MEDIEVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY ON MORAVIA

a. Tradition and evidence south of the Drava

As a result of the expansion of Charlemagne's political power across the Pannonias into Dalmatia and Moesia, the patriarchs of Constantinople and Rome found themselves in conflict with the bishops of Bavaria, who represented the interests of the Frankish proprietary church. Byzantium and Rome claimed jurisdiction over the territory of Illyricum, of which in antiquity the Pannonias, Dalmatia, Moesia, and other provinces were parts. As a result of defeats inflicted upon the Avars, the Slavic population of the Pannonias and the interior of Dalmatia came under Frankish political control, while the coastal cities of Dalmatia, with a Latin population, remained politically, for the most part, under Byzantine control. Switches of allegiance both by secular and ecclesiastic authorities in Dalmatia and Pannonia inferior were frequent, usually reflecting the shifting balance of power and influence among the three claimants to imperial authority: Rome, Byzantium, and the Frankish royal house. The collision of Roman, Byzantine, and Frankish interests was in evidence also in Eastern Illyricum where, during the ninth century, the Bulgars were in firm control.¹

Before the barbarian invasions, the territories south of the Drava-Danube line, west of the Southern Morava River, and toward the Adriatic were either a part or the whole of a church organization under the bishops of Sirmium, the metropolitans of Pannonia and of Illyricum. Papal efforts to restore the ancient bishoprics of Illyricum, after the barbarian disruptions, began in the late eight and early ninth centuries,

¹ See “Donauprovinzen” in Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum, IV (1959); F. Dvornik, Les Slaves, Byzance et Rome (Paris, 1926); F. Dvornik, “La lutte entre Byzance et Rome autour de l'Illyricum au IXe siècle”. in Mélanges Charles Diehl (Paris, 1930), 61–81; Ferdo Šišić, Povijest Hrvata u vrijeme narodnih vladara (Zagreb, 1925). For details on individuals, places and issues presented in this chapter see Słownik Starożytności Słowiańskich.
when John of Ravenna became archbishop of Spalato, the new episcopal see in place of the destroyed Salona. In 852 the archbishop of Spalato-Salona claimed jurisdiction north up to the Drava-Danube line, including territories which had formerly been the concern of the metropolitan bishops of Sirmium. The episcopal see of Sirmium was restored in 869 with Methodius as its first bishop. Conflicts between the Byzantine and the ‘Roman’ Empires for possessions in Illyricum and rivalry among the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Rome and the proprietary Frankish church were unavoidable, and the situation was aggravated by the reluctance of the local political powers – Bulgar or Slavonian – to recognize claims made by those three powers. Medieval Croatian and Dalmatian sources, as well as Papal documents, unequivocally attest that in these Illyrian developments a prominent role was played by Sventopolk. A sampling of sources provides the following illustrations.

The part of Pannonia which had been the realm of the South-Slavic prince Liudevit before 822, was in 838 controlled by another Slavic prince of the name Ratimar. In a South-Slavic source, one of Ratimar’s descendants appears to be Sventopolk, the prince known to us from the history of Moravia. The ancestry of Sventopolk is described by Presbyter Diocleas in his *Regnum Sclavorum*, a source well-known to historians, but rejected by those studying Moravia’s past because it associates Sventopolk with the South, namely with Pannonia and Bosnia.

The relevant fragments of *Regnum Sclavorum* relate that Ratimar was succeeded by four kings (without stating, however, whether these four were Ratimar’s sons ruling their own patrimonial principalities, or four successive rulers). “From this tribe” was born Svetimir, whose son was Sventopelek. Presbyter Diocleas states that during Svetimir’s lifetime a certain philosopher by the name of Constantine travelled to the Khazars and later converted the Bulgars. According to the same source, during Sventopelek’s lifetime this same Constantine was invited to go to Rome and that he visited Sventopelek’s realm on his way there (*Dum autem pergeret transiens per regnum regis Sventopelek*).

Sventopolk-Sventopelek probably became Christian at this time, for Diocleas says that he urged the Christians who had been living in the

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2 *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, vol. I, No. 3.
3 *Conversio Bagaiorum*, cap. 10; *Annales s. Ruberti Salisb.* s.a. 838 (*MGH. SS.*, IX, 770).
4 *Regnum Sclavorum*, known also as *Barski Rodoslov*, has been edited several times, e.g. F. Šišić, *Letopis popa Duklanina* (Belgrad and Zagreb, 1928); V. Mošin, *Lietopis popa Dukljana* (Zagreb, 1950); see also “Duklanin pop” in *Słownik Starożytności Słowiańskich*.