

PREDRAG KOMATINA  
(Institute for Byzantine Studies, SASA, Belgrade)

## THE SLAVS OF THE MID-DANUBE BASIN AND THE BULGARIAN EXPANSION IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 9<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY\*

The *Annals of the Frankish kingdom*, under the year 818, contain a description of the arrival of legations of certain Abodrits, Guduskans and Timočans at the Frankish court in Heristal. This paper is devoted to an attempt at the further identification of these tribes and their habitats. It mainly discusses the possibility that the Timočans and Abodrits should be recognized as two of the so-called *Seven Slavic tribes*, over whom the Bulgarians imposed their power in 680/681. The final part of the paper is dedicated to an overview of the question of the expansion of Bulgarian authority in the area of the Morava River valley.

*Keywords:* Slavs, Bulgarians, Timočans, Abodrits, the Danubian Basin

У *Аналима Франачког краљевства*, под 818. г., описује се долазак посланстава извесних Абодрита, Гудускана и Тимочана на франачки двор у Херистал. Рад је посвећен покушају ближе идентификације ових племена и њихових станишта. Расправља се преваходно о могућности да се у Тимочанима и Абодритима препознају два од тзв. *Седам словенских племена* којима су Бугари наметнули своју власт 680/681. г. На крају се даје и осврт на питање ширења бугарске власти на подручје Моравске долине.

*Кључне речи:* Словени, Бугари, Тимочани, Абодрити, Подунавље

In the *Annals of the Frankish Kingdom (Annales regni Francorum)*, hereinafter referred to as *ARF*), composed in the first half of the ninth century,<sup>1</sup> in the

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<sup>1</sup> It was usually believed that their author was Einhard, courtier of Charlemagne (768–814) and of Louis the Pious (814–840), but such thinking is now discarded, and the *Annals* are considered a

abundance of information it provides, related to all the meridians connected with the policy of the powerful Frankish state of the Carolingian era, there are several items that concern certain southern Slavic tribes. For the first time these tribes are mentioned in the description of the legations the Frankish emperor Louis the Pious (814–840) received in Heristal, at the end of 818. On his way back to Aachen, where he intended to spend the following winter, the emperor stopped at Heristal to receive the envoys of Sico, duke of Benevento.<sup>2</sup> However, along with these envoys from southern Italy, *...erant ibi et aliarum nationum legati, Abodritorum videlicet ac Bornae, ducis Guduscanorum et Timocianorum, qui nuper a Bulgarorum societate desciverant et ad nostros fines se contulerant, simul et Liudewiti, ducis Pannoniae inferioris...*<sup>3</sup> The southern Slavic tribes that are mentioned here are, therefore, the *Abodrits*, *Guduskans* and *Timočans*, and this fact is the starting point for research into their fate at a moment when, for the first and only time, they entered the scene of historical events.

As for the *Timočans*, the theory emerged among scholars long ago that they should be recognized as one of the so-called *Seven Slavic tribes*, who, according to Theophanes and Nicephorus the Patriarch, the Bulgarians found and conquered when settling on the right bank of the lower Danube.<sup>4</sup> In this paper, I shall try to put forward a few observations that I think can support this thesis. The case of the *Abodrits* is very interesting and it should be given special attention.

The question of the *Guduskans*, however, represents a major controversy in historical science. Initially, when examining the ARF data for 818, scholars, keeping to the verbatim text of the old edition of the ARF, by Pertz,<sup>5</sup> considered them also to be a Danubian Slavic tribe, as were the *Abodrits* and *Timočans*, and saw in *Borna* the joint leader of both the *Guduskans* and the *Timočans*. However, in the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a slight intervention was made in the text of that section — a comma (“,”) was added after *Bornae, ducis Guduscanorum* and in front of *et Timocianorum*, thereby changing the meaning of the entire sentence so that the said *Borna* was only the *dux* of the *Guduskans* but not of the *Timočans*, and that only the *Timočans* had separated from the *Bulgarorum societate*, while the *Guduskans* were the earlier inhabitants of *Dalmatia*. This intervention was accepted by all subsequent researchers, and it also made its way into a later edition of the ARF, the result of which was that the *Guduskans* were completely dropped from the study of topics related to the position of the tribes of the middle

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work by anonymous authors, cf. *Reichsannalen, Lexicon des Mittelalters, J. B. Metzler, Stuttgart–Weimar 1999* (hereinafter *LdMA*), Vol. VII, coll. 616–617 (*U. Nonn*). Hereinafter, I shall use the nominal *author of the ARF*.

<sup>2</sup> *Annales Einhardi a. 741–829*, ed. *G. H. Pertz*, MGH SS I, Hannoverae 1819, 205.17–20 (hereinafter *Einh.*).

<sup>3</sup> *Einh.*, 205.20–23.

<sup>4</sup> The opinion that the *Timočans* were one of the *Seven Slavic tribes* of Theophanes was promoted already by *L. Niederle*, *Slovanske starozitnosti*, II–1, Praha 1902, 416–417. For a review of older opinions and literature on *Timočans*, cf. *Słownik starożytności słowiańskich* (hereinafter *SSS*), VI, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk, 1977, 83–84 (*W. Swoboda*).

<sup>5</sup> Edition released in 1819, which I also follow in this paper. See above, n. 2.

Danube during the expansion of the Bulgarian domains in the first half of the ninth century.<sup>6</sup> It is my opinion that the aforementioned intervention in the source text was unjustified.<sup>7</sup> However, proving this point would entail a separate discussion for which there is no space or need, here. The purpose of this paper can be achieved even if the considerations are limited to the Abodrits and Timočans, and the results themselves, to some extent, will show whether the Guduskans can be linked up with them.

**Data of the Frankish Annals** — After the aforementioned data from 818, the Abodrits on one hand, and the Timočans on the other, are mentioned separately in the ARF, in different places and in different contexts. The Timočans are discussed in the context of events in Dalmatia and Lower Pannonia and, first of all, I shall pay attention to the data concerning them. The Abodrits are mentioned in a different context and require special attention so I shall devote a special unit to them within the framework of this paper.

The Timočans are mentioned only one more time in the ARF, in the year 819, in the description of the clashes that arose between the duke of Lower Pannonia, Liudewitus, and his superior, the duke Cadolah of Friuli, that grew into an open conflict between Liudewitus and the emperor of the Franks, himself. On the one hand, Liudewitus kept offering the emperor peace proposals through his

<sup>6</sup> The intervention in the text of this section was first done by *J. C. Zeuss*, *Die Deutschen und die Nachbarstämme*, Munich 1837, 614. Afterwards, it was accepted by *E. Dümmler*, *Über die Geschichte der älteste Slawen in Dalmatien*, *Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Wien 1856, 388, and then, with further explanation, by *F. Rački* in his collection of sources for earliest Croatian history, *Documenta historiae chroaticae periodum antiquam illustrantia*, ed. *F. Rački*, MHSM, VII, Zagrabiae 1877, 320 sq. Finally, *F. Kurze* added the controversial “,” in his new edition of the ARF, *Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741. usque ad a. 829. qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi*, ed. *F. Kurze*, Hannoverae 1895, 149. After that, this interpretation prevailed absolutely in science. It was questioned only by *S. Prvanović*, *Ko je bio hrvatski knez Borna (Da li je poreklom iz Istočne Srbije?)*, *Rad JAZU* 311 (1957) 301–310, but his work was strongly criticized by *N. Klaić*, *S. Prvanović*, *Ko je bio hrvatski knez Borna (Da li je poreklom iz Istočne Srbije?)*, *HZ* 10 (1957) 258–259. For a brief overview of this controversy and older literature on Guduskans, cf. *SSS*, II–1, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1964, 92 (*W. Frančić*). From the time of *Rački* onwards many lines has been written on Borna and Guduskans in the Croatian historiography, and there is no room for an overall survey of those works. Only the latest of them should be noted, such as *M. Ančić*, *Od karolinškog dužnosnika do hrvatskog vladara. Hrvati i karolinško carstvo u prvoj polovici IX. stoljeća*, *Radovi Zavoda za povjesne znanosti HAZU u Zadru* 40 (1998) 27–41. Unfortunately, the collection of papers dedicated to this period of Croatian history, *Hrvati i Karolinzi, dio prvi: Rasprave i vrela*, ur. *A. Milošević*, Split 2000, was not at my disposal.

<sup>7</sup> In the first half of the ninth century, when the author of the ARF drafted his annals, commas were not used, and if he wanted to emphasize a different context in which the Guduskans were mentioned from the context to which the Abodrits and Timočans belonged, I believe that he would have done it otherwise, to make it immediately clear to his readers, but certainly not by using an *et*. In any case, one of his first readers, the anonymous author of the *Life of Emperor Louis*, a contemporary, using data from the ARF for his work, summarizing and paraphrasing them, understood the controversial point just as a meaningful and contextual integrality — that the Abodrits and Guduskans and Timočans all left the *Bulgarorum societate* and joined with the Franks: *...Praeterea alliarum aderant missi nationum, Abotritorum videlicet et Goduscanorum et Timotianorum, qui Bulgarum societate relicta, nostris se nuper sotiaverant...*, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, ed. *G. H. Pertz*, MGH SS II, Hannoverae 1829, 624.5–7.

emissaries, while, on the other, he tried to persuade neighboring nations to fight the Franks. In this context, Liudewitus *Timocianorum quoque populum, qui dimissa Bulgarorum societate, ad imperatorum venire ac dicioni eius se permittere gestiebat, ne hoc efficeret, ita interceptit ac falsis persuasionibus inlexit, ut, omisso quod facere cogitabat, perfidiae illius socius et adiutor existeret.*<sup>8</sup> Liudewitus soon clashed with the forces of the duke of Friuli, and then went onto Dalmatia, and on the River Kupa clashed with Borna, who was now *dux* of Dalmatia and a Frankish ally, and then penetrated deeper into Dalmatia.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, about 818, the tribe of the Timočans, left the *Bulgarorum societas*, placed themselves under Frankish protection, and moved to the territory under Frankish rule. They informed the emperor Louis about this through the envoys they sent to Heristal at the end of 818. They settled somewhere in the neighborhood of Lower Pannonia, then ruled by *dux* Liudewitus. In his major movement against Frankish rule over Lower Pannonia in 819, Liudewitus succeeded in winning over the Timočans to his side. In later sources, the Timočans are no longer mentioned, either in Lower Pannonia, or in Dalmatia. The case would be, most probably, that after a short time, having lost their political uniqueness, they merged with the Slavs who had already been living in the region for a long time — the Croats.

We should now return, however, to the question of their origin, space, and the position they had before they placed themselves in the Frankish orbit. A crucial fact in this connection is that they left the *Bulgarorum societate*, which is highlighted twice in the ARF. This fact indicates that their homeland should be sought somewhere in the neighborhood of the Bulgarians. Moreover, their very name — Timočans (*Timociani*) — etymologically unequivocally points to the River Timok as the area from where they came.

