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ON THE BAPTISM OF THE SERBS AND CROATS IN THE TIME OF BASIL I (867–886)

The entry of the Serbs and Croats into Christendom belongs to that set of questions on which the modern historiography did not provide the final answer¹. The aim of this study is to shed more lights on this process from the Byzantine perspective, and to examine the information that Emperor Basil I (867–886) either baptized or considerably contributed to the process of Christianization among the Croats, Serbs, and other Slavs of Dalmatia. By examining this specific Byzantine view on the baptism of the Croats and Serbs, one would be able to understand not only whether the Serbs and Croats were baptized during the reign of Basil I or not, but also to understand from when they should be considered (as a medieval society) as the part of *oikoumene*, i. e. the world inhabited by Christians. The analysis of the Byzantine point of view on this issue shall eventually reveal some additional evidence. The issue of baptism of a *natio* and its *regnum* also cannot be treated separately from the wider political context, and it is rather a consequence

¹ On the baptism of the Serbs and Croats, see: *Radojičić G. S.* La date de la conversion des Serbes // Byzantion. 1952. Vol. 22. P. 253–256; *Dujčev I.* Une ambassade byzantine auprès des Serbes au IX^e siècle // ЗРВИ. 1961. Књ. VII. 7. С. 53–60; *Mandić D.* Pokrštenje Hrvata // Idem. Rasprave i prilozi iz stare hrvatske povijesti. Rim, 1963. С. 1–18; *Waldmüller L.* Die ersten Begegnungen der Slawen mit dem Christentum und den christlichen Völkern vom VI. bis VIII. Jh. Amsterdam, 1976; *Klaić N.* O problemima stare domovine, dolaska i pokrštanja dalmatinskih Hrvata // ZČ. 1984. Letnik 39. С. 253–270; *Максимовић Љ.* Покрштавање Срба и Хрвата // ЗРВИ. 1996. Књ. XXXV. С. 155–174; *Алимов Д. Е.* «Переселение» и «крещение»: к проблеме формирования хорватской этничности в Далмации // SSBP. 2008. № 2 (4). С. 94–116; *Curta F.* Emperor Heraclius and the Conversion of the Croats and the Serbs // Medieval Christianitas. 2010. Vol. 3. P. 121–138; *Dzino D.* Becoming Slav, Becoming Croat: Identity Transformations in Post-Roman and Early Medieval Dalmatia. Leiden; Boston, 2010. P. 201–208; *Živković T.* De conversione Croatorum et Serborum — A Lost Source. Belgrade, 2012.

of sophisticated political relations between the major powers interested in a specific *natio* or its *regnum*².

The additional problem is that the most number of Byzantine narrative sources relevant for the Dalmatia or Southern Slavs for the 9th century are actually composed in the middle of the 10th century, or even later³. It was only George the Monk, flourishing in the second half of the 9th century, who wrote a Chronicle extended until 867. Unfortunately, his interest was deeply to fight iconoclasm⁴, and for the period between 820 and 867, George the Monk wrote only dozen of pages, in which historical narratives are scarce⁵. After George the Monk, there is a huge gap in Byzantine historiography, which lasted until the middle of the 10th century when the writers such as: Symeon the Logothete, Pseudo-Symeon, Joseph Genesisius, and Theophanes Continuatus, are encountered. Their perspective on the events which occurred during the 9th century is tentative and generally in the accordance with political needs of the Macedonian dynasty⁶. Symeon Logothete and Joseph Genesisius also could be easily two writers on the same task, who had to elaborate the Byzantine history from 813 until 912, presumably on the command of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. Both works could be also just attempts to create that history, and, as the earliest Russian chronicle suggests, there should be at least another chronicle (or a version of the above mentioned chronicles) covering the same time and originated at the court of Constantine Porphyrogenitus⁷. It is highly probable that all these authors⁸ were based on the same sources and having been supervised through their entire work by Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Therefore, Theophanes Continuatus should be their main source for the period 813–886. If there were some older narrative sources, originated during the first half of the 9th century, then that material was, at least partially, already included in the *Continuator of Theophanes*. On the other hand, if Constantine Porphyrogenitus had used various documents from the first half of the 9th century for the first four books of the *Continuator of Theophanes*, then these same documents were most probably available to some extent to the above mentioned authors who wrote at the

² For instance, the best examples are the rulers of Moravia and Bulgaria during the 9th century, but also the rulers of the Danes or Slavs on the Elbe River. See: *Fletcher R. A.* The Barbarian Conversion: From Paganism to Christianity. New York, 1998. P. 224–225, 336–341, et passim.

³ *Mango C.* When was Michael III born? // DOP. 1967. Vol. 21. P. 253.

⁴ See: *Treadgold W.* The Chronological Accuracy of the «Chronicle» of Symeon Logothete for the Years 813–845 // DOP. 1979. Vol. 33. P. 159–160.

⁵ *Georgii Monachi* Chronicon / Ed. C. De Boor. Lipsiae, 1904. Vol. II. P. 792–803.

⁶ See, for instance: *Μαρκουπουλος Α.* Η χρονογραφία του Ψευδοσυμεών και οι πηγές της. Ιωάννινα, 1978; *Hunger H.* Die Hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner. München, 1978; *Shepard J.* The Uses of «History» in Byzantine Diplomacy: Observations and Comparisons // Porphyrogenita: Essays on the History and Literature of Byzantium and the Latin East in Honour of Julian Chrysostomides / Ed. by C. Dendrinos, J. Harris, I. H. Crook, J. Herrin. Aldershot, 2003. P. 91–115.

⁷ Повесть временных лет. СПб., 1910. С. 17. Стб. 5. — The author started to use absolute chronology, as well as, indictions, from the beginning of Michael III's rule, referring to the «Greek chronicles».

⁸ Theophanus Continuatus. Ioannes Cameniata. Symeon magister. Georgius monachus / Ed. I. Bekkerus. Bonnae, 1838 (= Theoph. Cont.).

court. In both cases these authors heavily depended on Constantine Porphyrogenitus' tutorship and his readiness to supply them with the sources — which could be generally found only in the Archives of the Imperial Palace and available only to the emperor, or those granted the permission to use it. In other words, the court's writers ca. 950 cannot be considered as the independent authors, since they were closely monitored and led in their work by the omnipotent and omnipresent emperor — Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus.

