

Ravenna in capitale politica nel periodo del dominio di Teodorico rappresenta anche per l'Istria un determinato punto di svolta nel suo sviluppo storico, anche se bisogna prendere in considerazione le condizioni riscontrate in Istria prima dell'ascesa del dominio bizantino.

### **Istria in the context of political and religious events in Northern Adriatic from the late fourth until the late sixth century**

#### **Abstract**

Owing to its geographical location, Istria was not directly exposed to the devastation in the fourth and fifth centuries, when it avoided both the civil wars and the migratory movements accompanied by invasions of wandering barbarian tribes. After the victory of Christianity, newly created city elites, with the bishop at the helm, had, since the early fifth century, managed the construction activities in cities, primarily relating to monumental projects, which altered the physical appearance of the cityscape. Local peculiarities are often considered as one of the most important factors both for the process of change and for the endurance of the preexisting values in political and religious life. Recent studies, however, suggest that the transformation of post-Roman cities was not exclusively a consequence of intense Christianization. The emergence of the new city elite was the result of a conscious effort by the representatives of state authorities. This phenomenon is noticeable as early as the Late Roman Empire and persisted during the times of the barbarian states of Odoacer and Theoderic. In Istria it is most evident during Byzantine reign when the intertwining of political and religious spheres is the clearly visible in post-classical urban centres. This phenomenon can be detected thanks to a greater number of written and material sources. The events that took place in the aftermath of the Byzantine-Gothic war and Justinian's reconquest of the former Arian regions between 535 and 555 were an intentional reaction of the Byzantine political and religious power centres. Their primary objective was the cleansing of the vestiges of the Arian heresy, followed by the construction of new Christian edifices. The sponsors of these building projects were Justinian himself, then bishops, state officials and members of the aristocracy. Justinian's conquest of the territories of the Ostrogothic Kingdom between the Alps and the Adriatic Sea – including Istria – caused not only social-political, but also religious-political changes. The transformation of Ravenna into a political power centre during the reign of Theoderic also marks a turning point for the historical development of Istria, although one should consider the situation on the peninsula before the onset of Byzantine rule, as well.