The term *societas* has several meanings in Latin, but their essence is the same — *company, association, alliance...*<sup>10</sup> The Timočans were a tribe that lived in the neighborhood of the Bulgarians, around the River Timok, and they existed in a kind of *alliance* with the Bulgarians. The nature of the aforementioned information in the ARF imposes the conclusion that it indicates an *enduring* relationship between the Bulgarians and the mentioned Slavs, i.e. that the Timočans abandoned their relationship with the Bulgarians which had lasted for a long period of time, and that the *Bulgarorum societas* for this Slavic tribe represented a

<sup>8</sup> Einh, 205.43, 206.3–7.

<sup>9</sup> Einh, 206.12–24. In the context of these events the Guduskans are mentioned again, as Borna's subjects, but who deserted him in the first phase of the battle on the River Kupa and returned to their homes, but then again they submitted to him. Borna and his family are mentioned two more times later in the ARF, in 821, when Borna died and was succeeded by his nephew Ladasclavus, Einh, 208.1–3, and in 823, when Liudewitus, leaving the Serbs, with whom he took refuge after the defeat of 822, he came to Dalmatia, to Borna's uncle Liudemuhslus, who had him soon killed, Einh, 209.13–17, 210.36–38.

All the mentioned information of the ARF was taken over and briefly paraphrased by the anonymous author of the *Life of Emperor Louis*, Vita Hludowici, 624.5–8, 624.40–625.10, 625.32–34, 42–43, 626.26–31, 627.35–36.

<sup>10</sup> C. Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, VI, Parisii 1846, 276.

kind of *legal status*. That is what can be said of the Timočans, based on the data recorded in the *Annals of the Frankish Kingdom*, under the years 818 and 819.

**Data of the Byzantine sources** — On the other hand, the Byzantine sources that came into being at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, primarily the *Chronographia* of Theophanes the Confessor (d. 818) and the *Breviarium historicum* of Patriarch Nicephorus (806–815, d. 828), contain important information about the relations between the Bulgarians and the Slavs from the time of the establishment of the Bulgarian state in 680/681. When the Bulgarians, led by the khan Asparukh, crossed the Danube and entered Thrace, in 680/681, they found the Slavs settled in this country. Having conquered the land and settled where it suited them, the Bulgarians, according to Theophanes, ...κυριευσάντων δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν παρακειμένων Σκλαυινῶν ἔθνῶν τὰς λεγομένας ἑπτὰ γενεάς, τοὺς μὲν Σέβερεις κατώκισαν ἀπὸ τῆς ἔμπροσθεν κλεισούρας Βερεγάβων ἐπὶ τὰ πρὸς ἀνατολὴν μέρη, εἰς δὲ τὰ πρὸς μεσημβρίαν καὶ δύσιν μέχρις Ἀβαρίας τὰς ὑπολοίπους ἑπτὰ γενεάς ὑπὸ πάκτων ὄντας.<sup>11</sup> Patriarch Nicephorus wrote the same, only a little more concisely: (The Bulgarians) ...κρατοῦσι δὲ καὶ τῶν [ἐγγιζόντων] παρωκημένων Σκλαβηνῶν ἔθνῶν, καὶ οὓς μὲν τὰ πρὸς Ἀβάρους πλησιάζοντα φρουρεῖν, οὓς δὲ τὰ πρὸς Ῥωμαίους ἐγγιζόντα τηρεῖν ἐπιτάττουσιν.<sup>12</sup> The Severians, settled by the Bulgarians to the east, to look after the areas approaching Byzantine territory, are not the subject of this paper. Attention should be paid to those tribes that were distributed *to the south and west*, in the areas bordering on the realm of the Avars (*Avaria*), with the task of guarding those areas and paying tribute to the Bulgarians.<sup>13</sup>

From these quotations, two questions arise: 1) what the geographic position of the said Slavic tribes was after the settlement of the Bulgarians, and 2) what their political position was in relation to the Bulgarians. As shown above, and from the data of the ARF about the Timočans, similar questions arise — where this tribe lived in the neighborhood of the Bulgarians, and what their *societas* with the Bulgarians actually was.

Can one arrive at a more precise conclusion about the geographic position of the *Seven Slavic tribes*? According to Theophanes and the Patriarch Nicephorus, the Bulgarians chose to settle in the land on the right side of the Danube,

<sup>11</sup> Theophanis Chronographia, ed. C. De Boor, Lipsiae 1883, 359.12–17 (hereinafter Theoph.)

<sup>12</sup> Nicephori Patriarchae Breviarium Historicum, ed. C. Mango, Washington 1990, 36.23–26 (hereinafter Niceph. Patr.)

<sup>13</sup> This information provided by Theophanes and Nicephorus was covered in every review of the Bulgarian history of the period, particularly in these: V. Zlatarski, Istorija na bălgarskata dărzava prez srednite vekove, I–1, Sofija 1918, 142–147; Istorija na Bălgarija, 2, Sofija 1981, 97–106 (P. Petrov); I. Božilov — V. Gjuzelev, Istorija na srednovekovna Bălgarija VII–XIV vek, Sofija 1999, 90–92. Review of older literature on the *Seven Slavic tribes*, cf. SSS, V, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk 1975, 157–158 (*W. Swoboda*). Recent literature on the *Seven Slavic tribes* and their position in the Bulgarian state: I. Božilov, Raždaneto na srednovekovna Bălgarija (nova interpretacija), IP 48/1–2 (1992) 17–22; G. Nikolov, Centralizăm i regionalizăm v rannosrednovekovna Bălgarija (kraja na VII — načaloto na XI v.), Sofija 2005, 63–68, 81–88.

in the hinterland of Varna (Odysos), between the Danube, the Balkan Mountain ranges and the Black Sea.<sup>14</sup> They displaced the *Seven Slavic tribes* to the *south and west*. That *the areas to the south* are mentioned at this point by Theophanes should not be understood literally, as the southern boundary of the Bulgarian territory corresponded to the ranges of the Balkan Mountain,<sup>15</sup> and neither was the region of Sofia in their hands until 809.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the above mentioned Slavic tribes should be sought south of the Danube, west of the Bulgarians, and north of the Balkan Mountain. In the *west*, the neighbors of these Slavs were the *Avars*.

That the Avar territory did not reach the right bank of the Danube at the time of the settlement of the Bulgarians and the establishment of the Bulgarian state is testified by a source that was contemporary to these events — *Miracula S. Demetrii II*. Namely, the fifth chapter of this collection tells the well-known story of the return of the descendants of the Rhomaioi captured during the Avar invasions in the second decade of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, from the land of the Avars to the Empire of the Rhomaioi, *more than sixty years* after their ancestors were captured. They were led by the Avar grandee, Kuver. The anonymous author of the text notes that, fleeing from the Avar khagan, Kuver, *with all the aforementioned people that were with him escaped across the River Danube and came to the areas towards us, and occupied the Ceramesian field*.<sup>17</sup> The Avar khagan pursued them, but gave up the chase even before they crossed the Danube, and returned *to the interior regions towards the north*.<sup>18</sup> Since this happened *more than sixty years* after the Avar invasions in the second decade of the 7<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>19</sup> i.e. at the time of or immediately after the Bulgarian settlement along the Lower Danube in 680/681,<sup>20</sup> as described by Theo-

<sup>14</sup> Theoph, 359.7–12; Nic. Patr, 36.19–23.

<sup>15</sup> Zlatarski, *Istorija*, I–1, 152.

<sup>16</sup> The Bulgarians conquered the city of Serdica (Sofia) in the spring of 809, and killed 6,000 soldiers and citizens in it, and then left. The city remained a Byzantine possession and the emperor Nicephorus intended to restore it and re-settle, Theoph, 485.4–22. In 811, the city was still a Byzantine possession, as emperor Nicephorus, after the capture and devastation of Pliska, intended to reach it before continuing the fight with Krum. It was on his way there that Krum's forces suddenly attacked him, killed him and destroyed his army, cf. n. 31–32.

<sup>17</sup> ...Κούβερ μετὰ τοῦ εἰρημένου σὺν αὐτῷ παντὸς λαοῦ τὸν προαφηγηθέντα Δανούβιν ποταμόν, καὶ ἐλθεῖν εἰς τὰς πρὸς ἡμᾶς μέρη, καὶ κρατῆσαι τὸν Κεραμήσιον κάμπον.... *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*. Le plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Démétrius et de la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans, I, Le texte, ed. P. Lemerle, Paris 1979, 228.29–30. Cf. commentary, *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*, II, Commentaire, par P. Lemerle, Paris 1981, 137–162.

<sup>18</sup> ...ἐν τοῖς ἐνδοτέροις πρὸς ἄρκτον ἄπεισι τόποις..., *Miracula*, I, 228.27–28.

<sup>19</sup> ...Χρόνων γὰρ ἐξήκοντα ἤδη..., *Miracula*, I, 228.15.

<sup>20</sup> F. Barišić, *Čuda Dimitrija Solunskog kao istoriski izvori*, Beograd 1953, 126–136, puts these events in between 680 and 685, and Lemerle, *Miracula*, II, 161, places them approximately in the period 678–685, and as a more precise determinant suggests the period between 682 and 684. Besides that, Lemerle, *Miracula*, II, 143–145, sees in the person of Kuver, the leader of this group of settlers, one of the four brothers of the Bulgarian khan Asparukh, the sons of Kuvrat, the master of *old great Bulgaria*, who are mentioned by Theoph, 357.8–358.11. and Niceph. Patr, 35.1–34. This one brother, according to them, settled with part of the Bulgarian people in Pannonia and entered the service of the Avar khagan. The same view is also accepted by Bulgarian historians, and they consider Kuver and the group he led to be the first Bulgarian settlers in Macedonia, *Istorija*, 2, 106–108 (P. Petrov); Božilov–Gjuzelev, 93–97.



phanes and Nicephorus, it is clear that at that time the Avar territory ended on the left bank of the Danube.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, the *Seven Slavic tribes* lived west of the Bulgarians, north of the Balkan Mountain and south of the Danube, and on this river they bordered with the Avars. I do not believe that their territory extended westwards, across the Homolje mountains into the valley of the Morava River. Simply, these tribes were subject to the Bulgarians and the Bulgarians were interested primarily in protection from possible Avar assaults so that they could go on waging war without hindrance, to the south against the Byzantine Empire. The center of the Bulgarian state, both political and geographic, during the first centuries of its existence, was far away to the east, near the shores of the Black Sea and the mouth of the Danube, and it is difficult to assume that they could also have controlled the Slavs in the valley of the Morava River, from there. It was important to the Bulgarians that the Avars did not threaten these centers of their power in Lower Moesia, which the Avars could reach primarily by penetrating across the Danube, east of the Iron Gate gorge, where the great river intersects the Carpathians and the Balkan Mountain ranges. Each Avar raid that would run through the Morava River valley would naturally be directed towards Thessaloniki and Constantinople, south of the ranges of the Balkan Mountain, and could not endanger the Bulgarian possessions on the Lower Danube. Therefore, I believe that the territory, which was settled by the *Seven Slavic tribes* after the arrival of the Bulgarians, was clearly delineated to the north by the River Danube, and to the west and south by the semi-circular wreath of the Balkan Mountain, and that it stopped at the Iron Gate, where the Danube and the aforementioned mountain range converged. How far it stretched to the east, i.e. where the border exactly was between these Slavic tribes and territories under the direct control of the Bulgarians, is not of immediate interest for this work.<sup>22</sup> Within the said limits also lies the River Timok, along which, beyond any doubt, the tribe of the Timočans lived. Therefore, as the Timočans lived in territory that has been marked here as the territory inhabited by the *Seven Slavic tribes* subject to the Bulgarians, there are strong grounds to believe that one of these *Seven Slavic tribes* can be identified with the Timočans.