The «Baptism» of the Southern Slavs ca. 870

The earliest document about the baptism of the Southern Slavs, from the Byzantine perspective, belongs to the middle of the 10th century⁹ and it was written by the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus — *De administrando imperio*¹⁰. In chapters 29, 30, 31, and 32 — the author dedicated parts of his text to the question of Serbo-Croat baptism¹¹. In chapter 29 Constantine wrote that the Serbs, Croats and all other Slavs from Dalmatia shook off the reins of Byzantine rule in the times of the Emperor Michael the Lisper (820–829) and, then, since majority of them (sc. Slavs) were not even baptized, they sent legates to Emperor Basil I (867–886) demanding that those who were unbaptized might receive baptism and to be accepted under the Byzantine rule. Basil I promptly responded on their request and sent an imperial agent (*basilikos*) and priests who baptized all of them which were unbaptized¹². The similar perspective of the baptism

⁹ The Serbs and Croats, and generally the Slavs of the former Roman province of Dalmatia, never attracted attention of Byzantine authors before Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (944–959). The only evidence of the Slavic raids into coastal areas of Dalmatia comes from Procopius, who mentioned that in 548 a group of Slavs, after they crossed the Danube River, managed to penetrate as far as Dyrrachion; cf. *Procopii Bellum Gothicum* III 29, 423–13 in: *Procopii Bellum Persicum, Bellum Vandalicum, Bellum Gothicum, Historia arcane, De aedificiis (Opera omnia I–IV)* / Ed. J. Hauriy, G. Wirth. Leipzig, 1962–1964. — The information about the 6th century Slavs and their raids into Byzantine territory, until the early years of Heraclius I's rule (610–641), to the south of the Danube River, found in the works of Procopius, Menander the Guardsman, Theophylact Simocatta, John of Ephesus, and *Miracula sancti Demetrii*, are related only to the Praefectura Illyricum, which was situated to the east of Dalmatia; see, for instance: *History of Menander the Guardsman* / Ed. by R. C. Blockley. Trowbridge, 1985. Frg. 25. 2.33–36; *Theophylacti Simocattae Historiae* / Ed. C. De Boor and P. Wirth. Stuttgart, 1972. I. 7, 52.10–25, 53.5–11; III. 4, 116.26–27; VI. 3, 226.1–3, 226.5–10; VII. 2, 247.14–16; *Iohannis Ephesini Historiae ecclesiasticae pars tertia* / Ed. E. W. Brooks. Louvain, 1936. VI. 25, 248.27–249.1; *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de saint Démétrius* / Ed. P. Lemerle. Paris, 1979. I. 12, 124–129; I. 13, 133–138; The Serbs and Croats, or any other Slavic tribe, such as Zachlumians, Terbounians, Pagans, and Diocleians, were never mentioned in Byzantine sources until 949.

¹⁰ *Constantine Porphyrogenitus. De administrando imperio* / Greek text ed. by Gy. Moravcsik; Engl. transl. by R. J. H. Jenkins. Washington, 1967 (= DAI). The commentary on the DAI was published separately: *Constantine Porphyrogenitus. De administrando imperio*. Volume II: Dvornik F., Jenkins R. J. H., Lewis B., Moravcsik Gy., Obolensky D., Runciman S. Commentary / Ed. by R. J. H. Jenkins. London, 1962.

¹¹ DAI. 29.68–84; 30.87–90; 31.21–25; 32.27–29.

¹² DAI. 29.58–76. See, also, commentary of B. Ferjančić: ВИИИИ. 1959. Т. II. С. 14–16, бел. 22–26.

of the South Slavs can be found in another work composed at the Court — *Vita Basilii* (after June of 950), most probably by Constantine Porphyrogenitus himself¹³. However, the version from *Vita Basilli* differs, since it was said that most of these Slavs, not only shook off the reins of Byzantine rule, but also abandoned the holy baptism in process¹⁴. This is not the only difference between chapter 29 of the *DAI* and *Vita Basilii* regarding the baptism of the Southern Slavs. In the following chapter of *Vita Basilii* (53), there is repetition of the story how they (sc. Slavs) sent their legates to Constantinople, but again, it was accentuated that legates were sent by those who completely abandoned holy baptism¹⁵. Both perspectives of the same event have also internal coherency: in the *DAI*, majority of the Slavs were unbaptized (repeated twice), and in the *Vita Basilii* majority of them abandoned baptism (repeated twice). To speak euphemistic, one of these two statements is to be less reliable than other. Since *Vita Basilii* is a «polished» version of the deeds of Basil I, it is highly probable that in this version the «false» statement is found. On the other hand, the *DAI* version could be tentative too, since the baptism of a *natio* in the Middle Ages was not «measured» by the number of baptized people, but by the fact whether the ruler and nobility are baptized, as well as, whether the ecclesiastical organization is established, or not¹⁶. Therefore, both statements are most probably tentative and hardly can be taken face true. It is also interesting that in two chapters of the *DAI*, 31 and 32, which contain the history of the Croats and Serbs, the role of Basil I and baptism of the Serbs and Croats during his reign — is not mentioned, even not hinted in a single line of the text¹⁷. What is even more interesting, Basil I did not appear in any political context in chapters 31 and 32 related to the history of the Croats and Serbs respectively.

The *Vita Basilli*'s version of the Serbo-Croat baptism appears to have stronger political message — the Serbs and Croats, which abandoned the holy baptism, came back to the Church of Constantinople, in the times of the glorious Emperor Basil — the founder of the Macedonian dynasty and grandfather of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. It was much stronger (politically) than to write that Basil I only baptized those who have been left unbaptized until his time. If one is looking for trustworthiness of this information about the Serbo-Croat baptism, than version recorded in the *DAI* should be closer

¹³ For the date of the composition (c. 950) of the *Vita Basilii*, see: *Bury J. B.* The Treatise De administrando imperio // BZ. 1906. Bd. 15. S. 551, 573; for the date and Constantine's authorship, see: *Nickles H. G.* The Continuatio Theophanis // Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association. 1937. Vol. 68. P. 222–224; *Ševčenko I.* Storia letteraria // La civiltà bizantina dal IX all' XI secolo. Bari, 1978. P. 99–101. For the narrative structure of *Vita Basilii*, see: *Kazhdan A.* A History of Byzantine Literature (850–1000) / Ed. by C. Angelidi. Athens, 2006. P. 137–144.

¹⁴ Theoph. Cont. 288.12–289.2.

¹⁵ Theoph. Cont. 291.1–292.1.

¹⁶ Typical example is king of the Franks, Clovis, who was baptized together with his military retinue of 3,000 men; cf. *Gregorii episcopi Turonensis* Historiarum libri X / Ed. B. Krusch, W. Levison (MGH Scriptorum rerum Merovingicarum. Vol. I/1). Hannoverae, 1951. 77.16.

¹⁷ *DAI*. 31.21–25: it is said that Heraclius brought priest from Rome and baptized the Croats. The same perspective is repeated in the chapter 32 related to the Serbs: *DAI*. 32.27–29. In chapter 30, however, it is stated that the Croats themselves requested baptism from Rome: *DAI*. 30.87–89.

to at least some facts about that event. It should be based on some kind of written record such as the data from the Imperial Archives about these legates of the Southern Slavs who came to Constantinople¹⁸.

The South Slavs, since they were politically organized in at least seven or eight (maybe nine) principalities, as well as geographically spreaded over the vast territory¹⁹, could not unanimously sent their legates to Constantinople in a single synchronized political action. Therefore, that is the part of Constantine's narrative which appears to be his own interpretation. Constantine probably had at least one source by which he was able to state that Serbs or Croats (but hardly both at the same time) sent their legates to Constantinople, and for Zachlumians, Terbounians, Pagans and Diocleians he probably had none. Another interesting detail is that Constantine said how Basil I on that occasion confirmed the *archontes* which were chosen by these same Slavs (i. e. all Southern Slavs)²⁰. Therefore, Constantine did not say that the South Slavs received Holy Baptism for the first time during the rule of Basil I — he clearly stated that they either abandoned it (*Vita Basilii*), or that at least some of them have been already Christians from previous times (*DAI*). To the scholars who dealt with this interesting text it appeared clear enough (also based on the *DAI*'s narrative in chapters 31 and 32 related to the 7th century baptism of the Croats and Serbs), to conclude that process of baptism of the Serbs and Croats most probably began in the 7th century and in some cascade way lasted until the first half of the 9th century, to be enforced strongly only in the time of Basil I²¹.

