

The Carolingian south-eastern frontier

by Neven Budak

Carolingian influences on the east of Istria and Carniola can be traced since the beginning of the wars against the Avars and the conflict with Byzantium. Papal undertakings in Dalmatia, regarding the revival of ecclesiastical organisation, should not be seen to have been a result of a cooperation between Rome and Charlemagne, but as an independent action by Pope Hadrian. After a successful victory against the khanate and the Treaty of Aachen, Dalmatia (excluding the remaining Byzantine possessions) as well as the parts held by the Serbs and Pannonia to the south of the Drava river were incorporated into the march of Friuli under their own dukes. At the beginning, their position towards Cividale might have been the same as the position of Istria, but the latter became integrated into the western Empire, while Croatia and southern Pannonia remained outside its borders. Such a development prevented the evolution of a Barbarian identity in both Istria and Lower Pannonia, which remained outside the Empire, but was more integrated into its frontier structures than Croatia. Since the time of Trpimir, Croats were only loosely linked with the Carolingian governing structures, that resulted in their gradual creation of their own identity. We might guess that the growing influence of Byzantium on Croatian rulers played its part, as had the Hungarian invasion for Pannonia.

Middle Ages; 9th century; Dalmatia, Croatia, Lower Pannonia; Charlemagne; Hadrian; Leo III; Ljudevit; Borna; frontier; march; *ducatus*.

Abbreviations

Codex diplomaticus = *Codex diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae I Diplomatica annorum 743-1100 continens*, ed. J. Stipišić – M. Šamšalović, Zagreb 1967.

MGH, ARF = *Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi*, ed. F. Kurze, Hannover 1895 (MGH, SS rer. Germ., 6).

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1. *The establishment of the frontier*

The question of the Carolingian frontier towards the southeast today seems to be solved, leaving little possibility for further discussion. We need only briefly to recall the steps of creating the defence system, which was more a basis for further expansion than a bulwark for repelling enemy invasion. Its beginnings fall into the period between the death of Hrodgaud and the establishment of the Italian sub-kingdom under Pippin in 781. The former Lombard duchy of Friuli was put under the command of a Carolingian *dux*, and the same happened to Istria, conquered possibly in 788, where a *dux de Histria*, mentioned already in 791, replaced the Byzantine *magister militum*¹. The Istrian *dux* was subject to the *dux* of Friuli, as was Carniola, the region between Friuli and Pannonia, which probably had a *dux* of its own, although he is not mentioned in our sources². Because of the Carolingian-Avar wars at the time when Charlemagne was occupied fighting the Saxons, the region of Friuli, and so its Duke Eric, gained in importance³.

After the victorious campaigns against the Avars, the preconditions had been created for the annexation of Byzantine possessions in Venice and Dalmatia. Partly through attracting supporters from among Byzantine subjects, and partly through exercising military pressure, Charlemagne and his son Pippin temporarily acquired control over Venice and Zadar/Iadera, the Byzantine capital of Dalmatia. Very soon, however, after the appearance of the Byzantine fleet in the Adriatic, the renegades returned under the authority of the eastern emperor⁴. The conflict ended with the Treaty of Aachen in 812, according to which the Carolingians could keep Istria and most of Dalmatia, whereas Venice and the coastal Dalmatian towns, together with the adjacent islands, remained Byzantine⁵. Dalmatia was thus divided in the way that the eastern Empire kept only isolated strongholds on the mainland in Lower Dalmatia, namely Zadar, Trogir and Split, but held control over the maritime route towards Venice⁶. In Upper Dalmatia, the situation of Dubrovnik and Kotor was similar, though, immediately after 812, somewhat less clear. We do not know how deep into the mainland of *Dalmatia superior* did the imperial authority extend, but we are justified in believing that the local elites in the immediate hinterland recognized the sovereignty of the emperor in Constan-

¹ Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 119-197. On the creation of the Kingdom of Italy and the frontier system towards the Avars and Byzantium, as well as on the ideology which supported these actions, see Borri, *A Great, Vast, and All Mighty Kingdom*.