What remains is to analyze their political position in relation to the Bulgarians and to determine in what measure it can be designated by the term *societas*, which is used in the ARF to describe the position of the Timočans in relation to the Bulgarians before they went westwards.

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<sup>21</sup> This analysis confirms how unfounded the thesis is presented by *I. Boba*, *The Pannonian Onogurs, Khan Krum and the Formation of the Bulgarian and Hungarian Polities*, BHR 11–1 (1983) 74, that *the Onogur-Bulgars of Kubrat's fourth son, as confederates of the Avars, controlled most probably the southeastern part of Pannonia and territories along the Southern Morava River, toward the Vardar River, with a center in Sirmium...*

<sup>22</sup> Most likely it reached the Iskar River basin, where some borderline trenches were found, cf. *Zlatarski*, *Istorija*, I–1, 152.

According to Theophanes, the Bulgarians had these *Seven Slavic tribes* on their western borders put ὑπὸ πάκτων, i.e. forced them to pay tribute.<sup>23</sup> However, the very fact that the Bulgarians made them defend the borders from the Avars, makes it clear that these tribes owed the Bulgarians military assistance, besides paying them tribute, that is to say, they were obliged to fight on behalf of the Bulgarians. And, it was not only against the Avars, but also against the Byzantines. Indeed, from that time on, until the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Byzantine sources speak of the Slavs as active participants in the Bulgarian-Byzantine struggle, on the Bulgarian side, and many conflicts between the imperial forces and the Bulgarian state are described as conflicts with the Bulgarians and the Slavs. Thus, in 687/688, the new emperor Justinian II, having decided to suspend the peace that his father Constantine IV had signed with the Bulgarians after they had settled, *commanded that the equestrian themes cross over into Thrace, in order to enslave the Bulgarians and Sklavinias*, and in the fall of 688, he *waged war against Sklavinia and Bulgaria*.<sup>24</sup> Irrespective of the fact that the Slavs who were defeated and subjugated on that occasion were from the vicinity of Thessaloniki,<sup>25</sup> one should not exclude that at the time he announced the campaign against the *Bulgarians and Sklavinias*, the emperor also had in mind those Slavs that were held ὑπὸ πάκτων by the Bulgarians, i.e. the Severians and the *Seven Slavic tribes*. In 704/705, the same emperor was intending to reclaim the throne that he had lost in the meantime (in 695), and asked the Bulgarian khan Tervel for help. Khan Tervel then συγκινεῖ πάντα τὸν ὑποκείμενον αὐτῷ λαὸν τῶν Βουλγάρων καὶ Σκλάβων, and brought them before Constantinople.<sup>26</sup> In 762/763, the Slavs sensed the negative consequences of the power struggle among the Bulgarians and many of them escaped and defected to the side of the emperor.<sup>27</sup> At that same time the emperor Constantine V (741–775) invaded Bulgaria. When the new khan Teletzes heard the emperor *was advancing towards him by land and by sea*, he confronted him, *taking into an alliance* (λαβὼν εἰς συμμαχίαν) 20.000 (men) *from the neighboring peoples* (ἐκ τῶν προσπαρακειμένων ἐθνῶν).<sup>28</sup> That the *neighboring peoples* mentioned here were, in fact, Slavs is clear from the testimony of Patriarch Nicephorus, referring to the same events: *Teletzes went out against him* (the emperor), *also having an alliance* (ἔχων εἰς συμμαχίαν) *of no small multitude of Slavs* (καὶ Σκλαβηνῶν οὐκ ὀλίγα πλήθη).<sup>29</sup> It all culminated in the famous battle of Anchialos in 763, and a great Byzantine victory.

<sup>23</sup> Vizantijski izvori za istoriju naroda Jugoslavije (hereinafter VIINJ), I, Beograd 1955, 225, n. 22 (*M. Rajković*); *Nikolov*, Centralizām, 65.

<sup>24</sup> Theoph, 364.5–18; Niceph, 38.1–11.

<sup>25</sup> VIINJ, I, 226, n. 23 (*M. Rajković*); *W. Seibt*, Neue aspekte der slawenpolitik Justinians II. Zur Person des Nebulos und der Problematik der Andrapoda-Siegel, VV 55/2 (1998) 126–127.

<sup>26</sup> Theoph, 374.6–8.

<sup>27</sup> Theoph, 432.25–28; Niceph. Patr, 75.1–5. On these Slavs, cf. *H. Ditten*, Umsiedlungen von Slawen aus Bulgarien nach Kleinasien einer- und von Armeniern und Syrern nach Thrakien andererseits zur Zeit des byzantinischen Kaisers Konstantin V. (Mitte des 8. Jh.), *Bulgaria Pontica Medii Aevi* 3 (1992) 30–31.

<sup>28</sup> Theoph, 433.1–3.

<sup>29</sup> Niceph. Patr, 76.12–13.



The last two fragments, Theophanes' and Nicephorus' on the conflict of 763, perhaps best characterize the relationship between the Bulgarians and their neighboring Slavic tribes. Not only were the Slavs obliged to pay tribute to the Bulgarians, but they were also their *allies*, *comrades*, σύμμαχοι. Although these data refer only to this particular event, and therefore this συμμαχία could be understood as an expression of the current needs of a military campaign, it is a fact that clearly arises from other mentioned examples: that the Slavs participated in this same capacity in the majority of Bulgarian – Byzantine conflicts during the 8<sup>th</sup> century, and that their participation in all of them, no doubt, could also be designated by the same term. The quoted examples testify to the enduring relationship of being under the obligation to provide military assistance that the subjected Slavs owed the Bulgarians, a relationship that started in 680/681 and lasted throughout the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Byzantine authors periodically called this relationship συμμαχία, *alliance*. It bears a strong resemblance to the data of the ARF that the Timočani were in *Bulgarorum societas*. Moreover, the word *societas*, in the meaning of *alliance, cooperation in battle*, is an adequate Latin equivalent of the Greek term συμμαχία, and, in this case, as shown above, also indicates a relationship that was permanent.

When both the geographic and political determinants provided by the ARF about the Timočans are compared with the geographic and political determinants given by the Byzantine sources about the *Seven Slavic tribes*, a high degree of consensus can be remarked. The conclusion that the Timočans were one of the *Seven Slavic tribes* can be drawn on the basis of both criteria. However, despite the similarities, one must not overlook the distance in time between the events these data refer to. The ARF describe the period of the second decade of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, while the Byzantine chronographers, although writing at the same time, talk about the events and situation at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> and from the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Clear conclusions can be drawn only after analyzing the information in the Byzantine sources about Bulgarian-Slavic relations at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

**Slavs and Bulgarians at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century** — Most of the data about Bulgarian-Slavic relations at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, is found within the scope of information dealing with the great Byzantine-Bulgarian war which lasted from 807 to 815.<sup>30</sup> When the emperor Nicephorus launched his decisive and, as it turned out, fatal only for him, attack on Bulgaria in 811, the Bulgarians engaged him in battle, *after having hired the Avars and the surroun-*

<sup>30</sup> Information on this conflict is found in: Theoph, 482 sq; *I. Dujčev*, La Chronique byzantine de l'an 811, TM 1 (1965) 210–216; Scriptor Incertus de Leone Bardae filii, Leonis Grammatici Chronographia, ed. *I. Bekker*, Bonnae 1842, 335–348. For a detailed review of military activities from 807 to 815, based on the data of these sources, cf. *Božilov–Gjuzelev*, 127–138; *S. Turlej*, The collapse of the Avar Khaganate and the situation in the southern Balkans. Byzantine and Bulgarian relations in the early 9th century. The birth of Krum's power and its foundations. Byzantium, New Peoples, New Powers: The Byzantino-Slav Contact Zone, from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Century, Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia V, Cracow 2007, 31–54.

*ding Sklaviniās*.<sup>31</sup> With an army collected in such a way, the khan made a sudden assault on the Byzantine camp and, in that attack, the emperor Nicephorus was killed. After the victory and the emperor's death, the khan Krum had the emperor's head cut off and put on a pole, *so as to exhibit it to the tribes that came before him and to dishonour us* (i.e. the Byzantines), then he had it pared to the bone and had the skull encased in silver plate, *and then he made the archons of the Slavs drink from it, in his pride*.<sup>32</sup> After the new emperor Michael Rangabe (811–813) continued the struggle with the Bulgarians, although with no particular success, in 812, the Bulgarian khan sent him a delegation to make peace proposals to the emperor. At the head of the delegation was a certain Δαργαμηρός,<sup>33</sup> a man certainly of Slavic origin, judging by his name.<sup>34</sup> Having completely taken over the military initiative, especially after the victory at the Battle of Bersinikia, in the spring of 813, Krum prepared for a decisive attack on Constantinople itself, in 814. In the army that he had assembled to launch this attack were also Slavs, that is, as the Byzantine source describes it: *Krum attacked, having collected a great many troops, both Avars and all of the Sklaviniās*.<sup>35</sup> In the face of this onslaught, the emperor Leo V (813–820), through his envoys, requested aid from the Frankish emperor Louis the Pious (814–840), *against the Bulgarians and other barbarian peoples*.<sup>36</sup>

Who were the Slavs, i.e. *Sklaviniās* mentioned by Byzantine sources in the description of these events? From what has been mentioned above, one can see that the Slavs played a particular role in the Byzantine-Bulgarian conflict which lasted from 807 to 815, and took part in it on the Bulgarian side. However, in contrast to previous periods the sources that speak of these events do not refer to the Bulgarian-Slavic relationship at that time by the term *συμμαχία*. Still, regardless of that, the fact remains that certain Slavs participated in this war on the side of the Bulgarians and under Bulgarian command. Without going into the matter of whether they were simply hired by the Bulgarians in 811, or they were also under an

<sup>31</sup> ...λαβόντες οἱ Βούλγαροι εὐκαιρίαν καὶ θεασάμενοι ἐκ τῶν ὁρέων ὅτι περιεφέροντο πλανώμενοι, μισθοσάμενοι Ἀβάρους καὶ τὰς περὶ Σκλαβηνίας..., *Dujčev*, *Chronique*, 212.42–44; *H. Grégoire*, *Un nouveau fragment du "Scriptor Incertus de Leone Armenio"*, *Byzantion* 11 (1936) 423.

<sup>32</sup> ...τὴν δὲ Νικηφόρου κεφαλὴν ἐκκόψας ὁ Κροῦμμος ἐκρέμασεν ἐπὶ ξύλου ἡμέρας ἱκανάς, εἰς ἐπίδειξιν τῶν ἐρχομένων εἰς αὐτὸν ἐθνῶν καὶ αἰσχύνῃν ἡμῶν. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα λαβὼν αὐτὴν καὶ γυμνάσας τὸ ὄστον ἄργυρόν τε ἐνδύσας ἔξωθεν πίνειν εἰς αὐτὴν τοὺς τῶν Σκλαβινῶν ἄρχοντας ἐποίησεν ἐγκαυχόμενος..., *Theoph*, 491.17–22.

