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THE CITY OF BAR IN THE TENTH THROUGH THE TWELFTH CENTURY

In the Early Middle Ages, the town of Bar was founded on a convenient defense location in the southernmost part of the eastern Adriatic. *Stari Bar* lies on a high plateau, a few kilometers away from the coast. Its geographic position protected it from possible invasions by sea while allowing it to have contacts with other urban centers that were situated along the eastern Adriatic coast and across the sea.

The archaeological research on the site of *Stari Bar* that was carried out in 2004 through 2007 sheds some additional light on the history of the early settlement of *Stari Bar* and the archaeology of the Montenegrin coast as a whole. Thus, the vast amount of amphora shreds dating to the ninth and tenth centuries bear evidence to the fact that, as early as the ninth century, *Stari Bar* was reached by goods from various parts of the Mediterranean world. However, the only archaeological remains of that time period, which so far have been unearthed on the site of *Stari Bar*, are two building complexes. The first one is the twin gate whose construction (along with the contemporary curtain wall) could be dated to the ninth century. The other one is the structure in the highest part of the town, which could have been a church built in the eighth or ninth century.¹ Under that church, there are remains of a still older church (a three-aisled chapel) dated to the fifth or sixth century and probably dedicated to St. Theodore; in

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¹ S. Gelichi, "Stari Bar. The Archaeological evidence and the Settlement during the Ages" — In: S. Gelichi (ed.), *The Archaeology of an Abandoned Town. The 2005 Project in Stari Bar* (Firenze: Edizioni All'Insegna del Giglio, 2006), 19–32, see esp. pp. 24–25.

the eleventh century another church was built on the same site and was dedicated to St. George.²

For the first time Bar appears in the written sources in the eighth century: it is mentioned as an episcopal see,³ which — along with the other dioceses of eastern Illyricum — was placed by the Byzantine Emperor Leo III (717–741) under the jurisdiction of the patriarchate of Constantinople.⁴ In his *De Administrando Imperio* Constantine Porphyrogenitus writes that, in ancient times, Dalmatia stretched from the limits of Dyrrachium, namely *Antivaris*, to the mountains of Istria.⁵ In the ninth and tenth century Bar was one of the *kastellia* that were subordinate to the military-civilian district (theme) of Dyrrachium.⁶ Probably, it was at that time that the curtain wall of *Stari Bar* was built.⁷

² M. Zagarčanin, “Short Historical Overview of the Town of *Stari Bar*” — In: S. Gelichi (ed.), *Stari Bar. Archaeological Project. Preliminary Report* (Firenze: Edizioni All’Insegna del Giglio, 2005), 15–18. Cf. T. Živković, D. Crnčević, D. Bulić, V. Petrović, I. Cvijanović, B. Radovanović, *The World of the Slavs: Studies of the East, West and South Slavs: Civitas, Oppidas, Villas and Archeological Evidence (7th to 11th Centuries AD)*. (Beograd: Istorijски institut — SANU, 2013), 98–99. For further information on the most recent excavations in *Stari Bar*, see S. Gelichi (ed.), *A Town through the Ages. The 2006–2007 Archaeological Project in Stari Bar* (Firenze: Edizioni All’Insegna del Giglio, 2008).

³ In the *notitiae* of the first half of the eighth century the bishop of Bar is listed as one of bishops who were subordinate to the archbishop of Dyrrachium. See G. Parthey (ed.), *Hieroclis Synecdemus et notitiae Graecae episcopatum: Accedunt Nili Doxapatrīi notitia patriarchatum et locorum nomina immutata* (Berolini: F. Nikolaus, 1866). This piece of evidence is in contradiction to the hypothesis of T. Živković, who argues that the bishopric of Bar was founded after the Council of 879/80, under Patriarch Photios: see Т. Живковић, *Црквена организација у српским земљама: рани средњи век* (Београд: Историјски институт, 2004), p. 148.

⁴ M. V. Anastos, “Leo III’s Edict against the Images in the Year 726–727 and Italo-Byzantine Relations between 726 and 730” — *Byzantinische Forschungen* 3 (1968), 5–41. Cf. M. Betti, “Rome and the Heritage of Roman Illyricum in the Ninth Century” — In: M. Ančić, J. Shepard, T. Vedriš (eds.), *Imperial Spheres and the Adriatic. Byzantium, the Carolingians, and the Treaty of Aachen (812)*, (London–New York: Routledge, 2018), 243–252.