² Štih – Simoniti, *Slovenska povijest*, p. 51.

³ On Eric see Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 152-158.

⁴ Ančić, *The Treaty of Aachen*, p. 28. Štih, *O novi knjigi*, pp. 473-475, stresses the fact that no actual military conflict between the two empires took place in the Adriatic, but that those possible conflicts, otherwise not mentioned in our sources, were conducted by local elites in Dalmatia, Istria and Venice.

⁵ *Imperial Spheres*.

⁶ On borders in Dalmatia/Croatia – not only political, but also ecclesiastical and cultural – in the ninth-eleventh century: Budak, *Early Medieval Boundaries*.

tinople⁷. Findings of Carolingian provenance in the late antique *castrum* in Mogorjelo near Čapljina (close to the Neretva river) and in the *castrum* of Gornji Vrbljani near the source of the Sana river (both in today's Bosnia and Herzegovina) could be seen as marking the outreach of Frankish influence, i.e. the easternmost strongholds of the indigenous elites recognising Carolingian authority⁸.

The newly gained territory in Dalmatia, which also included the former province of Liburnia, was organised in the same way as other Slavic (or Avar) *regna* along the eastern border of the Carolingian Empire. A local *dux* was entrusted with its government, having the title of *dux Dalmatie et Liburnie*. But this did not happen until 817, when a Byzantine delegation arrived in Aachen in order to settle some disputes about the border between Slavic and Roman Dalmatians⁹. The Friulian *dux* Cadolah, «ad quem illorum confinium cura pertinebat», was sent to Dalmatia to help resolve the matter. As no other local official was mentioned, we should suppose that at that time there was no indigenous representative of the Carolingian Empire in the province¹⁰. The first one we know of was Borna, who was also described as *dux Guduscanorum*, obviously a *gens* he originated from. Borna most likely owed his position to his engagement in the Carolingian-Byzantine conflict. However, his appointment may have been a consequence of Louis' anticipation of Ljudevit's revolt, because he was first mentioned in 818, when he attended the assembly in Aachen, the same one on which Ljudevit was suspected of initiating «res novas» because he accused Cadolah for committing atrocities¹¹.

In the region to the north of Dalmatia, in southern Pannonia, there was another local *dux*, the aforementioned Ljudevit, installed as a representative of Carolingian authority. However, there is no Barbarian name attached to his title. Like Borna, he was subordinate to the duke of Friuli and carried the title of *dux Pannonie inferioris*. He became infamous among the Franks because of the rebellion he raised in 819 against Cadolah, the duke of Friuli, and which lasted for four years, requiring a huge Frankish military effort to quell the uprising¹².

2. The regna between the Adriatic and the Drava River

There is no contemporary description of either of the two *regna* which formed some kind of buffer zone between the duchy of Friuli, the Bulgari-

⁷ Budak, *Die südslawischen Ethnogenesen*; Budak, *Kroatien*, pp. 870-873.

⁸ On the findings in Mogorjelo and Gornji Vrbljani see Milošević, *Karolinški utjecaji*, pp. 112-116.

⁹ MGH, ARF, p. 145, *ad annum* 817.

¹⁰ Budak, *Croats*, p. 15.

¹¹ Budak, *Croats*, pp. 15-16; Ančić, *From Carolingian Official*, pp. 7-8.

¹² Wolfram, *Die Geburt*, pp. 268-272 and 355-357; Budak, *Kroatien*, pp. 874-875; Ančić, *From Carolingian Official*, pp. 10-11.