<sup>33</sup> *Theoph*, 497.16–18.

<sup>34</sup> Δαργαμηρός could only be a hellenized corruption of the Slavic name *Dragomir*, *Dragamir*, v. *Zlatarski*, *Istoriija*, I–1, 262, n. 7; *VIINJ*, I, 237, n. 70 (*M. Rajković*). It is also quite possible that at that time the *liquid metathesis* had not yet appeared in the South-Slavic dialects, so the Slavic form of the name would have simply been *Dargamir*. The name of a certain *Dargaslav*, *archont of Hellas* (Δαργασκ<λ>άβου ἄρχοντ[ος] Ἑλλάδ[ος]), whose seal, dating from the 8th century, is preserved, *N. Oikonomides*, *L'archonte slave de l'Hellade au VIIIe siècle*, *VV* 55/2 (1998) 111–118, would corroborate this interpretation.

<sup>35</sup> ...ὁ Κροῦμμος ἐστράτευσεν λαὸν πολλὸν συναθροίσας, καὶ τοὺς Ἀβάρεις καὶ πάσας τὰς Σκλαβινίας..., *Scriptor Incertus*, 347.11–13.

<sup>36</sup> ...et legati Graecorum auxilium petebant ab eo contra Bulgares et caeteras barbaras gentes..., *Annales Laurissenses minores*, *MGH SS I*, 122.11–13.

obligation on some other grounds to join the Bulgarians in battle,<sup>37</sup> I only wish to draw attention to the question of the identification and the placement of these Slavs. The account of events of 811 mentions *the surrounding Sklaviniās* (τὰς πέριξ Σκλαβηνιάς), while those of 814 speak about *all of the Sklaviniās* (πάσας τὰς Σκλαβινιάς).<sup>38</sup> From these statements, one can only conclude that these *Sklaviniās* were in the neighborhood of the Bulgarians, and that there were many of them.<sup>39</sup> The fact is that both times these *Sklaviniās* were mentioned along with the Avars, and this

<sup>37</sup> The *Sklaviniās* that helped them in 811 are said to have been *hired* (μισθοσάμενοι) by the Bulgarians, along with the Avars, cf. n. 30. On another occasion, in 814, it is said only that Krum, *having gathered* (συναθροίσας) a huge army, and the Avars and all of the *Sklaviniās*, started war against the Empire, cf. n. 34. *Turlej*, *Collaps*, 51–52, insists on a difference between these two data, and on that basis concludes that the Avars and the Slavs were in a different position regarding the Bulgarians in 814 than in 811. In 811 they were just Bulgarian *mercenaries*, which means that they were independent of them, and just hired in exchange for money, whereas in 814 they were simply a part of the regular Bulgarian army, which means that they had become Bulgarian subjects in the meantime. However, the expression that Krum, *having gathered a huge army and the Avars and all of the Sklaviniās*, started war against the Empire, was just a form of information that reached Constantinople, a mere fact learned by the Byzantine scouts. They would not bother trying to explain the way in which Krum had *gathered* the army, so in this expression one should not look for information about that and not draw conclusions about the different position of the Avars and the Slavs regarding the Bulgarians in 814, then in 811. Nevertheless, *Turlej*, *idem*, says nothing about the geographic position of the Slavs he refers to.

As shown by *C. Mango*, *Two Lives of St. Ioannikios and the Bulgarians*, *Okeanos*, Harvard Ukrainian Studies VII, 1983, 399–400, the *Life of Saint Joannicius* by Sabbas the Monk, ch. 15, describing the campaign of emperor Nicephorus against the Bulgarians in 811, also contains the statement that the Bulgarians confronted the emperor with τὰ ὄμορα μισθοσάμενοι ἔθνη. However, Sabbas took this statement directly from the *Chronique byzantine de l'an 811*, *Mango*, *idem*.

Nevertheless, recent research definitely relinquished the old thesis, offered by *Grégoire*, *Scriptor Incertus*, 417–420, and held also by *Mango*, *idem*, that the *Chronique byzantine de l'an 811* and *Scriptor Incertus de Leone Armenio* were parts of one and the same historiographical review from the first half of the 9th century, and showed that they are in fact two totally independent and completely different sources, and that the *Chronique byzantine de l'an 811* dates only from the time after the Conversion of the Bulgarians in 864, cf. *A. Kazhdan — L. Sherry*, Some notes on the “Scriptor incertus de Leone Armenio”, *BSI* 58/1 (1997) 110–113; *A. Markopoulos*, La *Chronique de l'an 811* et le “Scriptor incertus de Leone Armenio”: problème des relations entre l'hagiographie et l'histoire, *REB* 57 (1999) 255–262.

<sup>38</sup> Based on the constant use of the term *Sklavinia* both times, VIINJ, I, 250–252, n. 5 (*M. Rajković — L. Tomić*), considers that in this name, one should recognize the *Sklaviniās* in Byzantine territory, with the explanation that *there is no example that the regions of the Bulgarian Slavs were ever called Sklaviniās*. It is true that the *Sklaviniās* under Byzantine sovereignty represented a specific historical phenomenon, and that in that case the term has a slightly technical meaning. However, the very term *Sklavinia* was used for other Slavic regions as well, and not only for those that were under Byzantine rule. In that broader sense, *Sklavinia* was every Slavic region, whether it was under the rule of the Byzantine emperor, or the Bulgarians, or any other lord, cf. *Sklavinien*, *LdMA* VII, col. 1988 (*J. Koder*). For Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–959) *Sklaviniās* were not only the lands of the South Slavs in the Dalmatian hinterland, Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, edd. *Gy. Moravcsik — R. J. H. Jenkins*, Washington 1967<sup>2</sup>, 29.66–68, 30.94–95 (hereinafter *DAI*), but also those under Frankish rule, *DAI*, 28.18–19, as well as the lands of the Russian Slavs (*Krivichians*, *Lendzians*, *Dervlians*, *Drougouvits*, *Severians*), *DAI*, 9.9–11, 107–109. Also, the Bulgarian-Byzantine peace treaty of 816 makes a clear distinction between the Byzantine (*those subordinated to the emperor*) and the Bulgarian (*those that are not subordinated to the emperor*) Slavs, using on that occasion for both of them the same term — *Slavs*, see hereinafter.

<sup>39</sup> This excludes the possibility that only the Severians from the eastern end of the Bulgarian-Byzantine border were in question, since they were just one of the many *Sklaviniās*.

fact could indicate that they should be sought somewhere closer to the Avars, which primarily directs us to the area in which the Theophanes and Patriarch Nicephorus, when speaking of the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, placed *the Seven Slavic tribes*.

The presence of the *archonts of the Slavs* at the celebration of Krum's victory over the emperor and the fact that his mission to the new emperor was led by a Slav, testifies to a certain degree of integration of the Slavs in Bulgarian society, which testifies to their enduring presence within the framework of that society. Struggling against the Byzantines seems to have still been the common destiny for them and the Bulgarians. Essentially, the information about Bulgarian-Slavic relations at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century does not differ significantly from the information about their relationship at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> and from the 8<sup>th</sup> century. In one case, the Slavs were τὰ προσπαρακείμενα ἔθνη, whereas in the other, αἱ περίξ Σκλαβηνίαι; the Bulgarians them on one occasion λαβὼν εἰς συμμαχίαν, ἔχων εἰς συμμαχίαν, on another occasion, μισθοσάμενοι, and then συνήθροισαν... In each of these situations, their position in relation to the Bulgarians was actually the same. Throughout the period from the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> to the first decades of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, namely from 681, until after 814, it seems that a state of continuity could be assumed regarding the political position of the *Seven Slavic tribes* with regard to the Bulgarians. At the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the only difference from the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries was that now the Avars, who were conquered, according to some data, by this same Krum,<sup>40</sup> were also in the same position regarding the Bulgarians as the mentioned Slavs. Whether we refer to that relationship by the term συμμαχία or not, it undoubtedly corresponds to what the author of the ARF called *societas* — the relationship in which the Timočans were with the Bulgarians up to 818.

As we know, the Bulgarian attack on Constantinople in the spring of 814, ended without any result because of Krum's sudden death.<sup>41</sup> The disappearance of Krum marked the end of the Bulgarian-Byzantine struggle that had lasted for many years. His successor Omurtag in 816 signed a peace treaty with the Empire for thirty years.<sup>42</sup> In this contract, the Slavs are also mentioned in a very important place.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Suidae Lexicon, I, ed. *A. Adler*, Lipsiae 1928, no. 423: Βούλγαροι, 483.19–484.12. *Turlej*, *Collaps*, 51–52, places this event in the time between 811 and 814, see above, n. 37. In historiography it has usually been considered that this happened earlier, around 805, *Zlatarski*, *Istorija*, I–1, 248, in any case before the beginning of the war with Byzantium in 807, *K. Gagova*, *Bulgarian-Byzantine Border in Thrace from the 7th to the 10th Century (Bulgaria to the South of the Haemus)*, BHR 14–1 (1986) 70; *Božilov–Gjuzelev*, 126–127; *Nikolov*, *Centralizъм*, 98. It is hard to believe that Krum, in the midst of military campaigns against Byzantium between 811 and 814, was capable of preparing another such great expedition as the subjugation of the not so small Avar territory to the East of the Tisza River, where the remnants of the free Avars retreated after the armies of Charlemagne destroyed their state in 796 and occupied its territory in Pannonia, west of the Danube, *Einh.*, 183.12–14. These remnants of the Avars Krum could conquer only before he started the war with Byzantium in 807.

<sup>41</sup> Scriptor Incertus, 348.12–15; *G. Ostrogorski*, *Istorija Vizantije*, Beograd 1959, 204–205.

<sup>42</sup> *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. *Imm. Bekker*, Bonnae 1838, 31.10 sq; *Iosephi Genesisii Regum libri quattuor*, edd. *A. Lesmueller–Werner — I. Thurn*, Berlin — New York 1978, 29.87 sq; *V. Stan-ković*, *Karakter vizantijske granice na Balkanu u IX i X veku*, Treća jugoslovenska konferencija vizantologa, Kruševac, 10–13. maj 2000, Beograd–Kruševac 2002, 283. In recent historiography,

According to the preserved section and the editor's reconstruction of the lacunas, the second and third clauses of the treaty concern the Slavs. The first of these relates to *the Slavs who were subject to the emperor*, and determined that they *remain as they were when the war started*. The second regards *other Slavs, those who are not subject to the emperor, in the coastal area*, and specifies that they *return to their villages*.<sup>44</sup> It is of particular interest that this treaty regarded *two kinds of Slavs* — those who were subjected to the emperor and those who were not. Since it was determined that the former remain in the position that they had had before the war started, i.e. to continue as subjects of the Byzantine emperor, whereas the latter, those *who were not subjects of the emperor*, were said to come *from the coastal regions*,<sup>45</sup> it is clear that neither of the two groups of Slavs mentioned in the peace treaty of 816 can be identified with the *Seven Slavic tribes* known from earlier times. Therefore, one may conclude that they were not included in this contract and that it did not regulate their status. Their position simply remained a matter of Bulgaria's internal politics.