The idea of the 7th century baptism of the Slavs came also from the *DAI*. In the chapters 31 and 32 Constantine said, based on the source from 878, written in Rome, most probably by Anastasius the Librarian, that the Serbs and Croats were baptized in the time of the Emperor Heraclius²². Based on that source, but unaware of its provenience, as well as its political goals and purpose at the time when it was composed, he could say in *Vita Basilii* that the Slavs abandoned Christian faith. If this was a case, then the version of baptism preserved in *Vita Basilii* came as the result of: 1. all sources about that issue, which Constantine had at his disposal, and 2. his tentative way of narrative in favour of Basil I, the founder of the Macedonian dynasty. The problem is, from which

¹⁸ Note that in *De cerimoniis* Constantine left two testimonies about the receptions of the envoys of the Slavs from Subdelitia (the region around Elos in Peloponnesus?) and around Thessalonike, at the court of Michael III (842–867); cf. *Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris De cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae* / Ed. I. Reiske. Bonnae, 1829. II. 634.11–635.6. For the date, after 856, see: ВИИИ. Т. II. С. 76, бел. 284.

¹⁹ See: *Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris De cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae* / Ed. I. Reiske. Bonnae, 1829. II. 691.8–11, where imperial *keleusis* are enumerated to the *archontes* of the Croats, Serbs, Zachlumi, Kanales, Terbounia, Dioclea, Moravia. Bosnia and Paganian are missing, but both principalities are mentioned in the *DAI*; cf. *DAI*. 32.151; 36.14.

²⁰ *DAI*. 29.75–78; Theoph. Cont. 292.4–12.

²¹ Максимовић Љ. Покрштавање Срба и Хрвата // ЗРВИ. 1996. Књ. XXXV. С. 155–174.

²² For the detailed analysis of that source and autorship, see: Živković T. *De conversione Croatorum et Serborum* — A Lost Source. Belgrade, 2012. For some aspects of that source, see: Živković T. 1) Constantine Porphyrogenitus' *kastra oikoumena* in the Southern Slavs Principalities // ИЧ. 2008. Књ. 57. С. 7–26; 2) Constantine Porphyrogenitus' Source on the Earliest History of the Croats and Serbs // RZHP. 2010. Sv. 42. S. 117–131.

source the name of Michael the Lisper came out, since it probably did not appear in the *DAI* regarding the political position of the Slavs and the Dalmatian towns by an accident. It is noticeable that Constantine mentioned Michael the Lisper in chapter 22 of the *DAI*, too, and again he used Michael's name to establish the timeline describing how the Arabs from Spain desolated Sicily, all the islands of the Cyclades, and captured Crete²³. In this same passage, Constantine also mentioned the uprising of Thomas the Slav which «lasted three years»²⁴. Judging by this chronological evidence this statement should be based on some kind of written source – most probably a historical work belonging to the first half of the 9th century²⁵. It is obvious that such a source did not favoured Michael the Lisper and could originate as earliest in the time of Michael III (842–866), the emperor who reestablished the cult of icons. The iconoclastic emperors, such as Michael the Lisper was — should be painted in dark colors in historical works which were written during the rule of orthodox emperors.

On the other hand Michael the Lisper maintained close relations with the Franks. It was him who sent Greek histories and books to Louis the Pious²⁶. It was in his time (824), again, that the Franks and Byzantium confirmed «*priorem pacem*»²⁷, most probably the one from 812 (Aachen), or the one from 817 when the new borders between the Byzantine theme of Dalmatia and the interior of Dalmatia settled by the Slavs (Croats) and ruled by the Franks, were established²⁸. In *Vita Basilii* Constantine briefly summarized the information from chapter 22 on Thomas the Slav and the Arabs, then in chapter 29 he said that in that time Dalmatian towns (and he meant of the *theme* of Dalmatia) became autonomous and independent²⁹, and then, he added that the Slavs of Dalmatia, too, shook off the reins of Byzantine rule³⁰. The testimony in *Vita Basilii*, forged from at least two sources, made the picture about the events in Dalmatia — both regarding the *theme* of Dalmatia and the Slavs of Dalmatia — completely vague. However, there are some interesting details which could shed more lights on this.

²³ *DAI*. 22.40–49.

²⁴ *DAI*. 22.40–42.

²⁵ For the Byzantine cultural revival ca. 780–850, see: *Treadgold W.* The Revival of Byzantine Learning and the Revival of the Byzantine State // *American Historical Review*. 1979. Vol. 84. P. 1245–1266; see also: *Kazhdan A.* A History of Byzantine Literature (650–850) / In collaboration with Lee F. Sherry and C. Angelidi. Athens, 1999. P. 7–16.

²⁶ *Epistolae variorum inde a morte Caroli Magni usque ad divisionem imperii collectae* / Ed. E. Dümmler (MGH *Epistolae Karolini Aevi III*). Berolini, 1899. 327.4–5.

²⁷ This is something well known from Michael's letter to Louis the Pious from 824; cf. *Sacrorum conciliorum, nova et amplissima collectio* / Ed. J. D. Mansi. Graz, 1960. Vol. XIV. Col. 416–422.

²⁸ *Annales regni Francorum inde ab anno 741. usque ad anno 829. qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi* / Ed. F. Kurze (MGH *in usum scholarum*). Hannoverae, 1895. P. 136 (812), 145 (817) (= ARF).

²⁹ *DAI*. 29.59–60.

³⁰ *DAI*. 29.63–66.

Latin Sources Related to the IXth Century Baptism of the Southern Slavs

It is well known that the Duke Trpimir (ca. 839 – ca. 854?) of Croatia issued a charter by which he confirmed the previous donation of his predecessor (not an ancient donation, but recent) Duke Mislav, to the Church of St George near Spalato³¹. It was the well known church, which appears in the preserved charters of Croat rulers regularly during the Early Middle Ages³². The charter of duke Trpimir is the finest example of Christian rite of the Croat ruler already from at least 830s. His predecessor, Mislav, was also a Christian ruler, since Trpimir's donation was based on Mislav's donation, and so were Bornja (818–821), Vladislav (821–822), and Ljudemisl (823 – ca. 830). All of them have been either installed or confirmed as the dukes of Dalmatia by Louis the Pious, and there is no a single clue in the *Annales regni Francorum* to support eventual idea that they were pagans³³.