ans, Serbs and other Slavic *gentes* and Byzantium. We have to draw our conclusions from indirect information, as well as from the description provided by Constantine Porphyrogenitus in *De administrando imperio*. The latter has given us the first description of Croatia (the former Carolingian Dalmatia and Liburnia) and Byzantine Dalmatia¹³. According to Constantine, the north-eastern border of Croatia lay along the Vrbas river in what is today Bosnia, while the south-eastern border was on the Cetina river. We can assume that the situation at the beginning of the ninth century must have been much the same, except that the frontier of Carolingian Dalmatia towards the eastern neighbours lay further to the South-east, on the Neretva river (judging by the findings in Mogorjelo). The Frankish annals inform us that part of Dalmatia was Serbian territory. It could approximately be identified as the eastern and northern part of today's Bosnia, about which we know nothing apart from the information once again provided by the *Annales regni Francorum* that this Serbian territory was split into small units ruled by several *duces*¹⁴. They obviously did not recognise Frankish authority because Ljudevit had taken refuge with one of them, before killing him and taking over his *civitas*. From there he had offered Louis the Pious to submit to his rule, but received no answer. As Herwig Wolfram rightfully noticed, Louis thus missed the opportunity to extend his rule over eastern Bosnia/Dalmatia¹⁵.

The question of the eastern borders of Ljudevit's *regnum inter Savum et Dravum* is also not clear. We can draw conclusions from the reports on his uprising. Since he was joined by the Timocians, a tribe originally settled by the Timok river in today's eastern Serbia, who decided to secede from the Bulgarians and submit to the Franks, we must conclude that Ljudevit's authority must have stretched eastwards to the Danube and the region of Sirmium¹⁶. That is in accordance with Patriarch Paulinus' lamentation in honour of Duke Eric, in which he mentions the ancient city of Sirmium as one of Eric's conquests, but also with the toponym *Francohorion*, the Frankish Mountain (Fruška gora) in today's Srijem (in Serbia), which reminds us of the Frankish presence in the region¹⁷.

In 822 the Diet met in Frankfurt, where the emperor received emissaries from all the eastern Slavs: the Abodrites, the Sorbs, the Wilzi, the Boheimians, the Moravians, the «Praedenecenti» and the Avars residing in Panno-

¹³ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, pp. 122-153, cc. 29-31.

¹⁴ MGH, ARF, p. 158, *ad annum* 822.

¹⁵ Wolfram, *Die Geburt*, p. 272.

¹⁶ MGH, ARF, p. 150, *ad annum* 819.

¹⁷ Wolfram, *Die Geburt*, pp. 262-263, believes that Eric's conquests might have reached the Morava river in today's Serbia, but that they were short-lived. On the other hand, on page 522, footnote 14, he stresses that there is no evidence for Eric ever reaching Moesia. However, I would argue that the direct or indirect (with Ljudevit's intermediation) Frankish rule in the region of Sirmium too lasted until 828. For Paulinus' lamentation see Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 154-156. For the interpretation of the name Francochorion see Gračanin, *Južna Panonija*, pp. 154-155. On Bulgarian-Frankish relations in southern Pannonia see Filipec, *Donja Panonija*, pp. 143-148.

nia¹⁸. All of these resided outside the borders of the empire and to the north of the Drava river. Why is there no mention of the region between the Drava and the Adriatic? Is it because at that time both Lower Pannonia and Dalmatia with Liburnia were considered integral parts of the empire and their dukes had no reason to send embassies with gifts to the emperor? If that was so, then when did the relation between the two provinces and the empire change? Was it after the dissolution of the march of Friuli?

However, the described borders were the region within which Carolingian political influence could have spread between the Drava, the lower Danube and the Adriatic. But secular politics could not be separated from ecclesiastical. So how did Charlemagne use the Church to strengthen his authority in Dalmatia and Lower Pannonia?

3. Charlemagne and Hadrian I

Recently, the thesis was presented that the pope and Charlemagne jointly undertook the action of strengthening Frankish influence in Istria and Dalmatia through establishing or reviving bishoprics, or by imposing bishops favourable to the king of the Franks¹⁹. The best-known example is that of Bishop Maurice of Novigrad/Cittanova, whom Charlemagne around 780 ordered to collect taxes in Istria for the Church of Rome²⁰. By that time Istria was officially still Byzantine and the «nefandissimi Graeci», in the pope's words²¹, blinded Maurice, believing he was an agent of Frankish imperialism, though we might presume that the Istrians were more concerned about having to pay new taxes.