After this, the next item of information about the relationship of the Bulgarians and the Slavs in their neighborhood is found in the above mentioned ARF data from 818, on how the Timočans left the *societas* of the Bulgarians. Therefore, between 816, when the Byzantine-Bulgarian peace treaty was signed, and 818, a change occurred in the relations between the Bulgarians and the *Seven Slavic tribes*, and, as seen from subsequent developments, to the detriment of the latter, some of whom were even forced to leave their dwelling places and move to the west. After the above presentation, the reasons for this change can be explained with greater certainty. The self-government of the *Seven Slavic tribes* and their special relationship with the Bulgarians, established at the time of the arrival of the Bulgarians in 680/681, which survived for almost a century and a half, fell victim to the change in foreign policy circumstances in the Balkans and the Pannonian Plain that occurred in the first fifteen years of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Since the beginning, the purpose of these relationships was for the Slavs to protect the Bulgarian borders from the Avars and supply them with military assistance

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signing of this treaty is placed in 816, cf. *W. Treadgold*, The Bulgars' Treaty with the Byzantines in 816, *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi* 4 (1984) 213–220; *Božilov–Gjuzelev*, 145; *Nikolov*, *Centralizăm*, 91; *P. Sophoulis*, New remarks on the history of Byzantine-Bulgar relations in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, *BSI* 67 (2009) 126.

<sup>43</sup> The text of this treaty is preserved in two stone inscriptions, found at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in eastern Bulgaria, and now kept at the Archeological Museum in Sofia. Written in poor Greek, the inscriptions are badly damaged, one far more than the other. On that which is better preserved, only the left side of the first half of the inscription is visible. According to the reconstructed initial part of the inscription, the treaty was to have had eleven clauses (*chapters*). However, in the preserved part of the inscription there are only the first four clauses. I used the critical edition by *V. Beševliev*, *Die Protobulgarischen Inschriften*, Berlin 1963, Nrr. 41–42, pp. 190–208, foto abb. 77–82. The lacunas in the text were reconstructed by the editor, so I fully rely on that reconstruction.

<sup>44</sup> *Beševliev*, *Inschriften*, Nr. 41.8–12. *B. и Božilov–Gjuzelev*, 146; *Nikolov*, *Centralizăm*, 91.

<sup>45</sup> In these Slavs one should most probably recognize the Severians, whom the Bulgarians had in 680/681 placed *towards the East*, to watch the areas that approach the Romans, cf. above, and whose settlements were most exposed to military activities during the war of 807–815.



against the Byzantine Empire. However, the power of the Avars was destroyed by Charlemagne in 796,<sup>46</sup> and the Bulgarians subjugated whoever remained of them at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The war with the Byzantine Empire ended in 816, and the peace was arranged to last for thirty years. After the subjugation of the Avars and the establishment of a lasting peace with the Byzantines, the Bulgarians no longer had the need to tolerate the self-government of their Slavic neighbors. For the Bulgarians, the subjugation of the Avars opened up new opportunities and space for expansion in the direction of the Pannonian plain and, during his reign (until 831) their ruler Omurtag would concentrate mostly on the situation on that side.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the Slavs on the right bank of the Danube became only a domestic issue and a potential source of instability. The Bulgarians therefore tried to eliminate their self-government and fully integrate them into their own social and political order.<sup>48</sup> To avoid this fate and preserve their integrity, some of the *Seven Slavic tribes*, such as the Timočans, decided to leave their homeland and seek the protection of the Franks.

**Another one of the *Seven tribes*?** — Now, attention should be paid to the Abodrits, mentioned in the ARF in the description of the legations that the emperor Louis received at Heristal at the end of 818, along with the Timočans, Guduskans and Borna. The whole passage, it may be useful to repeat, reads as follows: *...erant ibi et aliarum nationum legati, Abodritorum videlicet ac Bornae, ducis Guduscanorum et Timocianorum, qui nuper a Bulgarorum societate desciverant et ad nostros fines se contulerant, simul et Liudewiti, ducis Pannoniae inferioris...*<sup>49</sup> After this, they are mentioned again twice in the ARF.

Firstly, at the great Diet the emperor Louis summoned in Frankfurt at the beginning of the winter of 822, a Diet *that was required for the benefit of the eastern regions of his kingdom*,<sup>50</sup> among the envoys of various Slavic peoples from the eastern Frankish border, there appeared also envoys of certain *Praedenecenti*. As the ARF relate, the emperor *...in quo conventu omnium orientalium Sclavorum, id est Abodritorum, Soraborum, Wiltzorum, Beheimorum, Marvanorum, Praedenecentorum et in Pannonia residentium Avarum legationes cum muneribus ad se directas audivit...*<sup>51</sup> According to the order of listing these people, running from North to South, the *Praedenecenti* should be sought somewhere south of the Moravians (Great Moravia), in the neighborhood of the *Avars who dwell in Pannonia*.

The next reference to them in the Frankish annals reveals the precise geographic location of their dwelling places, and provides a fresh detail about their identification. In the year 824, around Christmas, the emperor Louis came to

<sup>46</sup> Einh. 182.1–19, 183.4–19.

<sup>47</sup> *Ostrogorski*, *Istorija*, 205.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Božilov–Gjuzelev*, 150–151; *Nikolov*, *Centralizām*, 90–92.

<sup>49</sup> Einh. 205.20–23.

<sup>50</sup> Einh. 209.33–36.

<sup>51</sup> Einh. 209.36–39.



spend the winter in Aachen. There, he heard that the envoys of the Bulgarian ruler Omurtag were in Bavaria, on their way to him.<sup>52</sup> However, already in Aachen he found and received ...*caeterum legatos Abodritorum, qui vulgo Praedenecenti vocantur, et contermini Bulgaris Daciam Danubio adiacentem incolunt, qui et ipsi adventare nuntiabantur, illico venire permisit. Qui cum de Bulgarorum iniqua infestatione quererentur, et contra eos auxilium sibi ferri deposcerent, domum ire, atque iterum ad tempus Bulgarorum legatis constitutus redire iusii sunt...*<sup>53</sup>

*Abodriti* is the name that is often mentioned in the Frankish annals. It mainly refers to the well-known north Slavic people, who lived on the right bank of the lower Elbe, with whom the neighboring Franks and Saxons had numerous military conflicts and diplomatic contacts during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, the Abodrits referred to in the above paragraphs of the Frankish annals, were not the same as those Abodrits from the north. They were a completely different people, who lived far to the south of the Polabian Abodrits, in the neighborhood of the Bulgarians, in *Dacia which lies along the Danube*. The data from 824 clearly attests this. The data from 822 refer to them using a different name, *Predenecenti*, but this would later be explained, under the year 824, that it meant exactly the same as the Abodrits. Since the data from 822 also mention other Abodrits, those from the Elbe,<sup>54</sup> that fact would be the reason why the author of the ARF at this point, for the first time used the name of the *Predenecenti* for the Abodrits of the Danube — simply to avoid repeating the same name for two different peoples. As for the data from 818, it has never been disputed in science that this referred to the Abodrits of the Danube.<sup>55</sup> One reason to accept this view is that this legation of Abodrits came before the Frankish emperor along with the embassies of the Timočans, Guduskans and Liudewitus, Duke of Lower Pannonia, and clearly in connection with the events that occurred at the time in the region of the Sava and the Danube basins. Another reason is that, meantime that is, from 817 to 819, the Abodrits of the Elbe were engaged in constant clashes with the Franks,<sup>56</sup> and they did not send an embassy to the Frankish court at that time.

<sup>52</sup> Einh, 212.41–44.

<sup>53</sup> Einh. 212.44–213.5.

<sup>54</sup> It is clear, since the listing of the present legations of *all the Slavs from the East, i.e. the Abodrits, Sorabs, Wiltzes, Czechs, Moravians, Praedenecenti and Avars that dwell in Pannonia*, Einh, 209.36–39, is done according to the geographic position of the said peoples, along the eastern Frankish border, from the North towards the South, and thus it is reasonable that the Abodrits of the Elbe were mentioned in the first place, since they lived northernmost.

<sup>55</sup> For a short notice and review of older literature, cf. SSS, III–2, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1967, 441–442 (*W. Swoboda*). In recent literature the Abodrits are mentioned, but only casually, by, *L. Havlík*, “Hē megalē Morabia” and “Hē chōra Morabia”, BSI 54 (1993) 77; *J. Herrmann*, Bulgaren, Obodriten, Franken und der Bayrische Geograph, Sbornik v čest na akad. Dimităr Angelov, Sofija 1994, 43–44; *Božilov–Gjuzelev*, 151; *Nikolov*, Centralizăm, 91. In recent historiography, apart from being supported by *Božilov–Gjuzelev*, idem, the thesis that was sometimes discussed in earlier historiography, about the identification of these Abodrits with the *Osterabtrezi* of the second part of the text of the Anonymous Bavarian Geographer, Geograf Bawarski, Monumenta Poloniae historica, I, ed. *A. Bielowski*, Lwów 1864, 10 (hereinafter MPH I), is not generally accepted.

<sup>56</sup> Einh, 204.20–31; 205.17–18, 25–31.

Where did these Danubian Abodrits live? According to the ARF data from 824, they were *neighbors of the Bulgarians* and lived in the land which the ARF refer to as *Dacia which lies along the Danube* (Dacia Danubio adiacens). In another famous work from the era of Louis the Pious, known as the *Life of Charlemagne*, that is reliably known to have been compiled by Einhard,<sup>57</sup> long considered the author of the *Annals of the Frankish Kingdom* (the ARF), *Dacia* is also mentioned. As part of a general overview of Charlemagne's reign (768–814), Einhard, in short, gave the frontiers of his empire. Charlemagne's empire included, inter alia, *...tum Saxoniam, quae quidem Germaniae pars non modica est...; post quam utramque Pannoniam, et adpositam in altera Danubii ripa Datiam, Histriam quoque et Liburniam atque Dalmatiam, exceptis maritimis civitatibus...*<sup>58</sup> It would appear from this section that *Dacia located on the other bank of the Danube* (adpositam in altera Danubii Ripa Datia) should be sought somewhere on the left bank of the Danube,<sup>59</sup> since *both of the Pannoniae*, referred to immediately before it, are on the right bank of the great river. It is well-known that the *Life of Charlemagne* is actually just a summary of the events described in detail and comprehensively according to the years, in the ARF, and that in writing this work Einhard relied entirely on the data from the ARF.<sup>60</sup> That is why it is quite clear that the information on Dacia was also entered in the *Life of Charlemagne* from the *Annals of the Frankish Kingdom*, and that therefore it refers to the same area.<sup>61</sup> Since, according to the ARF, the Abodrits lived in *Dacia which lies along the Danube* (Dacia Danubio adiacens), and since, according to the *Life of Charlemagne*, Dacia was *on the other bank of the Danube* (adpositam in altera Danubii ripa) compared to Pannonia, that is, on the left bank of the river, it is generally assumed in historiography that, consequently, the Danubian Abodrits should be sought on the left bank of the Danube, around the lower course of the Tisza, that is, in today's Banat.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Einhard composed this work in the middle of the 830s, cf. Einhard, LdMA III, coll. 1738–1739 (*J. Fleckenstein*).