According to the *ARF* the political relations between the Franks and Byzantium were not so cordial after 817. It was exactly in 824, when Michael the Lisper wrote his letter to Louis the Pious with the demand for the renewal of an «ancient» friendship, because of the previous fighting between Bornja and Liudewit, during which Byzantium supported Liudewit³⁴. From an Arab source it is well known that Michael the Lisper was able to undertake counter measures against the Arabs on Sicily by sending a formidable Byzantine fleet in the waters of Sicily³⁵. It should be around the end of 827 and first half of 828, when this campaign ended in disaster, and only after that someone could draw a conclusion that during the rule of Michael the Lisper things went very bad for Byzantium in the West. At this point, i.e. after 828, and until the end of Michael the Lisper's rule (829), the *apostasia* of the Byzantine cities of the *theme* of Dalmatia could happen.

³¹ Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae. Vol. I: Diplomata annorum 743–1100 continens / Redegit Marko Kostrenčić. Collegerunt et digesserunt Jakov Stipišić et Miljen Šamšalović. Zagrabiae, 1967 (= CD I). Nr. 3. See the most recent commentary on this charter: *Matijević Sokol M.* 1150. obljetnica darovnice kneza Trpimira // 100 godina Arheološkog muzeja Istre u Puli: nova istraživanja u Hrvatskoj. Znanstveni skup, Pula, 8.–12. listopada 2002 / Odgovorni ur. D. Komšo (Izdanja Hrvatskog arheološkog društva. Sv. 25). Zagreb, 2010. S. 11, 13–14. Mislav's name appears three times in the charter of Trpimir: «que Mislauo duce ipsam...»; «ab ipso supradicto duce»; «quas decimas antecessor noster Mislauus dare cepit» (CD I. Nr. 3).

³² CD I. Nr. 20 (892); Nr. 110 (1075). Nr. 125 (1078).

³³ *ARF*. P. 149, 155, 161. Of these dukes only Trpimir was duke of the Croats. The sequence of events of 819–823 in Dalmatia and Pannonia, was recently discussed in: Živković T. The Origin of the Royal Frankish Annalist's Information about the Serbs in Dalmatia // Споменица академика Симе Тирковића. Београд, 2011. С. 381–398. See also: *Алимов Д. Е.* Политија Борны: *Gentes* и *Herrschaft* в Далмации в первой четверти IX века // *SSBP*. 2011. № 1 (9). С. 101–142.

³⁴ This letter was brought by Byzantine envoys among which was Fortunat, in November of 824. The envoys met Louis the Pious at Rouen. It is not specified what kind of answer Louis the Pious gave to the envoys, but it is said that they came to ratify peace. See: *ARF*. P. 165.

³⁵ Ibn-al-Atir speaks about the maritime campaign of the Byzantines in the Sicilian waters; see: *Vasiliev A.* Byzance et les Arabes. Bruxelles, 1968. Vol. II. Partie 1. P. 358. All Byzantine sources are silent on this; cf. Theoph. Cont. 83.12–84.5; Symeon Magister. 621.20–22; Georgius Monachus Continuatus. 789.1–4; Leo Grammaticus. 212.19–22; Theod. Meliteni. 146. It is another detail which places all of these sources in the same «kitchen».

According to the Frankish sources, the Byzantine envoys arrived in September of 827 in Compiègne to confirm an alliance (*foedus*). They were received kindly (*benigne receptos*), heard and dismissed, without a slightest hint whether they achieved their goals or not³⁶. Meanwhile, Michael the Lisper sent another envoy to Venice in 827, demanding naval support from Doge Justinian Particiacus against the Arabs of Sicily³⁷. Then, after the Byzantines suffered catastrophe at Sicily, nothing is known about the political relations between Constantinople and Aachen for another seven years. When it comes to the Dalmatian issue — the silence of western sources is also notable. Only in 833, Emperor Theophilus did send an envoys to Louis the Pious, but they arrived at the very difficult moment, since he was just deposed by his eldest son Lothar, and they only managed to present gifts and letters to Lothar³⁸. According to the available sources, chiefly western, it appears that Michael the Lisper was in control of the situation in the West (including Dalmatia), until late 827 or early 828. From that moment until the end of his rule the only possible range when *apostasia* of the Byzantine cities of the theme of Dalmatia could happen was 827–829.

Approximately in the same time, a duke of the Narentani (sc. Pagans) arrived in Venice. He was baptized by the doge and peace was concluded — eventhough, it did not last for a long time³⁹. This brief episode, gleaned from the unknown source by John the Deacon, could be important for the reconstruction of the political situation in Dalmatia towards the end of Michael the Lisper's rule. Namely, in 827 or 828, Venice was a Byzantine ally, the most important in the northern Adriatic, and the peace accord, as well as, the baptism of the duke of the Pagans, actually signalize that Byzantium controlled situation in Dalmatia at least until 827. Only in 846 or 847 there is an information about the Croats under the Duke Terpimir, who attacked and defeated a Byzantine *strategos*. Greek *patricius*, who is mentioned as the commander of the «Greeks» could be only the Byzantine *strategos* of the theme of Dalmatia⁴⁰. Therefore, as the worst possible scenario for Byzantium regarding the theme of Dalmatia, is that the cities of the *theme* of

³⁶ ARF. P. 174.

³⁷ *Iohannis Diaconi Chronicon Venetum et Gradense usque ad a. 1008* / Ed. G. H. Pertz (MGH. Scriptores. Vol. VII). Hannoverae, 1846. 16.24–30 (= Ioh. Diaconi); it is repeated in Dandolo's Chronicle; cf. *Andreae Danduli Chronica per extensum descripta* aa. 46–1280 d. C. / Ed. E. Pastorello, Bologna 1938. 148.5–6.

³⁸ *Annales Bertiniani* / Ed. G. Waitz (MGH in usum scholarum). Hannoverae, 1883. P. 7.

³⁹ Ioh. Diaconi. 16.40–41: «Circa haec tempora missus Sclavorum de insula Narrentis ad domnum Iohannem ducem veniens, ab eo baptizatus est, pacem cum eo instituens, licet minime perdurasset». See also: Danduli. 148.21–24, who added that these Narentani were Slavs (Sclavi), «adhuc gentiles, quia a Gothis originem duxerant». Dandolo's Goths are from the 13th century source, Thomas of Spalato. Dandolo literally updated his sources; cf. *Thomae Archidiaconi Historia Salonitanorum atque Spalatinorum pontificum* / Ed. O. Perić, M. Matijević Sokol, R. Katičić. Split, 2003. 32.15–25.

⁴⁰ *Katić L. Saksonac Gottschalk na dvoru kneza Trpimira*. (Poseban otisak Bihaća, hrvatskog društva za istraživanje domaće povijesti). Zagreb, 1932. S. 8: «contra gentem Grecorum et patricium eorum». J. Ferluga thought that the Byzantine strategos of the theme of Cephalonia or Dyrrachion attacked Croats (*Ферлуга Ј. Византиска управа у Далмацији*. Београд, 1957. С. 67).

Dalmatia could be independent and autonomous from 828 to 846. This period was, most probably, much shorter, because the same source states that the seat of the Croat duke was very close to the borders of Dalmatia, i. e. the Byzantine *theme* of Dalmatia. If there was a border, than there was also Byzantine rule behind that border. It is, therefore, possible, that Byzantium lost control over the Dalmatian cities in a brief period from 828 to the early years of Teophilus' rule, when the *theme* of Dalmatia was restored — and that is something what could be related to the Byzantine envoy sent to Louis the Pious in 833⁴¹. The envoys had, most probably, to confirm the peace, to renew the borders of Dalmatia, and to confirm the spheres of Frankish and Byzantine political domination in the region.