In Dalmatia, there are no such obvious cases of bishops advocating the Carolingian cause. Indeed, the first credible mentions after around 600 of prelates from Split, Rab, Osor and Kotor date from 787, when their presence was registered at the council of Nicea²². In the opinion of some researchers, this was the sign of a renewal of older bishoprics like Kotor, Rab or Osor, and the establishment of the bishopric of Split, which considered itself to be heir to the archbishopric of Salona²³. This revival of ecclesiastical organization in Dalmatia is also documented by the activity of a masons' workshop,

¹⁸ MGH, ARF, p. 159, *ad annum* 822.

¹⁹ Basić – Jurković, *Prilog opusu*; Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, pp. 149, 152-155.

²⁰ Jurković, *Il ciborio*; Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, p. 149.

²¹ *Codex Carolinus*, no. 63, p. 590 (available in *Fontes Istrie*, I, doc. 776, < https://fontesistrie.eu/776_HPC > [last access: May 27th, 2022]).

²² Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, pp. 152-153. The position of the Dalmatian bishops at the council of Nicea was recently discussed by I. Basić, *The Inscription*, pp. 96-97. Basić concludes that «Consequently, the re-establishment of the Salonitan bishopric at Split reveals a Roman rather than Byzantine initiative, with the Holy See pursuing its own political goals as well as those of the Carolingians».

²³ Jurković – Basić, *Élites ecclesiastiche*.

maybe even several, which produced furniture for the cathedrals and other churches in the aforementioned dioceses. The style of these decorations can be compared to the products of the so-called Liutprand Renaissance²⁴. In the opinion of Ivan Basić and Miljenko Jurković, the action of ecclesiastical renovation was initiated from Rome, with the pope and Charlemagne coordinating efforts, just like in Istria, to organize a pro-Frankish party in Byzantine Dalmatia, which would thus enable the Carolingian takeover of the province.

This analogy with Istria is tempting, but if we recall the relations between Charlemagne and the pope in the few years before 787, we may recall that they were not idyllic²⁵. The king refused to fulfil his promise, given to Hadrian in 774, regarding the territorial expansion of the papal state, which was a great disappointment to the pope²⁶. Among other things, this meant that Hadrian had to give up the idea of acquiring Venice and Istria for his "Republic". The dissent between the two continued after the Council of Nicea because of their different attitudes towards either the actual, or possibly the badly translated, conclusions of the council²⁷. Keeping this in mind, it does not seem highly probable that Hadrian and Charlemagne coordinated their actions in Byzantine Dalmatia by reviving old bishoprics or establishing the new one in Split.

There are other arguments that speak against such a cooperation. Had Charlemagne counted on the Church of Rome as a supporter of his expansionistic policy in Dalmatia, why would he allow his son Pippin to hand over to the patriarch of Aquileia in 796 the jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters over all the territories south of the Drava river, including Dalmatia, thus depriving the pope of a chance to spread his own influence further into the Balkans²⁸? Apart from that, when looking at the broader picture, would it be realistic for the king to start planning taking Dalmatia from Byzantium as early as 780s? With the Avar Khanate still a power of unknown strength, Bavaria and Istria still not subjugated, and Saxon revolts still continuing, could he have occupied his thoughts with plans against Dalmatia?

It is more probable that the action of Rome was the result of an independent papal policy, provoked by the loss of the vicariate of Thessaloniki and

²⁴ Jakšić, *Riflessi*.

²⁵ Schimmelpfennig, *Das Papsttum*, pp. 100-103.

²⁶ Collins, *Charlemagne*, p. 64; McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms*, p. 69; Riché, *Die Karolinger*, pp. 122, 126, 127.

²⁷ It is still not clear on exactly what terms Charlemagne and Hadrian had been, from their first meeting in 774 until Hadrian's death in 795. There is little doubt that generally their relation was amicable, but that does not mean that the pope was always satisfied with Charlemagne's decisions and his treatment of Hadrian's requests and expectations. On their relation and especially on the question of their agreement of 774 see Noble, *The Republic*, esp. pp. 138-148.