<sup>58</sup> Einhardi vita Karoli Magni, 451.5–9.

<sup>59</sup> That is, in place of the original, the so-called *Trajan's Dacia* (Dacia Traiana).

<sup>60</sup> Reichsannalen, LdMA VII, coll. 616–617 (*U. Nonn*).

<sup>61</sup> In his *Life of Charlemagne*, while describing the borders of his Empire, Einhard included all the areas with which that Empire had political contacts, about which he found detailed information in the ARF.

<sup>62</sup> *Havlik*, Morabia, 77; *Herrmann*, Bulgaren, 43–44; *Božilov-Gjuzelev*, 151; *Nikolov*, Centralizъм, 91.

In older historiography there were also other theories about the original homeland of the Abodrits of the Danube, based on the toponymy of certain Danubian areas. Thus, thanks to the similarity with the name of the medieval Hungarian county of Bodrog (in modern times Bacs-Bodrog) and the river that gave its name to the county, the Abodrits were placed in the area of northern Bačka. Sometimes, their second name — *Preadenecenti*, was for some reason identified with the name of *Braničevians*, so they were placed also on the right bank of the Danube, in the area of Braničevo, Serbia, mentioned in the late medieval sources, which was first proposed by *Zeuss*, Deutschen, 614–615. For other literature see n. 55.

However, what do the phrases *Dacia Danubio adiacens* and *adposita in altera Danubii ripa Datia* really mean? At a first glimpse, one can see that it is a term from the geography of Late Antiquity. When describing events in the Danubian basin and in the northern Balkans, the author of the ARF often used classical concepts, especially the names of some Roman provinces of Late Antiquity, in order to clarify to the reader the scene of certain events. More importantly, his knowledge of Late Roman administrative and provincial organization of the said area was vast. Thus, he knew that the emperor Nicephorus (802–811) *after numerous and important victories in the province of Moesia was killed in the conflict with the Bulgarians*.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, that *Krum, the Bulgarian ruler, who had killed the emperor Nicephorus two years earlier, also expelled (the emperor) Michael (811–813) from Moesia*.<sup>64</sup> These events in fact did occur on the territory of the former Late Roman province of Lower Moesia. The author of the ARF also knew the division of Pannonia into Upper (north of the River Drava) and Lower (south of the River Drava).<sup>65</sup> Perhaps the most interesting in this respect is his well-known statement that *the Serbs are people who are said to hold a large part of Dalmatia*.<sup>66</sup> It is known that the Late Roman province of Dalmatia extended eastwards up to the River Drina. On the other hand, according to the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–959), the then Serbia also included Bosnia and some other areas that were located to the west of the said river, and its border

The thesis about the *Braničevians* cannot be sustained for certain reasons. The area between the lower course of the Great Morava and the Danube became known as *Braničevo* only after the town of Braničevo, in the 11th century, became the seat of the bishopric which had previously had its seat in the nearby town of *Morava*, where it was mentioned for the first time in 879, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, XVII, ed. *J. D. Mansi*, Venetiis 1772, col. 373D. The *Bishopric of Braničevo* was mentioned for the first time in 1019, in the first charter of the emperor Basil II to the Archbishopric of Achrida, and it comprised also the town of *Moravski*, *H. Gelzer*, *Ungedruckte und wenig bekannte Bistümverzeichnisse der orientalischen Kirche*, II, BZ 2 (1893) 43.17–20. In a *notitia episcopatum* from the end of the 11th or the beginning of the 12th century this bishopric was called *of Morava or of Braničevo*, *Notitiae episcopatum ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. *J. Darrouzès*, Paris 1981, 13.845. On the continuity of this bishopric, cf. *J. Kalić*, *Crkvene prilike u srpskim zemljama do stvaranja arhiepiskopije 1219. g.*, Sava Nemanjić — Sveti Sava, Beograd 1979, 29–30, 33–34; *S. Pirivatrić*, *Vizantijska tema Morava i “Moravije” Konstantina VII Porfirogenita*, ZRVI 36 (1997) 178–181; *P. Komatina*, *Moravski episkop Agaton na Fotijevom saboru 879/880. g.*, *Srpska teologija danas* 2009. Prvi godišnji simposion, Beograd 2010, 359–368. In the 9th century, when the Abodrits were mentioned, in the area of later Braničevo, where in 879 the *Bishopric of Morava* (in fact, the *Metropolis of Morava*) was mentioned, there lived the *Balkan Moravians*, another Slavic people. About them, see the final part of this paper.

<sup>63</sup> Einh, 199.25–26.

<sup>64</sup> Einh, 200.41–42.

<sup>65</sup> The *Annals of the Abbey of Lorsch*, under the year 796 use plural *Pannoniae*, i.e. its accusative case *Pannonias*, Einh, 182.4, 15, as well as the ARF in 811, Einh, 199.5; in 818 Liudewitus was *dux Pannoniae inferioris*, Einh, 205.22–23; one of the three Frankish armies the emperor Louis sent in the spring of 820 against him, was going *per Baioariam et Pannoniam superiorem*, and entered Liudewitus' country, that is, Lower Pannonia, after crossing the Drava River, Einh, 206.43–44, 207.5–8; in 827 the Bulgarians, by ship along the Drava, attacked and devastated *terminos Pannoniae superioris* and the villages of the Slavs that lived in it, Einh, 216.32–34, 217.4–5.

<sup>66</sup> ...ad Sorabos, quae natio magnam Dalmatiae partem obtinere dicitur..., Einh, 209.15–16.

with Croatia was by the Cetina river and Livno.<sup>67</sup> Thus, one could say that the initial Serbia actually included much of Late Roman Dalmatia.

Bearing all that in mind, could it be possible that the *Dacia Danubio adiacens* of the author of the ARF and Einhard's *adposita in altera Danubii ripa Datia* be understood and recognized as the Late Roman province of *Dacia Ripensis* (Coastal Dacia)? Coastal Dacia was given such a name because it lay on the (*right*) coast (bank) of the Danube. This province was created as part of so-called *Aurelian's Dacia* (*Dacia Aureliana*), which was founded by the emperor Aurelianus (270–275) on the right bank of the Danube, after the Roman legions were forced to leave the original *Trajan's Dacia*, on the left bank of the said river.

The notion that the expression *Dacia* in the ARF and *Life of Charlemagne* means *Dacia Traiana*, the one on the left bank of the Danube, and not *Dacia Ripensis* on the right bank of the river, is based on the interpretation of the data in the *Life of Charlemagne* that it was located *on the other side of the Danube* (*adposita in altera Danubii ripa*) in relation to *both of the Pannoniae*, which immediately preceded it in the list of the lands on the Frankish eastern borders.<sup>68</sup> However, the mention of *both of the Pannoniae* and the mention of *Dacia* in this list should not be connected and viewed as a whole. It was simply an enumeration of the provinces in a certain order, and, as Pannonia had no geographical connection with Saxony, which preceded it, nor had Dacia any with Istria, Liburnia or Dalmatia, which followed it, no geographic or contextual connection should necessarily exist between Pannoniae and Dacia, either. What *the other bank of the Danube* was from Einhard's point of view is of no crucial importance. The phrase *adposita in altera Danubii ripa Datia* should be considered separately. In this way, the coincidence in the two definitions given about Dacia by Einhard in the *Life of Charlemagne* and by the author of the ARF — *adposita in altera Danubii ripa Datia* and *Dacia Danubio adiacens* — becomes obvious. The first was the same as the second, merely expressed in other words. Even more precisely, both represented an attempt to adequately paraphrase the Late Roman provincial name of *Dacia Ripensis*, with the clear intention of emphasizing that this *Ripensis* referred precisely to the bank of the Danube. Therefore, I think that the term *Dacia* in both the ARF and the *Life of Charlemagne* indicates exactly the area of the Late Roman province of *Dacia Ripensis*.<sup>69</sup>

*Dacia Ripensis* was located on the right bank of the Danube, west of Lower Moesia, between the Danube, the Balkan Mountain ranges and the Iskar river,<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> DAI, 30.113, 116–117; 32.149–151.

<sup>68</sup> Einhardi vita Karoli Magni, 451.5–9, cf. n. 58.

<sup>69</sup> In the 9th century, there still existed the notion of *Dacia Traiana*, like, for example, in the *Description of Germania* by the Anglo-Saxon king Alfred (871–899), but quite unclear, and usually in the context of data by the authors of Late Antiquity about the Goths living in it, thus King Alfred places it *East of the land of the Vistulans*, Króla Alfreda Opis Germanii, MPH I, 13.21–23. The notion that the author of the ARF had about the Late Roman provinces in the Danubian region was far more clear and precise.

<sup>70</sup> For the towns that it comprised in the 6th century, cf. Hieroclis Synecdemus, 655.1–6, in Hieroclis Synecdemus et Notitiae graecae episcopatum, ed. G. Parthey, Amsterdam 1967<sup>2</sup>.

and indeed it was in the neighborhood of the Bulgarians, the center of whose country was in Lower Moesia. That is, on the other hand, the same area inhabited by the *Seven Slavic tribes*, including the Timočans. As the author of the ARF explicitly states that the Abodrits-*Predenecenti* lived in that area, one can draw the conclusion that they too could be one of the *Seven Slavic tribes*.

The Danubian Abodrits lived south of the Danube, near the Timočans and in the neighborhood of the Bulgarians, and together with the Timočans they sent a mission to the Frankish emperor in 818. From this fact, one can deduce that they too, with the Timočans, left the *Bulgarorum societas* a little before, having been pressed by the same problems.<sup>71</sup> What distinguished them from the Timočans was the fact that they did not leave their habitat and move to the west, as the Timočans did. They remained in their country and continue to resist the Bulgarians for at least six more years, until the end of 824, when they made their third, and last, mission to the Franks, because they could not endure the Bulgarian pressure any more.<sup>72</sup>

But after 824, nothing more is heard of them. That same year, the Bulgarian khan Omurtag sent his first mission to the Frankish emperor Louis *allegedly for the purpose of establishing a peace*.<sup>73</sup> At the time when the Frankish emperor received the last mission of the Abodrits-*Predenecenti*, around Christmas of 824, the second mission of the Bulgarian khan was on its way to him.<sup>74</sup> The emperor did not receive this Bulgarian legation till May 825.<sup>75</sup> The Bulgarian envoys, on behalf of their ruler, requested that the precise boundary be demarcated between the Bulgarians and the Franks.<sup>76</sup> Negotiations and exchanges of legations lasted until 826, but the Franks gave no clear answer.<sup>77</sup> The Bulgarian khan interpreted this as the failure of the negotiations and, in 827, Bulgarian detachments began to attack *the Slavs that reside in Pannonia* and subjugate them, sending ships up the Drava River, and, in 828, inflicted tremendous devastation in Upper Pannonia, north of the Drava. There was more fighting in 829, as well.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Bearing this in mind, it is really hard to accept that all of that did not refer to the Guduscans and their leader Borna as well, since they were mentioned in the description of the legations to the Frankish emperor in 818, between the Abodrits and the Timočans.