In 877, according to the Chronicle of John the Deacon, the sons of Duke Domagoi (864–876) were expelled by Zdeslav, the son of Duke Trpimir, who arrived in Croatia from Constantinople⁴². The sudden appearance of an off-spring of Duke Trpimir in Croatia, backed by Byzantine military aid, by which he was able to expel the sons of Duke Domagoi, reveals that Byzantium was in fact involved in the internal discordia in Croatia which followed the death of Miroslav in ca. 862, who was dethroned by Duke Pribina of Lower Pannonia⁴³. The members of Trpimir's family who survived Pribina's intervention in Croatia, sought shelter in Constantinople, and from there, one of Trpimir's sons, Zdeslav, regained the rule over Croatia. Here we reach the crucial year when the alleged «second» baptism of the Croats could occur. Namely, as it is well known from the letters of Pope John VIII to Duke Branimer, already from June of 879, it is clear that something happened on the level of ecclesiastical supremacy in Croatia. The pope congratulated Croat duke on his willingness to come back to the Roman church⁴⁴. It could only mean that there was a situation before Duke Branimer, when the Croat Church **was not under the Roman church**. Such a situation therefore, was during the rule of Zdeslav, and as we know from an independent source (John the Deacon) he was the Byzantine protegee⁴⁵. Consequently, Zdeslav, beside his political orientation towards Byzantium, probably pursued an ecclesiastical policy which connected the church in Croatia with Constantinople. If we keep in mind that he was in Constantinople for a long time, and probably raised in Constantinople from his childhood or adolescence, such a decision of Croat duke makes sense. Constantine Porphyrogenitus stressed that Basil I also confirmed *archontes* of the Slavs chosen by the Slavs themselves⁴⁶. In the case of Zdeslav, it naturally leads to the conclusion that he was recognized by the emperor, for

⁴¹ For the date of the creation of the theme of Dalmatia, see: Ферлуга Ј. Византиска управа... С. 69–70 (between 867 and 878). For an earlier date, see: Posedel J. Pitanje dalmatinskog temata u prvoj polovici devetog stoljeća // HZ. 1950. God. III. S. 217–219; Живковић Т. Тактикон Успенског и тема Далмација // ИЧ. 2002. Књ. 48. С. 9–43.

⁴² Ioh. Diaconi. 21.6–8.

⁴³ Živković T. De conversione Croatorum et Serborum — A Lost Source. Belgrade, 2012. P. 129–136.

⁴⁴ CD I. Nr. 10; Nr. 11. Zdeslav, according to an inscription found in basilica at Biskupija near Knin, found in four fragments, seems to be killed by arrows: «Dux glo(riosus) Sed(esclavus) (sagit)is obstruct(us)»; cf. Šišić F. Povijest Hrvata u vrijeme narodnih vladara. Zagreb, 1925. S. 363, bilj. 40.

⁴⁵ See note 42.

⁴⁶ DAI. 29.76–78.

the same emperor sent him to claim the throne of Croatia. On the other hand, Pope John VIII wrote at the beginning of 879 to Zdeslav, and from that letter it is clear that Zdeslav was considered as the ruler who recognized Rome as his spiritual and ecclesiastical centre: *Quia fama tuae dilectionis atque bonitatis et religionis in deum ad nos usque peruenit, confidentur gloriae, tuae precipimus atque mandamus, it pro amore sanctorum apostolorum Petri ac Pauli, protectorum uestrorum...*⁴⁷ This, of course, could be just the manner of pope, since in this letter he had to secure the safe passage of his legate to Michael of Bulgaria – *Vulgarorum rege*. Already in May of 879 the same pope wrote an exalted letter to Branimer in which he praised Croat ruler because he decided to come back to the Roman Church⁴⁸.

Policy of Basil I Regarding the Southern Slavs

The lack of corroborative sources related to Serbia, Zachlumi, Terbounia, Pagania and Dioclea, unable us to examine Constantine's statement that all these Slavs sent legates to Constantinople after Basil I's intervention in Adriatic (868). According to Constantine Porphyrogenitus, immediately after the Byzantine fleet appeared in Adriatic, the *archontes* of the South Slavs asked to be baptized and under the submission of the emperor⁴⁹. In the case of the Croats it is not true, since from the letter of Louis II to Basil I from 871, it is clear that Croats were involved in the siege of Bari on the command of Louis II⁵⁰. From the same letter it is obvious that Byzantine fleet attacked the shores of Dalmatia (i. e. Croatia) in 869 or 870⁵¹, by which the Croats were actually induced to raise against the Franks⁵². In 872 or 873 Pope John VIII informed Duke Domagoi that Bulgarian church came under the influence of the patriarch of Constantinople — Ignatius⁵³. The letter is ill-preserved as a regest, and we do not know whether the deteriorating situation in Croatia regarding the ecclesiastical matters in fact induced the pope to write this letter. In another letter from 873, Pope John VIII wrote to Paul, the bishop of Ancona, in which he briefly summarized that the Apostolic See, as it is clear from different, ancient (*antiquitus*) documents, have consecrated churches and ordained priests in Illyricum⁵⁴. Meanwhile, Domagoi seized the papal ship on her return from Constantinople carrying

⁴⁷ CD I. Nr. 9.

⁴⁸ CD I. Nr. 10.

⁴⁹ DAI. 29.70–78; 88–112.

⁵⁰ Ludovici II. Imperatoris epistola ad Basilium I. imperatorem Constantinopolitanum missa / Ed. W. Henze (MGH Epistolarum VII. Karolini aevi V). Berolini, 1928. 392.15–24.

⁵¹ Ibid. 392.18–20.

⁵² See: *Šišić F. Povijest Hrvata u vrijeme narodnih vladara*. S. 350–353.

⁵³ CD I. Nr. 5.

⁵⁴ Fragmenta registri Iohannis papae VIII / Ed. P. Kehr (MGH Epistolarum VII. Karolini aevi V). Berolini, 1928. 284.8–11 (= Fragmenta): «Nam non solum intra Italiam ac ceteras hesperies provincias, verum etiam in totius Illyrici fines consecrationes ordinationes et dispositiones apostolica sedes patrare antiquitus consuevit, sicut nonnulla regesta et conscriptiones synodales atque ipsarum quoque plurima ecclesiarum in his positarum monumenta demonstrant».

the Acts of the Synod of 870⁵⁵. Around the same time, cities controlled by Venice to the northwestern corner of the Adriatic, came under Domagoi's attacks⁵⁶. It became truly problem since Pope John VIII wrote to Domagoi asking him to stop piracy and to punish those who, hidden behind Domagoi's name, made these misdeeds⁵⁷. In another letter from 874/875 there is a very important information about the presbyter John, for whom pope said that still can serve as the God's servant, since he was protecting a person which was accused as the assassin on Domagoi and that unfortunate assassin was killed by Domagoi⁵⁸. The turbulent years of Domagoi's rule, from 870, when he, most probably, became a protegee of Byzantium, did not show any trace that Croat rulers were pagans or recently baptized, or even under the Patriarchate of Constantiople in the ecclesiastical matters. Yet, from the pope's letter to Branimer it is clear that Croat church actually abonded Rome during the rule of Zdeslav (878–879). And, that is only information which could support Constantine Porphyrogenitus' statement that Croats sent their emissaries to Constantinople. If so, it must be the consequence of political decision, not strictly ecclesiastical question.