²⁸ Wolfram, *Die Geburt*, p. 261; Filipec, *Donja Panonija*, pp. 243-249. On the other hand, it is true that the division of 796 came one year after Hadrian's death, and a few years before the conflict with Byzantium over Dalmatia, when St. Peter's chair was occupied by the weak Leo III. This could mean that neither Pippin nor Charlemagne trusted the new pope to support their policy. Had Hadrian lived until the war against the Avars, Pippin's decision might have been different, considering also the pope's interest.

the southern Italian territories²⁹. The episode with the Istrian bishop Maurice may be telling us more about papal efforts to increase incomes by collecting taxes in an area where this had not been previously possible, rather than attempting to hand over the province to the Franks, especially since he wanted the peninsula for himself. This, of course, would not exclude cooperation with Charlemagne: it is simply a matter of priorities in papal policy.

4. Missionary activities from Aquileia

However, it seems that the Carolingians did not make much use of the patriarchate of Aquileia in order to promote their interests in southern Pannonia, while traces of the activity of Aquileian missionaries to Dalmatia are also scarce. There is not one single source reporting on missionary activities in both regions³⁰. Once again we have to rely on art historical evidence, showing that decorations on stone furniture in Croatian churches of the ninth century reveal influences spreading from Cividale and northern Italy in general. The most convincing argument is the use of the Westwerk in some of the churches erected by Croatian dignitaries, followed by the installation of three altars necessary for performing the western liturgy³¹. The connections of the Croatian *regnum* and the patriarchate of Aquileia or the archbishopric of Milan may be also traced through the spreading of saints' cults, like that of St. Ambrose, St. Martha, or St. Martin³². In some cases, we might add to these cults also the cult of the Holy Cross, popular with the Carolingian dynasty. As another piece of evidence for Carolingian missionary efforts in Croatia, scholars frequently cite the appearance of Germanic names of ecclesiastical dignitaries preserved mostly on epigraphs, like Abbot Theudebert, Deacon Gumpertus or Bishop Aldefreda (the latter mentioned in a charter)³³.

Regarding the Pannonian region to the south of the Drava river, two important centres can be detected either in sources, or in the archaeological evi-

²⁹ Prigent, *Les empereurs isauriens*.

³⁰ The only exception might be the legend of Ursus the Confessor, according to which Ursus, a young Frankish nobleman, arrived in Dalmatia where he converted the ruler of the province, married his daughter and replaced him on the throne after the death of his father-in-law. After accidentally killing some members of his family, in order to repent, he went to Rome and approached Pope Hadrian. Although it is tempting to see this legend as evidence for missionary activities in Dalmatia already during Hadrian's pontificate, there are arguments against it. At the time of Hadrian, the only dignitary who could be defined as the ruler of Dalmatia would have been the Byzantine governor of the province who – obviously – did not need to be converted. But actually, the first ruler of Dalmatia was the one appointed by the Franks after their conquest of the larger part of the province, sometime at the beginning of the ninth century, when Hadrian was already dead. See Budak, *Frühes Christentum*, p. 227. For the interpretation of the legend as a valid source for Frankish missionary activities see Basić, *Natpis*, pp. 164-165, and Basić, *New Evidence*, pp. 277-278.

³¹ Maraković – Jurković, "Signatures".

³² Jakšić, *The Installation*; Budak, *Hrvatska povijest*, p. 147; Vedriš – Maraković, *Bursa*.

³³ Delonga, *The Latin Epigraphic Monuments*, pp. 50-53, 218; *Codex diplomaticus*, p. 23.

