematic introduction is necessary to include/understand not only the height of Constantinopla in comparison with Rome (this one fell in year 476, whereas the Empire of East prolonged its existence until 1453), but also for a correct reading of the currencies bizantinas, only in appearance poor and deprived of iconográfico interest.

New features of the currencies bizantinas

One says that the currencies bizantinas are the continuation of the Romans. This is truth partly, mainly in which it talks about to first years of Empire of East, although with the course of time the production was acquiring more and more characteristic own and original, tie to the peculiar structure of a State that it had in religious component one of its foundations. This component it adopted immediately to distinguish to the currencies bizantinas, and constitutes the most outstanding characteristic and the point of total renovation with respect to the previous currencies. All the iconográficos subjects, in effect, are centered in the Christian propaganda and the figure of an authority civilian had with one acusadísima sacralidad. If the Greek or Roman currencies are compared (in which also they appeared divinities) with the bizantinas, notice remarkable and deep differences. The profile of Athenian or the face of Aretusa, in the currencies of scope culture Greek, they represent a municipality (in the mentioned cases, respectively Athens and Siracusa) and not a religious concept. The figures of Morning call, the Dioscuros, Mars, Minerva and the rest of the numerous divinities that appear in the Roman currencies, represent a tradition, they symbolize the virtues or the characteristics of Latin town, like the personifications of the mercy are allegorical, justice or @, mercy. In the currencies bizantinas are the cross and the images of Christ, the Virgin and the saints, often represented in narrow entailment with the emperor, is about a true religious propaganda, a species of manifestation of the indissoluble bows between divine and earth authority, which constitute the base of the same existence of Empire, justifies it and they legitimize it.

the art of the recorders

Indeed in its official figure of titling of to be able theocratic, the emperor rigidly assumes a

conventional aspect, iconography this one very moved away of the beautiful pictures of Roman world. It is transformed with it into a symbol and no longer one talks about a specific subject. It is had debated much on the hieratismo, (typical attitude of a priest) and the rigidity of the imperial figures in the currencies bizantinas. Many specialists considered until alguni years ago the tinos recorders were totally lacking of artistic sensitivity and of ability. The certain thing is that the craftsmen who worked in the mints bizantinas were in their majority excellent chisellers. Thus they testify the put care and the attention in the @ The currencies coined during bizantino Imperio partly recover the denominations already in use in the últimos years of the Roman hegemony. The bizantino gold currency, in effect, was **solidus**, introduced at the time of Constantino 1 and that soon stayed like the axis of everything the bizantino economy. Constantino 1 based its monetada reform on the abandonment of the defense of denado, using in the transactions daily and that the emperors always had protected until that moment. The solid became the foundation of the economy, parameter in accordance with which the payments of little volume were moderate. The denario, now preferredly of copper, lost all power of interchange and caused to a deep crisis to great part of the population of craftsmen and small rural propietanos. EJ Empire of East did his the solid as much in the weight as in the alloy, and conserved it intact until end of century I removing it the processes of degradation and devaluation (after the diverse devaluations of the Roman gold currency had been arrived at the 4. 54 weight of g, equivalent to 1/72 third of solid). silver currencies, today all of them very evenness, were **miliarensis** “, introduced at the time of emperor Leon 111 (years 717-741) and @, **siliqua** ” (1 miliarensis = – 2 siliquas), that as well counted on the submultiples of the average siliqua and the quarter of siliqua.

a great number of reforms

is the bizantinos monetary systems not yet underwent diverse clarified and defined reconstructions of everything. Between the main ones reforms we remember Yla de Anastasio, of year 498, that introduced the definition of **foiis**, from that moment indicated clearly and established by several silas, as well as provided often with there is and indication of the mint. ollis must its name to the signifioriginal of **stock market, amount of s that can contain saquio**. In effect, at the outset to acostumbrapesar certain number of copper currencies and, like guarantee of declared value, sealed them in a saquito of called leather indeed @ heresy. The monofisitas maintained that in Cñsto there was a single nature, the divine one , **monkeys**, in Greek, means **only**, and **physis** is translated by **nature**), thus contravening one of the basic dogmas of catholicism, the one of the double nature, divine and human, of Redentor. In addition, in East very the fanatical idolatry of the divine images was extended, some of which they denominated **achiropo ietes**, that is, **not done by human hands**. This exaggerated adoration and the conviction that the divinity did not have to never imagine with the imperfections of the human nature, they gave rise to a reaction that of strictly religious became also in polftica: monoflsftas tended in effect to a very clear distance of the Roman Church, in which were not recognized, pressing to create a even political fracture in favor of the autonomy of the grecoorientales scopes. Leon was put from monofisitas with the intention (political than more religious) to complete a definitive rupture with the Empire of the West. The creation and veneration of religious images was prohibited by law. The son of that emperor, Constantino V (years 741-775), encouraged authentic persecutions against the catholics and the monasteries, that by the way hoarded enormous wealth. The problem did not take in leading a a very tense situation that ended as well at a split between the western world and orients, incompatible for centuries by

traditions and mentalities. The definitive rupture took place in century Xi with the schism between Rome and the Church orientes independent, **also orthodox** call, this are, the one of **straight opinion**. In the iconography of the currencies, the fight against the images tolerated the greater one interest towards the imperial figure, that benefitted from that restriction of subjects, and insisted on the propaganda on the own function symbolic and the own one to be able, Nevertheless, is attended a later rigidity of the forms and a levelling of style. The only reference to the religion it continues being the cross, that quite often appears in reverso of the currencies during the period iconoclasta. The cross is not characteristic only of this period, because already from second half of century v appeared frequently in the currencies, in erected individual on a staggered base, reproduction of votive offering proposed by Constantino I like symbol of the victorious faith.

When fell the Roman empire?

The division of the diverse historical periods is something conventional, although it is based on important and deep events that shook the civilizations, until the point to justify the aim of an era and the beginning of another one. With regard to the decay of old world, no all the historians are in agreement in isolating an only particularly significant and symbolic event like of passage to medieval time. Some indeed judge the year of the foundation of Constantinopla and of official transfer of the imperial cut to this city, like the most indicated to indicate the aim of Rome and of which during centuries it had represented. Others prefer year 395, year of death of Teodosio, when the Roman Empire was divided concretely, until that responsible moment, in theory, of the unit of East and The West. Many numismatists make begin the currencies bizantinas from Arcadio, the son of Teodosio to whom the government was assigned orientes. Also there is one who sees in the sacking of Rome, carried out in year 41 0 by Alarico to the front of the godos, the most evident moment of rupture with a past of Roman conquests and hegemony. The extended tradition more, nevertheless, locates in year 476 the true aim of old world: the deposition of last emperor, Rómulo Augústulo, weak, insignificant and very young (for that reason nicknamed, Augústulo “), would be the evident sign of radical change of the times. In any case, it is obvious that the passage from a political, social balance and culture a another one is seen from diverse perspective, and that are necessarily subjective the interpretations of so radical changes.