On the other hand there is a tiny evidence that at least one Byzantine delegation was directed to the Serbs during the rule of Basil I. The testimony is preserved in the *Vita* of St German. Actually, St German did not have money to pay craftsmen, and by Divine providence he was saved from unpleasant situation by two officials of the emperor, Neophites and Nicholas who were under their way home from being previously as the legates to the Serbs⁵⁹. This testimony appears to be genuine, since the Serbs themselves did not play any important part in this *Vita*, and specially because St German was far a way from the Serbian borders — somewhere in Thrace, and closer to the Bulgarian borders. In another source, written by the archbishop of Ohrid, Theophylactes, at the end of the 11th century, the Bulgarian ruler Michael was called *basileos*⁶⁰. It is odd, since it is unthinkable that a Byzantine writer could ever titled Michael (of Bulgaria) as emperor. Such denomination is possible in a Slavic text originated after Simeon of Bulgaria, who was the first Bulgarian ruler who claimed the imperial title⁶¹. Therefore, we do not know even when German lived, since Theophylactes of Ohrid only briefly refers to St German as the one who lived during the Emperor of the Bulgarians, Michael. It was just Theophylactes' opinion, not a contemporary testimony. In fact, the most probable solution is that these two legates were sent to the Serbs in the time when land route

⁵⁵ Liber pontificalis / Ed. L. Duchesne. Paris, 1955. Vol. II. P. 184.

⁵⁶ Toh. Diaconi. 20.11: «Sclavorum pessime gentes» (875); 20.23–24: «Dehinc mortuo Domagoi, Sclavorum pessimo duce» (876).

⁵⁷ CD I. Nr. 8.

⁵⁸ CD I. Nr. 7.

⁵⁹ *Dujčev I. Une ambassade byzantine auprès des Serbes au IX^e siècle // ЗРВИ. 1961. Књ. VII. С. 59.*

⁶⁰ *Theophylacti Bulgariae archiepiscopi Historia martyrii / Ed. J.-P. Migne. (Patrologia graeca. Vol. 126). 1864. Col. 201. — He mentioned probably the same German who flourished during the rule of Michael of Bulgaria (852–889).*

⁶¹ About Simeon's imperial ideas, see: *Пириватрић С. Самуилова држава. Обим и карактер. Београд, 1997. С. 32–40.*

between Constantinople and Serbia was open, and that was possible only in the times when Byzantium and Bulgaria were at peace⁶². It could be after 866 until 893, then again between 897 and 913, and again from 927 to 976. The most probable date of this embassy should be sought during the rule of Michael of Bulgaria from 866 to 889.

It is also known that Pope John VIII wrote a letter to *Montemero duci*, according to the editor of the MGH, in May of 873.

Iohannes VIII. *Montemero duci* (in A: *Montemero duci Iohannes VII*)

*Presbyteri illic absoluti et vagi ex omni loco adventantes quedam aecclesiastica contra canones officia peragunt, immo numerosa, cum sint asephali, scelera contra Dei precepta committunt*⁶³.

(Presbyters which are absolved from their duties and wandering around coming from all places, preach some kind of sermons against canons, and since they are *acephali* they make crimes against God's commandments).

(*Idem Montemero duci Sclavanie inter caetera*, B)

Quapropter ammonemus te, ut progenitorum tuorum secutus morem quantum potes ad Pannonensium reverti studeas diocesan. Et quia illic iam Deo gratias a sede beati Petri apostoli episcopus ordinatus est, ad ipsius pastoralem recurras sollicitudinem.

Another editor, Kukuljevic-Sakcinski, dated this letter in 875⁶⁴. The MGH edition was based on A: *Collectio canonum* (*Collectio Britannica*, Ms N° 8873): f. 124, ep. 17; and B: *Deusdedit card. Collectio canonum* (Lib I. c. 242 (194 [ed. Martinucci, Venetia 1869; ed. Wolf von Glanvell 1905])⁶⁵. Kukuljevic-Sakcinski quoted Ms of the Vatican Library N° 4886, fol. 102.

*Joannes episcopus Montemero Duci Saluinicae... Admonemus te, ut progenitorum tuorum secutus morem, quantum potes, ad pannoniensium reuerti studeas dioecesim; et quia iam illic, deo gratias, a sede beati Petri apostoli episcopus ordinatus est, ad ipsius pastoralem recurras sollicitudinem*⁶⁶.

(Bishop John to Mutimir, duke of Sclavonia... We ask you, according to the custom of your fore-parents, to take care as soon as possible to revert to the diocese of Pannonia, where now, thanks to God, the bishop is consecrated by the apostolic See of St Peter the Apostle, and to come back under his pastoral care).

It is virtually unknown on what kind of evidence both editors dated this letter. Methodius was consecrated as the bishop of Pannonia in 870 (Rome) but he was prevented even to reach his supposed See (Sirmium?) by Adalwin, archbishop of Salzburg, who imprisoned him and kept in captivity until the Spring of 873⁶⁷. The MGH edition

⁶² An alternative route should include travel by sea, and that was not the case with this legation.

⁶³ *Fragmenta*. P. 282.25–27.

⁶⁴ *Codex diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae* / Ed. I. Kukuljević Sakcinski. Zagreb, 1874. Vol. I. Nr. 71.

⁶⁵ For the abbreviations, see: *Fragmenta*. P. 273.

⁶⁶ *Fragmenta*. P. 282.28–30.

⁶⁷ *Fragmenta*. P. 283.11–12.

in fact shows the traces of at least two letters sent by John VIII to Mutimir. In the first letter Pope John VIII wrote against some presbyters who preached *contra canones* — and who were — *acephali*. The problem is that it is not so certain whether these priests preached in Serbia (Mutimir should be the duke of Serbia) or somewhere else — sc. Bulgaria⁶⁸. If one takes a look upon the letter of John VIII to the Croat duke Domagoi from 872/873, it is noticeable that Pope John VIII spoke about the situation in Bulgaria: «*Ad mentem reducimus, qualiter Greca falsitas Bulgarorum nobis iure pertinentem patriam per Ignatium, quam nos recuperaveramus, occupare non timuit. Qui frequenter ob hoc excommunicatus non solum non quievit, verum etiam illuc quemdam scismaticum sub nomine archiepiscopi destinavit*»⁶⁹. The wording is quite different in this letter, since it is obvious that Pope John VIII speaks about the Greek priests preaching in Bulgaria and about the archbishop (sc. of Bulgaria) who was consecrated (obviously) from Constantinople. In the letter to Mutimir, there is nothing about the Greeks, but about an *acephal* Church — i. e. the one having been neither under Rome nor Constantinople. On the other hand Mutimir was advised to revert to the Roman church. While the pope's letter to Domagoi was written in a manner to warn the Croat duke – not to do the same as it was done in Bulgaria — since he did not call him to come back to the Roman Church — the letter directed to Mutimir leads to the conclusion that there was a real problem with the Roman Church in Serbia. Namely, Mutimir was considered as the one who made choice of another «Church» instead of Roman Church to which his fore-parents were submitted.