dence. Siscia, an important industrial, ecclesiastical, and administrative centre of Roman Lower Pannonia retained (or regained) some of its significance as Ljudevit's stronghold. The acts of the synod of Split, held in 928, state that Siscia has a sufficient number of both priests and worshippers³⁴. This is most probably the result of the mission from Aquileia, though some continuity of the antique Christian population should not be excluded³⁵. The other important centre was the church of St. Mary in Lobor, in today's north-western Croatia, close to the Slovenian border, and another missionary centre in Svete Gore, in Slovenia³⁶. We could assume, though very cautiously on the basis of the saints to whom they were dedicated, that missionary bases were established also in Samobor (St. Anastasia), again close to the border of Carniola, and in Križevci (Holy Cross), where in the High and Late Middle Ages both the town and the church enjoyed a high reputation in the Kingdom of Slavonia, by far exceeding the economic importance of the settlement³⁷. The reason for this could have been the long existence of the ecclesiastical centre. It is also possible, according to the archaeological evidence, that the mission in Sirmium lasted even under Bulgarian rule³⁸. However, all in all, it seems that Aquileian patriarchs were not very dedicated to the evangelization of Lower Pannonia³⁹. The reasons for this were manifold, but the main one was a lack of interest in a region distant from Cividale, as well as the political insecurity⁴⁰. Neither should we neglect the language barrier⁴¹.

It took time for the establishment of the first bishopric on Croatian territory to happen. The exact dating of the establishment of the diocese in Nin remains an open question, but scholars agree that it happened some time during the rule of Duke Trpimir or his successor Domagoj, i.e. around the middle of the ninth century⁴². The establishment of this bishopric was a major blow to the Dalmatian bishops of Rab, Zadar and Split, whose dioceses were now reduced to the territory of their towns and islands, while before they had covered broader areas of Croatian territory. If this had happened before Photius' schism, during which Dalmatian bishops opted for the patriarchate

³⁴ *Codex diplomaticus*, p. 37.

³⁵ Gračanin, *Južna Panonija*, pp. 268-269.

³⁶ Filipec, *Donja Panonija*, pp. 250-269.

³⁷ Budak, *Križevci*.

³⁸ Jeremić, *The Relationship*; Filipec, *Južna Panonija*, p. 256.

³⁹ However, Filipec believes that it was possible that a chorepiscopus with the title of bishop of Siscia was appointed for the region of southern Pannonia. His argument is based mainly on comparative examples regarding the frontier region from Nitra over Pannonia to Croatia (Nin), but also on the fact that the bishopric of Siscia is mentioned in 928 as vacant, but well populated and with sufficient number of priests. See Filipec, *Južna Panonija*, pp. 309-310. For the mention of the bishopric in 928 see *Historia Salonitana maior*, p. 104.

⁴⁰ Bratož, *Die Geschichte des frühen Christentums*, pp. 508-550; Bratož, *Vpliv*, pp. 52-53; Gračanin, *Južna Panonija*, p. 269.

⁴¹ An interesting comparative example could be the Nitrian principality in today's Slovakia. However, I did not have the opportunity to consult the most recent book on early medieval Slovakia: Steinhübel, *The Nitrian Principality*.

⁴² Budak, *Hrvatska povijest*, pp. 152-153.

of Constantinople⁴³, then we could interpret it as a move against the pope. This would not be surprising, given the tense relations between Lothar and Louis II on the one side, and the popes on the other. If the establishment of the bishopric of Nin occurred after the beginning of Photius' schism, it should be understood as a step towards preventing the spread of possible influences from Constantinople.

5. *The dissolution of the march of Friuli and the emergence of the Croats*

After the disintegration of the march of Friuli in 828 there is no mention of any direct intervention of Frankish officials in Croatia. The march was divided into four counties, but the author of our source failed to name them, opening up the possibility for long-lasting debates. Nowadays the prevailing opinion is that these counties were Friuli, Istria, Carantania and Carniola, which means that both Croatia and Pannonia to the south of the Drava river were left outside the borders of the empire⁴⁴. However, some authors suggested that one of the counties could have been Istria with Liburnia or even Liburnia by itself⁴⁵. In my opinion it was not impossible that Croatia, i.e. Dalmatia and Liburnia, was one of the counties, but Peter Štih is probably right in criticising my suggestion, on the grounds that it was ruled by domestic dukes and not by Frankish *comites*⁴⁶.