<sup>72</sup> Einh. 212.44–213.5.

<sup>73</sup> Einh. 212.7–8.

<sup>74</sup> Einh. 212.41–213.5.

<sup>75</sup> Einh. 213.25–26.

<sup>76</sup> ...Quo cum, peracta venatione, fuisset reversus, Bulgaricam legationem audivit; erat enim de terminis ac finibus inter Bulgaros ac Francos constituendis..., Einh. 213.28–29. After the fall of the Avars, the Frankish eastern border was at the Danube, the Bulgarian northwestern border was at the Tisza, cf. n. 40, while the area between the Danube and the Tisza was a sort of semi-deserted “no man’s land”, a buffer-zone between the two great realms, and the negotiations were dealing most probably with that area. Certainly *Herrmann*, *Bulgaren*, 44, is not right when assuming that this definition of the border referred to the *former land of the Abodrits*, which he mistakenly places between the Tisza and the Danube, in today’s Banat.

<sup>77</sup> Einh. 213.38–40; 214.12–16.

<sup>78</sup> Einh. 214.41–44; 216.32–34; 217.4–7; *Annales Fuldenses*, MGH SS I, 359.38–39; 360.2–3 (hereinafter *Ann. Fuld*). In short on this Bulgarian expansion towards Frankish possessions, cf. *Božilov–Gjuzelev*, 151–153; *Nikolov*, *Centralizăm*, 91–92.

During these clashes, or perhaps during the negotiations that preceded them, the Bulgarians were able to finally conquer and subjugate the Abodrits of the Danube, thus liquidating the last remnant of the self-government of their former Slavic allies, the so-called *Seven Slavic tribes*.

**Expansion of Bulgarian rule to the Morava River valley** — This paper would be incomplete and not fully explained, if it did not pay attention to another question, that arises after presenting the above results. It is the question of when and how Bulgarian authority spread to the area west of the region inhabited by the *Seven Slavic tribes*, that is, to the area of the Morava River valley.

The subjugation of the Abodrits and their Slavic neighbors along the Danube and the Morava River basins was not a precondition for the further expansion of Bulgaria in the Pannonian Plain upstream along the Danube, nor for their attacks along the Drava and across this river. Since the time of their settlement and the establishment of the state in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Bulgarians had also ruled the left bank of the Danube, up to the slopes of the South Carpathians.<sup>79</sup> Around 680, one group of the Bulgarians settled among the Avars in the Pannonian Plain.<sup>80</sup> When the Franks destroyed the political power of the Avars in 796, they occupied Pannonia to the Danube, and expelled the remaining Avars across the Tisza River.<sup>81</sup> Soon after the Bulgarians conquered the Avars, who were left, on the east side of the river Tisza, they subjected them to their authority and the obligation to provide military assistance in their war against the Byzantine Empire in 807–815.<sup>82</sup> In this way, the Bulgarian state spread across the ranges of the South Carpathians and seized a large portion of the Pannonian Plain as far west as the River Tisza. By then, the Bulgarian borders were approaching the frontiers of the Frankish Empire. However, due to wars with Byzantium, the Bulgarians did not operate in this area until the 820's. Their attacks on the banks of the Drava and Pannonia came from the direction of the Bulgarian part of the Pannonian Plain, in today's Banat and Bačka, and not from the south, for example, from Sarmia, or the present-day Serbian Danube or Morava region. The fact that they attacked the Slavs in Pannonia in 827 and 829 by ship along the Drava,<sup>83</sup> and not by land between the Drava and Sava, substantiates this. Also, in 828, it is clear that they attacked the Slavs in Upper Pannonia that is, north of the Drava,<sup>84</sup> rather than those living south of the river, which would have been the natural route from Sarmia.

<sup>79</sup> Zlatarski, *Istoriija*, I–1, 152–155.

<sup>80</sup> Theoph., 357.23–26; Niceph. Patr., 35.17–19. After the data that refer to the 7<sup>th</sup> century, there is no more direct information about these Bulgars of Pannonia. It is generally considered that they merged with the Bulgarians of the Danube after the fall of the Avar state in 796, and even that Krum, who became the Bulgarian khan about that time (traditionally in 802 or 803, but Božilov–Gjuzelev, 126, consider that it was certainly before 800), was in fact the leader of those *Pannonian* Bulgars, Ostrogorski, *Istoriija*, 200; Boba, *Onogurs*, 74–76. These hypotheses, however, have no confirmation in the sources.

<sup>81</sup> Einh., 182.1–19, 183.4–19.

<sup>82</sup> See above.

<sup>83</sup> Einh., 216.32–34; Ann. Fuld., 360.2–3.

<sup>84</sup> Einh., 217.4–7.



Finally, since the Bulgarians failed to break the resistance of their former allies from the *Seven Slavic tribes* until 824, it is clear that until then, they were also unable to establish direct control over their western border, on the mountain range that creates the watershed of the Timok and the Greater Morava river basins, and therefore until that moment they were unable to control the valley of the Greater Morava.<sup>85</sup> The text of an anonymous *Bavarian geographer*, written around 844,<sup>86</sup> the first part of which is of interest here, confirms the existence of certain *Moravians (Merehanos)*, at that time still unconquered by the Bulgarians. The text lists the peoples *on the eastern borders of the Frankish Empire*, from north to south, in this order: the Nortabtrezi, in the neighborhood of the Danes, the Wiltzi, Linnaei, Betenici and Smeldinzi and Morizani, Hehfeldi, Surbi, Talaminzi, Czechs (*Beheimare*), Moravians (*Marharii*), Bulgarians (*Vulgarii*), another Moravians (*populus quem vocant Merehanos*), and ends with the statement: *these are the areas that end on our* (i.e. Frankish) *borders*.<sup>87</sup> These Moravians (*Merehani*) were Balkan Slavs, living in the valley of the River Morava, the right tributary of the Danube.<sup>88</sup> Traveling from the north to the south along the eastern border of the Empire, a Frank would first pass through the neighborhood of the Czechs, then the Moravians (of Moravia), then the Bulgars, and then the Moravians (of the Balkans). Therefore, these Balkan Moravians, viewed from the perspective of the Franks, lived south of the Bulgarians,<sup>89</sup> who bordered on the Franks in the Pannonian area. The fact that their boundaries touched the Franks, south of the Bulgarian-Frankish border in Pannonia is still more evidence to support the thesis that Bulgarian rule over the valley of the Morava was not necessary for the Bulgarians to come into direct contact and conflict with the Franks in Pannonia.

Based on the above statements, we may conclude that the Bulgarians did not control the valley of the Morava River until the fifth decade of the 9th century. However, judging by the events that followed, this must have happened just at that time. The Bulgarians are known to have gone to war with the Serbs for the first time during the reign of their khan Presian, who ruled between 836 and 852. As the war lasted for three years, it could have started no later than 849. In describing the conflict, the emperor Constantine VII says that the Serbs and Bul-

<sup>85</sup> Zlatarski, *Istorija*, I–1, 249, claims completely arbitrarily that the Bulgarians *already during the 8th century* spread their rule over the basins of the Mlava and the Morava. Nikolov, *Centralizăm*, 87, believes, also without grounds, that during the 7th and the 8th century the border between the Bulgarian and the Avar realms was in the area between Belgrade and Sremska Mitrovica.

<sup>86</sup> Geographus Bavarus, *LdMA IV*, col. 1270 (*W. H. Fritze*).

<sup>87</sup> Geograf Bawarski, *MPH I*, 10. Since none of the more recent editions of this brief text was at my disposal, I used an older, Polish edition from 1864, cf. n. 55.

<sup>88</sup> It has long been disputed in historiography how to understand this data of the Bavarian Geographer. In recent times, it has finally been proved that the people in question were the dwellers of the Balkan Morava Region, *Pirivatrić*, *Morava*, 198–199, cf. n. 87. for older considerations; *Herрманн*, *Bulgaren*, 44. In order to distinguish them from their northern namesake from Moravia, today part of the Czech Republic, I would call them the *Balkan Moravians*.

<sup>89</sup> *Pirivatrić*, *Morava*, 198.

garians were already neighbors at that time.<sup>90</sup> This could have been possible only if the Bulgarians had previously extended their authority in the Morava River valley by annexing the territory of the Balkan Moravians located there. Neither do the facts we know about Bulgarian-Byzantine relations at the time contradict the conclusion that the Bulgarian authority could extend in the Morava Valley during the fifth decade of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, the thirty-year peace from 816 was still in force between the Bulgarians and the Empire. Meantime, the Bulgarians, nevertheless, subjugated the Smolyans, formally imperial subjects in the Rhodope Mountains around 837,<sup>91</sup> whilst their next direct conflict with the imperial army occurred at the time when the State and the Church in Constantinople were governed by the empress Theodora and Patriarch Ignatius,<sup>92</sup> that is, between 847 and 856.<sup>93</sup> Also, even in Frankish sources there are no accounts of any Bulgarian activities in Pannonia or in the direction of the Franks between 829 and 845.<sup>94</sup> The absence of activities against the Byzantines and Franks at this point left the Bulgarians space for operating on a third side, and that could have been the Morava Valley. However, since the manuscript of the *Bavarian geographer*, which was composed about 844 or soon after, intimates that the Balkan Moravians were still unconquered by the Bulgarians, their submission to the Bulgarian authority could not have occurred much earlier than this date. On the other hand, there are solid grounds for believing that it did not happen much later.

In the *Annals of Fulda* there is a note that in 845 and 852, the East Frankish king, Louis the German, received the embassy of *the Bulgarians and Slavs*.<sup>95</sup> In

<sup>90</sup> DAI, 32.35–42.

<sup>91</sup> *Beševliev*, Inschriften, Nr. 14.1–9. For datation, cf. idem, p. 173–174; cf. also, *Božilov–Gjuzelev*, 159; *Nikolov*, Centralizăm, 92–93.

<sup>92</sup> Symeonis magistri et logothetae chronicon, ed. *S. Wahlgren*, Berlin — New York 2006, 131.17–18.

<sup>93</sup> That is, after the peace treaty of 816 expired.

<sup>94</sup> The information about Bulgarian envoys at the Frankish court in 832, mentioned in some later Latin annals, *Annalista Saxo*, ed. *G. Weitz*, MGH SS VI, Hannoverae 1844, 574.22–23; *Annales Lobienses*, ed. *G. Weitz*, MGH SS XIII, Hannoverae 1881, 232.14–15, which *Božilov–Gjuzelev*, 153, rely on, refer, in fact, as do other data noted in these sources under the year 832, that is the conflict of the Franks with the Saracens and the baptism of the Danish king Harald, to the year 826. All these data are taken from the ARF, AD 826, Einh., 214.12–20, 21–25, 37–40.