However, it is not clear what kind of Church was the one mentioned in the letter to Mutimir. The *acephal* priests could belong to the Bulgarian church with its non-canonical archbishop — the one mentioned in the letter to Domagoi. On the other hand it is hard to believe that recently established Bulgarian Church (under the spiritual leadership from Constantinople) could conduct such an extensive work to establish itself in another country, such as Serbia was⁷⁰. The only *acephal* church, which could be observed by the pope as *acephal*, could be the Church in Serbia, having been previously under Rome, and now under the spiritual guidance of Constantinople. The priests could be sent from Constantinople, but without canonically consecrated archbishop/bishop that Church would be considered, from the papal point of view, as *acephal*. Therefore, this letter is probably the only surviving evidence that Basil I truly made serious attempts to organize

⁶⁸ Mutimir from the papal letter should be the archon of the Serbs mentioned in the DAI. 32.43, 52, 59, 65. See: *Srebrnić J.* Odnosaji pape Ivana X. prema Bizantu i Slavenima na Balkanu // *Zbornik kralja Tomislava*. Zagreb, 1925. S. 135; *Šišić F.* Povijest Hrvata u vrijeme narodnih vladara. S. 342, bilj. 47; *Историја српског народа*. Књ. 1: Од најстаријих времена до Маричке битке (1371) / Ур. С. Ћирковић. Београд, 1981. С. 152, бел. 29; *Живковић Т.* Портрети српских владара (IX–XII век). Београд, 2006. С. 28. There is also opinion that Mutimir was a Pannonian duke; see: *Perojević M.* Ninski biskup Teodozije. Split, 1922. S. 66–67; *Vlasto A. P.* The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom. Cambridge, 1970. P. 33, footnote 135; *Košćak V.* Pripadnost istočne obale Jadrana do splitskih sabora 925–928 // *HZ*. 1981. God. XXXIII–XXXIV. S. 320–321.

⁶⁹ *Fragmenta*. P. 278.14–17.

⁷⁰ Eastern borders of Serbia were at the town of Ras (nearby the modern town of Novi Pazar) and it was the situation from ca. 854; cf. DAI. 32.50–53.

the Church of Serbia under the spiritual guidance of Constantinople. It appears that he had some success, because Pope John VIII had to ask Mutimir to come back to the Roman Church. If we add on top of this the testimony from the Vita of St German, that at least one Byzantine embassy was sent in Serbia between 866 and 889, then the *DAI*'s information about the ecclesiastical matters in Serbia had some grounds.

Well, John VIII wrote another letter to Michael *Bulgarorum regi*, on April 16, 878, in which he mentioned certain eunuch, Sergius, of Slavic origin, who became consecrated as the bishop of Belgrade by another un-canonically ordained bishop — Gregory. It is interesting that this Sergius was previously ordained as a priest by somebody who had right to consecrate bishops, but since he was unfit, he was absolved as the priest and found another bishop, Gregory, a false one, to consecrate him as the bishop of Belgrade⁷¹. The false bishop, Gregory, might be the leading figure of the new Bulgarian church established by Constantinople — which was un-recognized by the pope⁷².

In another letter, also from April 16, 878, directed to all the bishops and some Greek clerics of the Bulgarian diocese, John VIII, asked them to withdraw from their positions in 30 days under the treat of excommunication⁷³. Since John VIII underlined that these priests are «*in Illyrici provincias*» it was assumed that he wrote to the clerics of what is today Albania. Therefore, Belgrade, mentioned in the previous letter, could be Berat (Pulcheropolis) in Albania⁷⁴. This is not a case here, since Pulcheropolis belonged to the Church of Constantinople (Metropoly of Dyrrachion) as it is plainly clear from the *notitiae 10* of the Church of Constantinople⁷⁵. The province of Illyricum mentioned in this letter relates to the former Byzantine *Praefectura Illyrici* in which Moesia (sc. Bulgaria) was situated in the Late Antiquity. It is also clear from the synodical documents from the Council of Constantinople of 870, when papal legates argued that Bulgaria belonged to the former province of Illyricum — and they had in mind *Praefectura Illyrici*⁷⁶.

⁷¹ Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia / Ed. L. de Thallóczy, C. Jireček, E. de Sufflay. Vindobonae, 1913. Vol. I. Nr. 55: «Johannes VIII. Papa Michaeli Bulgarorum regi (inter caetera): Sergium eunuchum, qui, cum genere Sclavus esset et multis pravitatibus irretitus, sacerdotium per subreptionem obtinuit et post etiam super aliis detectus et convictus excessibus ab episcopo tunc suo depositus fuisse dignoscitur et poste indigne satis a Georgio, qui falso sibi episcopi nomen usurpat, ad episcopatum Belogradensem provectus est».

⁷² The Acta of this council do not provide the name of this archbishop, but according to this letter of John VIII, he should be Gregory. First testimony of the bishop of Bulgaria, installed by Constantinople, comes from a letter of Pope Hadrian II (871) to the Emperor Basil I; cf. Hadriani II. papae epistolae / Ed. E. Perels (MGH Epistolae VI. Karolini aevi IV). Berolini, 1925. 760.14–15.

⁷³ Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia. Vol. I. Nr. 56.

⁷⁴ However, the mentioned city is in fact ancient Singidunum, and not Berat in Albania as it was proposed in Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia. Vol. I. P. 15; see also: Notitiae episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae / Texte critique, introduction et notes par J. Darrouzès. Paris, 1981. P. 113, n. 5.

⁷⁵ Notitiae episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae. Notitia 10.622.

⁷⁶ Anastasii Bibliothecarii epistolae sive praefationes (MGH Epistolae VII. Karolini aevi V). Berolini, 1928. P. 411.33–35.

It appears that the Roman Church was obviously established in Croatia and Serbia, as well as in other principalities of Southern Slavs — Zachlumi, Pagania, Terbounia, and Dioclea, long time before Basil I. One among the most important archaeological evidence which confirms that the Slavs of Dalmatia were connected to Rome in the ecclesiastical matters — is the baptisery of Duke Višeslav. The paleographical analysis yielded different results⁷⁷, but the analysis of all other documents pushed towards conclusion that this duke could not belong to the 9th or 10th centuries⁷⁸. Therefore, he must be either from 7th or 8th centuries⁷⁹. The genuine information about the earliest ecclesiastical organization established by Rome in these principalities, is preserved in the *DAI*. It was the source of the *DAI*, *De conversione Croatorum et Serborum*, in which Constantine Porphyrogenitus found a list of cities which were designated as the ecclesiastical centres in the principalities of Southern Slavs. The specific term: *kastra oikoumena*, actually marks a city which belongs to the «Christian world» — i. e. *ecoumene*. According to that list it is easy to recognize that Nin in Croatia, Trebinje in Terbounia, Ston in Zachlumi, and Mokro in Pagania, were at the head of its ecclesiastical organization. Namely, all of them are confirmed from another sources as the truly most important ecclesiastical centres in these principalities. On the other hand, since we do not know where the *kastra oikoumena* of Serbia, Bosnia, and Dioclea were situated — we can only assume that Destinik in Serbia, Gradete in Dioclea, and Katera in Bosnia, were the most important ecclesiastical centres of Serbia, Dioclea, and Bosnia⁸⁰. For Destinik we have additional information from the *DAI*, that it was obviously considered as a capital of Serbia by the Serbian rulers, since during the usurpation in Serbia, Klonimir, an usurper, temporally seized power only after he captured Destinik⁸¹.