The dissolution of the march of Friuli and the loosening of the Carolingian grip, as some of us believe, opened the way for a clan which named itself Croats, to take over the duchy of Dalmatia and Liburnia.⁴⁷ The first known ruler to call himself *dux Croatorum* was Trpimir⁴⁸. By dating his charter with the years of Lothar's reign in Italy, he made it clear that he recognised the king of Italy as his sovereign⁴⁹. All other sources imply that he acted as an independent ruler. His ties with Italy are supported by evidence of his pilgrimage to Cividale⁵⁰, and the war he fought against the Greeks and their *patricius* in 846/7, presumably in the vicinity of Split, confirms his loyalty to the Carolin-

⁴³ Budak, *Friühes Christentum*, p. 226; Budak, *Hrvatska povijest*, pp. 152-153.

⁴⁴ Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 194-196.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 195, note 418. On the meaning of Liburnia, which underwent substantial changes from the third to the ninth century, see Turković – Basić, *Kasnoantička*, pp. 45-53. While in certain periods the province encompassed a much larger territory, around 800, according to the Anonymous from Ravenna, it was reduced to the surroundings of Tarsatica (today Rijeka/Fiume). See *Ravenmatis Anonymi Cosmographia*, pp. 223-225.

⁴⁶ Štih, *O novi knjigi*, pp. 481-482.

⁴⁷ Budak, *Handbuch*, p. 877.

⁴⁸ *Codex diplomaticus*, p. 4.

⁴⁹ For the different opinions about the dating of the charter, which varies from 840 to 852, see Lujo Margetić, *O nekim pitanjima*, pp. 7-8; Matijević Sokol, *Studia diplomatica*, pp. 88-89; Budak, *Hrvatska povijest*, pp. 46, 106.

⁵⁰ Kumir, *For the Salvation*, pp. 57-60.

gian cause⁵¹. Trpimir's successor Domagoj, who took the throne by force, acted even more independently, attacking Istrian towns which were part of the Kingdom of Italy⁵². At the same time, however, he responded to the request of Louis II to join the Frankish and Byzantine forces at the siege of Bari⁵³. Further distancing from the western Empire happened during the one-year reign of Trpimir's son Zdeslav, who acquired the ducal position with the support of Byzantium⁵⁴. This drastic change was forcefully interrupted by Branimir who again acknowledged Charles the Fat as his sovereign⁵⁵. Croatian-Carolingian political relations ended with the dissolution of the empire in 888. Very soon after, the Croats would approach the eastern Empire⁵⁶.

In the region of southern Pannonia, the first interruption of Carolingian authority over the local dukes after the suppression of Liudevit's revolt happened in 827/8, when the Bulgarians replaced local lords with their own men⁵⁷. After their withdrawal from Pannonia, Ljudevit's successor Ratimir provoked a military intervention of the Bavarian prefect of the East in 838 by accepting the former count of Nytra on his territory⁵⁸. The final end of Carolingian influence came with the Hungarian invasion. Braslav, the last known *dux* whose seat was in Siscia, fell probably defending his *regnum*. In 884 he pledged an oath of fidelity to Charles the Fat, and in 896 Arnulf granted him the territories north of the Drava river with Mosapurg as the centre. This made Braslav the first Frankish official to govern areas on both sides of the Drava river. But even that could not repel Hungarian raids⁵⁹. However, Braslav's career shows that Carolingian/Frankish authority in southern Pannonia has been felt some two decades longer than in Croatia.

6. Churches and swords

A final element of Carolingian influence to be considered is the material culture. On the territory of Croatia, and to a lesser extent in southern Pannonia, there is a relatively large number of finds of Carolingian swords, spurs, lances and other objects. This phenomenon was explained in three ways: either as equipment of Slavic/Croatian troops who settled in Dalmatia during the course of the Carolingian wars against the Avars and Byzantium; as objects imported by trade; or as gifts given by the Carolingians to members of

⁵¹ Katić, *Saksonac Gottschalk*.

⁵² Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, p. 188.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 175.

⁵⁴ Budak, *Croatia and Byzantium*, p. 213; Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, pp. 175, 177.

⁵⁵ Budak, *Croatia and Byzantium*, p. 213; Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, p. 187.

⁵⁶ Budak, *Croatia and Byzantium*, pp. 213-214, 221.