The only mention of the Bulgarians in the context of events in the eastern Frankish areas at that time is the story of Pribina, the former prince of Nitra, and then prince of Pannonia, who, with his own son Kocel, a little before 838, after the quarrel with Radbod, the Frankish margrave of the East, fled *to the realm of Bulgaria*. From there he then left for Lower Pannonia, where he was recieved by the prince Ratimir. That was the reason why the army of the said Radbod attacked this Ratimir in 838, *De conversione Bagoariorum et Carantanorum*, ed. *W. Wattenbach*, MGH SS XI, Hannoverae 1854, 11.25–28.

<sup>95</sup> AD 845 ...tempore vero autumnii in Saxonia apud Padrabrunnon generale placitum habuit, ubi fratrum suorum et Nordmanorum, Sclavorum quoque et Bulgarorum, legationes suscepit, audivit et absolvit..., *Ann. Fuld*, 364.25–27; AD 852 ...Habita est autem et synodus... in civitate Mogontia, metropoli Germaniae..., rex vero synodalia eorum decreta suo iudicio comprobavit, et legationes Bulgarorum Sclavorumque audivit et absolvit..., *Ann. Fuld*, 367.39–45. The assumption that these were perhaps the envoys of some of the northern Slavic peoples, that quite accidentally found themselves before the Frankish king on both occasions at the same time as the envoys of the Bulgarians,

the *Annals of St. Bertin* it is recorded that in 853, the Bulgarians, *receiving the Slavs into an alliance* (*sociatis sibi Sclavis*), and lured with gifts from the West Frankish king, Charles the Bald, attacked the aforementioned East Frankish (German) king Louis, but they were defeated.<sup>96</sup> This last fact is of great importance, because once again the relationship of the Bulgarians and their Slavic neighbors and fellow combatants is designated by the term *societas*. Reports from the *Annals of Fulda* on the Bulgarian-Slavic embassies in Germany in 845 and 852, indicate that this was a lasting relationship, and leave no room for the data on the Bulgarian-Slavic alliance of 853 to be interpreted as an expression of a current state of affairs and the simple needs of a current military campaign.<sup>97</sup> All three records must be viewed as a whole, and as such they bear witness to the existence of an enduring set of circumstances between the Bulgarians and some Slavs in their neighborhood, in the period from before 845 until after 853, relations that were once more characterized by the term *societas*, like the relations between the Bulgarians and the Timočans and Abodrits, thirty years before. The only question is — who were the Slavs that were now in the *Bulgarorum societas* in the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century? As we explained previously, the Bulgarians eliminated the self-government of the *Seven Slavic tribes* in the course of 820's, and the Slavs in Pannonia west of the Danube were still Frankish subjects. Should we recognize in these Slavs perhaps the Balkan Moravians? Bearing in mind, as noted above, that they did not come under Bulgarian rule until sometime in the fifth decade of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, this solution seems likely. However, if one accepts this, then one must also accept that the expansion of Bulgarian rule to include them did not happen at once but that it was a gradual process. In this process, the Balkan Moravians were first given the status of allies, obliged to provide military assistance to the Bulgarians, and that happened around, or slightly before 845. The Balkan Moravians still held this status regarding the Bulgarians in 852 and 853. However, one must ask the question as to how long this relationship lasted?

The next record in the Frankish chronicles dealing with the Bulgarians, an item in the *Annals of Fulda* referring to 863, does not mention the Slavs along

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cannot be accepted, since the Frankish annalists, especially those of the East Franks, and the writer of this part of the *Annals of Fulda* was of such a kind, when writing about the relations between the Franks and their Slavic neighbors in the Elbe basin, Bohemia or Moravia, almost always and with no exception, beside the term *Slavs*, also recorded their specific name, that is, *Slavs Wiltzes*, *Slavs Abodrits*, *Slavs Sorbs*, *Slavs Czechs*, *Slavs Moravians*... That is not the case, however, with the quoted data from the *Annals of Fulda*, and the more precise identification of the Slavs mentioned there can be deduced only on the grounds that they are mentioned together with the Bulgarians.

<sup>96</sup> AD 853 ...Bulgari, sociatis sibi Sclavis, et, ut fertur, a nostris (i.e. Occidentalis Francis, whose official historiography the *Annales Bertitniani* were) muneribus invitati, adversus Hludowicum, Germaniae regem, acriter promoventur, sed Domino pugnante vincuntur..., *Annales Bertitniani*, MGH SS I, 448.14–16.

<sup>97</sup> There is an established view in historiography, which I think is wrong, that this data speaks of the alliance against the Franks that was concluded between the new Bulgarian khan Boris and the Great Moravian prince Rastislav, cf. *Zlatarski*, *Istorija*, 1–2, *Sofija* 1927, 6–7; *Istorija*, 2, 213 (*V. Gjuzelev*); *J. V. A. Fines*, *The Early Medieval Balkans*, Ann Arbor 1991, 112; *Božilov–Gjuzelev*, 169–170.

with them any more,<sup>98</sup> and no longer do any of the other Frankish sources up to the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Does this mean that at some point between 853 and 863, the Balkan Moravians, too, lost their status as allies and that then the Bulgarians imposed direct rule on them? In that case, the process of the Bulgarians' subjugation of the Balkan Moravians would be exactly the same as in the case of the *Seven Slavic tribes* and the Avars.<sup>99</sup> The Bulgarians would first impose the payment of tribute on a neighboring people and the obligation of supplying military assistance in the form of an alliance, leaving them internal self-government and local rulers, and then, the moment when the need for this kind of relationship expired, they would terminate the relationship, destroy the self-government of the said people and impose on them their direct and absolute power, integrating them fully into their political and cultural system. It might be that in this process we should recognize a general feature of the Bulgarian policy of expanding power over the neighboring non-Byzantine peoples.

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<sup>98</sup> Ann. Fuld, 374.26–29.

<sup>99</sup> The fate of the Severians was certainly the same, since there is no more mention of them in the sources after the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, either. However, that was not the issue of this paper.

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*Предраг Коматићина*

## СЛОВЕНИ СРЕДЊЕГ ПОДУНАВЉА И БУГАРСКА ЕКСПАНЗИЈА У ПРВОЈ ПОЛОВИНИ IX ВЕКА

Према подацима *Анала Франачког краљевства (АФК)*, 818. г. двор цара Лудовика Побожног посетили су, између осталих, и посланици извесних Абодрита, Гудускана и Тимочана. Гудускани се остављају по страни, како се не би беспотребно улазило у контроверзу која је у науци везана за њихову идентификацију. Пажња се усмерава на питања везана за станишта и политички положај Тимочана и Абодрита на почетку IX века.

За име Тимочана везане су две чињенице — то да су напустили *Bulgarorum societas* и преселили се на франачку територију, и то да њихову постојбину, судећи по њиховом имену, треба тражити у поречју реке Тимок. Са друге стране, византијски извори који описују досељавање Бугара 680/681. г. и настанак бугарске државе, тј. Теофан и патријарх Никифор, пружају податке о одређеним словенским племенима која су Бугари том приликом потчинили, а које Теофан помиње као *седам њлемена*. Према овим византијским писцима, Бугари су ове Словене сместили западно од својих станишта у Доњој Мезији, према граници са Аварима, наметнули им данак и обавезали их да чувају те пределе од аварских напада. Пошто у време настанка бугарске државе аварска територија није прелазила на десну обалу Дунава, а ни бугарска територија није се пружала јужно од венаца Старе планине, то нова станишта *Седам словенских њлемена* треба тражити између Дунава и западних обронака Старе планине, тј. у подручју где се налази и река Тимок.

Поред плаћања данка, Бугари су потчињеним Словенима наметнули и обавезу одбране граница од Авара, али и војне помоћи у борбама, како против Авара, тако и против Ромеја. Крајем VII и током VIII века Словени се спомињу као бугарски савезници у великом броју византијско-бугарских сукоба. Византијски писци повремено тај бугарско-словенски однос означавају појмом *συμμαχία*, *савезништво*. Такав однос Бугара и потчињених им Словена био је трајан. Постојао је и на почетку IX века, што се да закључити анализом вести о словенском учешћу у великом бугарско-византијском рату 807–815. г. Износи се закључак да управо у том односу треба препознати оно што франачки анали означавају као *societas* са Бугарима у коме су до 818. г. били Тимочани. Тако се и на основу чињенице о њиховом пореклу из поречја реке Тимок, и на основу њиховог политичког положаја у односу на Бугаре, намеће закључак да су Тимочани били једно од *Седам словенских њлемена*. Разлози због којих су они напустили своја станишта и дотадашњи политички положај у односу на Бугаре и затражили франачку заштиту, проналазе се у промењеним спољнополитичким околностима у Подунављу, насталим након уништења Аварске државе крајем VIII и почетком IX века, и завршетка бугарско-византијског рата склапањем тридесетогодишњег мира 816. г., услед чега је престала бугарска потреба за постојањем самоуправних словенских заједница на границама са Аварима и Византијом.

У случају Абодрита који се помињу 818. г., а који су такође једно подунавско племе, и који се у франачким анализима помињу још и 822. и 824. г., пажња је усмерена на податак да они живе у *Дакији која лежи крај Дунава*, одн. у *Дакији њоложеној на другој обали Дунава*. Пошто је примећено веома добро познавање позноримске провинцијске организације подунавских простора од стране франачког анализисте, понуђено је ново тумачење ове две синтагме, по којем у обе треба видети покушај адекватног парафразирања позноримског провинцијског назива *Dacia Ripensis* (*Дакија Приобална*), са израженом намером да се истакне како се ово *Ripensis* односи управо на обалу Дунава. Пошто се *Dacia Ripensis* налазила на десној обали Дунава, управо на простору где Теофан и патријарх Никифор смештају *Седам словенских њлемена*, износи се закључак да су и Абодрити могли бити још једно од *Седам словенских њлемена*. Такође, и они су, као и Тимочани, напустили *Vulgarorum societas*, али се нису преселили на франачку територију, него су наставили да се одупиру Бугарима све до 824. г.

Коначно, пошто све до 824. г. нису успели да у потпуности потчине све своје суседе из *Седам словенских њлемена*, јасно је да Бугари дотада нису могли ни да прошире своју власт на Моравску долину. Спис анонимног *Баварског географа* око 845. г. бележи постојање од Бугара самосталних *Морављана* у балканском Поморављу. Међутим, како је први бугарски рат са Србима почео најкасније 849. г., то се бугарска власт у неком виду морала проширити на Моравску долину пре те године. Одређени подаци франачких анала за 845, 852. и 853. г., поново сведоче о заједници и савезништву Бугара и извесних Словена. Има основа за претпоставку да у овим Словенима треба видети управо балканске Морављане. У том случају, ширење бугарске власти над њима текло би на исти начин као и у случају *Седам словенских њлемена* и Авара — Бугари би им најпре наметнули данак и обавезу војне помоћи, а потом би их, када потреба за таквим односима престане, једноставно потчинили и укинули сваки остатак њихове самоуправе. То се збило Морављанима пре 863. г., пошто се од тада па надаље у франачким изворима уз Бугаре више не помињу Словени. У описаном процесу можда би требало видети општу одлику бугарске политике ширења власти над суседним нерођејским народима.