The list of *kastra oikoumena* is in fact the only solid evidence from 878 which provides some clues about the origin of the ecclesiastical organization in the principalities of the Southern Slavs. It is important to note that uniformity of this list demands an explanation. It is not so easy to understand how this happened. Namely, the list itself, which made this uniform approach that the first city is the main ecclesiastical centre in

⁷⁷ See: Matijević Sokol M. Krsni zdenac Hrvata. Paleografsko-epigrafska raščlamba natpisa s krstionice kneza Višeslava // CCP. 2007. Vol. 59. S. 1–31.

⁷⁸ The genealogy of the archontes of the Serbs started also from (another?) Višeslav; cf. *DAI*. 32.33–34. Between him and the first datable archon of the Serbs are four generations of rulers (ca. 80 years); cf. *DAI*. 32.34–36. Since we know from: *DAI*. 32.38–40, that Vlastimir died ca. 851, the rule of Višeslav began ca. 770–780.

⁷⁹ There is an interesting inscription of diaconissa Ausonia, from Dioclea, dated to the end of the sixth century; cf. Munro J. A. R., Anderson W. C. F., Milne J. G., Haverfield F. The Roman Town of Doclea in Montenegro // *Archaeologia*. 1896. Vol. 55. P. 42–43. — The problem is that last datable coins from Dioclea are from the very beginning of the fifth century (Honorius), and this inscription would be, among dozen of Roman inscriptions from Dioclea, the only one of its kind — early medieval.

⁸⁰ About this list, see: Живковић Т. *Kastra oikoumena...* P. 25–28.

⁸¹ *DAI*. 32.74–77.

a particular principality, could not originate at the same time, because these principalities were separate political entities. It would be relatively easy to create an ecclesiastical organization in a particular principality, but not simultaneously in eight of them. That is why the narrative preserved in the *DAI*, about Basil's I politics among the Serbs and Croats, cannot be taken face true. However, based on the evidence presented in this paper, we can say that Basil I changed the ecclesiastical picture of Illyricum. Serbia and Dioclea, and most probable Bosnia, were placed under the control of Constantinople in ecclesiastical matters, while Croatia, Pagania, Zachlumi, Terbounia, remained under the spiritual guidance of Rome.

Conclusions

It is notable that Basil I had serious plans about the ecclesiastical policy towards the Slavs of Greece⁸², and highly developed idea to bring the ecclesiastical organization of the Croats and Serbs under the control of Constantinople. In the case of Croatia — he had limited success — only between the end of 877 and first half of 879. In the case of Serbia he probably managed, since ca. 872/873 to dissolve the previous ecclesiastical organization of the Roman Church and to link the Serbs closer to Constantinople. The same conclusion is valid for Dioclea. The *kastra oikoumena* of Serbia and Dioclea, as well as of Bosnia, previously under the Roman church — never appeared in the medieval sources again, what could be an *ex silentio* evidence that these ecclesiastical centres actually ceased to exist. However, even in Serbia and Dioclea, the Church of Constantinople did not establish any new ecclesiastical centre or ecclesiastical organization, since in *notitiae* of the Church of Constantinople Serbia never appears, while Dioclea appears only in *Notitia* 10 under Dyrrachion (dated at the very end of the 10th century)⁸³. It is important to underline that appearance of the town of Ras in the *DAI*, already ca. 853/854, was not connected with the term *kastra oikoumena*. At that time Ras was just a boundary town, or fortress. Only in much posterior sources, from 1019, Ras appears as an important ecclesiastical centre — a bishopric⁸⁴. Therefore, the Croat and Serb conversion related to Basil I and presented in the *DAI* and *Vita Basilii*, came as an outcome of fighting over ecclesiastical rights in the former *praefectura Illyrici* between Constantinople and Rome. It seems that Constantinople from that time was enforcing his ecclesiastical domination over Serbia and Dioclea. How effective it was — it is another question. The story of a conversion always has strong political agenda above all.

⁸² During the «Photian» Council of 879/880, there is a number of bishoprics bearing the Slavonic names in Thessaly and Macedonia; see: *Живковић Т. Јужни Словени под византијском влашћу 600–1025*. 2 изд. Београд, 2007. С. 176–177.

⁸³ *Notitiae episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*. P. 103.

⁸⁴ *Notitiae episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*. Notitia 13.846.

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Заголовок: On the Baptism of the Serbs and Croats in the Time of Basil I (867–886) [О крещении сербов и хорватов в правление Василия I (867–886)]

Резюме: У Василия I были серьезные планы, касавшиеся церковной политики в отношении славян Греции, а также хорошо разработанная программа по установлению контроля Константинополя над церковной организацией хорватов и сербов. В случае с Хорватией он имел ограниченный успех — только между концом 877 и первой половиной 879 г. В случае с Сербией он, вероятно, сумел около 872/873 г. упразднить прежнюю церковную организацию Римской церкви и теснее привязать сербов к Константинополю. Такой же вывод следует сделать и в отношении Дукли. Обращение хорватов и сербов при Василии I, описанное в трактате Константина Багрянородного «Об управлении империей» и «Жизнеописании Василия», является результатом борьбы за права церковной юрисдикции в бывшей префектуре Иллирик между Константинополем и Римом. Кажется, что с этого времени Константинополь установил свою церковную власть над Сербией и Дуклей.

Ключевые слова: Василий I (867–886), южные славяне, крещение сербов и хорватов, христианизация, византийская политика

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Summary: Basil I had serious plans about the ecclesiastical policy towards the Slavs of Greece, and highly developed idea to bring the ecclesiastical organization of the Croats and Serbs under the control of Constantinople. In the case of Croatia — he had limited success — only between the end of 877 and first half of 879. In the case of Serbia he probably managed, since ca. 872/873 to dissolve the previous ecclesiastical organization of the Roman Church and to link the Serbs closer to Constantinople. The same conclusion is valid for Dioclea. The Croat and Serb conversion related to Basil I and presented in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' treatise *De administrando imperio* and *Vita Basilii*, came as an outcome of fighting over ecclesiastical rights in the former *praefectura Illyrici* between Constantinople and Rome. It seems that Constantinople from that time was enforcing his ecclesiastical domination over Serbia and Dioclea.

Keywords: Basil I (867–886), Southern Slavs, baptism of the Serbs and Croats, Christianization, Byzantine policy

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