⁵⁷ Wolfram, *Die Geburt*, p. 273; Gračanin, *Južna Panonija*, pp. 176-177.

⁵⁸ Wolfram, *Die Geburt*, pp. 276, 356; Gračanin, *Južna Panonija*, pp. 175-177.

⁵⁹ Wolfram, *Die Geburt*, p. 366, 374-375; Gračanin, *Južna Panonija*, pp. 189-195; Budak, *Slavic ethnogeneses*.

the local elite. In my opinion, the first explanation should be rejected, because there is no satisfying argument that there was a migration around the year 800⁶⁰. Whether as gifts or as imported goods, these objects document close relations between Croatia and the lands under Frankish rule. Although we have Byzantine coins and jewellery in the same territory⁶¹, these findings either slightly precede the Frankish ones or they are less numerous and less impressive. The new elite from the beginning of the ninth century saw their role models in the Carolingian aristocracy. As Zbigniew Robak has recently shown, artefacts of Carolingian origin in the Carpathian Basin, as well as in Dalmatia/Croatia, are found in areas where also the presence of Carolingian troops has been attested. This is especially true for the regions south of the Drava river and already in a very early stage, from the end of the eighth century⁶².

Material culture combined with burial practices, the implementation of the Westwerk and the organisation of the ducal court as shown in the two preserved ninth-century charters⁶³ reveal a process which could be defined as *imitatio regni* or maybe *aemulatio imperii*, as Ivan Majnarić described it, following the pattern proposed by Evangelos Chrysos⁶⁴. This, of course, is true for , because of lack of evidence, or even only indications, almost nothing can be said about southern Pannonia. This is not surprising, given the difference between the two political units: while Croatia grew into an independent regnum with its own ethnogenesis, the *regnum inter Dravum et Savum* could not produce a *gens* of its own, nor did it have a chance, in spite of attempts made by Ljudevit or Ratimir, to free itself from the Frankish grip before it dissolved around 900. We can compare these two *regna* with Istria, which was also a political unit of its own, following – or better to say preceding – for a while the destiny of Croatia and Lower Pannonia. Unlike the latter two, Istria was firmly incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy (until 952) and thus into the Empire⁶⁵. Such a development prevented the evolution of a Barbarian identity. Lower Pannonia remained outside the Empire, but was more integrated into its frontier structures, as shown by the case of Braslav. Croats were, since the time of Trpimir, if not his predecessor Mislav, only loosely linked with the Carolingian governing structures, which resulted in their gradual emancipation and the creation of their own identity.

⁶⁰ Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, pp. 156-165, offers a brief, but informative, overview of grave goods and other archaeological evidence for ninth-century Croatia. See also *Hrvati i Karolinzi*; Bilogrivić, *Carolingian weapons*; Bilogrivić, *Formation of Identity*.

⁶¹ Džino, *From Justinian to Branimir*, pp. 155-156; Petrincec, *On Jewellery*.

⁶² Robak, *Chronology and Periodisation*.

⁶³ *Codex diplomaticus*, pp. 4-6, 23-24.

⁶⁴ Majnarić, *Aemulatio imperii*.

⁶⁵ It would be interesting to draw a comparison in this respect also with Carantania and Carniola.

7. *Conclusions*

Carolingian influences on the east of Istria and Carniola can be traced since the beginning of the wars against the Avars and the conflict with Byzantium. In my opinion, papal undertakings in Dalmatia with regard to the revival of the ecclesiastical organisation, should not be seen as a result of a cooperation between Rome and Charlemagne, but as an independent action by Pope Hadrian I. After a successful Carolingian victory against the khanate and the Treaty of Aachen with the eastern emperor, Dalmatia (excluding the remaining Byzantine possessions) and Pannonia to the south of the Drava river were incorporated into the march of Friuli under their own dukes. At the beginning, their position towards Cividale might have been the same as the position of Istria, but the latter became integrated into the western Empire, while Croatia and southern Pannonia remained outside its borders. The reasons for this difference need further discussion, but we might guess that the growing influence of Byzantium on Croatian rulers played its part, as did the Hungarian invasion for Pannonia.

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