⁵ Const. Porphyг, *DAI* 30.8–10. — In: Г. Г. Литаврин, А. П. Новосельцев (ред.), *Константиин Багрянородный, Об управлении империей* (Москва: Наука, 1989), 29–30.

⁶ V. Popović, “L’Albanie pendant la Basse Antiquité” — In: M. Garašanin (ed.), *Les Illyriens et les Albanaïis: Série de Conférences Tenues du 21 Mai au 4 Juin 1986* (Belgrade: Academie Serbe des sciences et des artes, 1988), 251–283, see esp. p. 254. The theme of Dyrrachium seems to have been established in the early ninth century, in the reign of Emperor Nikephoros I (802–811): see J. Ferluga, “Sur la date de la creation du Theme de Dyrrachium” — In: J. Ferluga, *Byzantium on the Balkans* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1976), 215–224; G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969), p. 194, note 4; T. Živković, “Uspenski’s Taktikon and the theme of Dalmatia” — *Σύμμεικτα* 17 (2007), 49–85, see esp. p. 62, note 76.

⁷ See above, note 1.

In 997, the Bulgarian Tsar Samuel (996–1014) attacked Dioclea/ Duklja and placed it under his control.⁸ Florin Curta argues that “Samuel’s domination of Duklja and the Slavs in southern Dalmatia seems to have contributed to a shift of the power center from the interior to the coast” and this is why during the eleventh century most political events were associated with Duklja.⁹

As regards Bar in the tenth through the twelfth century, the few surviving written sources mostly relate to its ecclesiastical history. It appears that, for nearly two and a half centuries, the bishoprics in *Dalmatia Superior* (i. e., southern Dalmatia) remained under the authority of the archbishop of Dyrrachium.¹⁰ In the first half of the eleventh century, the bishoprics along the southern Dalmatian coast seem to have been placed under the authority of the archbishopric of Split. In the papal bulls of that time period there are numerous references to the bishop of Bar.¹¹ However, he is not mentioned in connection with the church council of Split that was convened in 928.

Two years later, in 930 the archbishop of Split, Dobralj (1030–1050), convoked yet another ecclesiastical council. According to *History of the Bishops of Salona and Split*, commonly known as *Historia Salonitana*,¹² the bishops of Kotor, Bar and Ulcinj chose to travel together to Split by sea. But their ship was caught in a sea storm and suffered a wreck; everybody on board drowned. According to Thomas the Archdeacon, the citizens of Kotor, Bar and Ulcinj then sent an embassy to the pope, telling him about the tragedy

⁸ L. Simeonova, “A Murder Reconsidered: John Vladimir, John Vladislav and the Byzantine-Bulgarian Conflict” — In: G. Borozan (ed.), *The 1000th Anniversary of St. Jovan Vladimir. Proceedings from the Scientific Conference Oct. 21, 2016* [MASA- Naučni skupovi 142], (Podgorica, 2017), 161–170.

⁹ F. Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500–1250* [Cambridge Medieval Textbooks], (Cambridge — New York, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 213.

¹⁰ J. Ферлуга, „Драч и његова област од VII до почетка XIII века” — In: *Глас САНУCCCXLIII*, књ. 5 (Београд, 1986).

¹¹ The authenticity of those bulls has been the subject of scholarly debate: see D. Crnčević, “The Architecture of Cathedral Churches on the East Adriatic Coast at the Time of the First Principalities of South Slavs (9th — 11th Centuries)” — In: T. Živković, D. Crnčević, D. Bulić, V. Petrović, I. Cvijanović, B. Radovanović (eds.), *The World of the Slavs: Studies on the East, West and South Slavs: Civitas, Oppidas, Villas and Archeological Evidence (7th to 11th Centuries AD)*, (Belgrade: Institute of History, 2013), 37–136, see esp. p. 95.

¹² *Thomae Archidiaconi Historia Salonitanorum atque Spalatinorum pontificum*. Cf. *Toma Arhiđakon, Historia Salonitana. Povijest salonitanskih i splitskih prvosvećenika*. Predgovor, latinski tekst, kritički aparat i prijevod na hrvatski jezik O. Perić; povijesni komentar M. Matijević-Sokol; studija „Toma Arhiđakon i njegovo djelo” R. Katičić [Biblioteka Knjiga Mediterana 30], (Split: Književni krug, 2003).

that had befallen their bishops; they asked the pope to have their episcopal sees removed from the authority of Split, as it was too dangerous for their bishops to travel to such a remote place by sea. Their request was granted: the pope stipulated that all the bishoprics that were located to the south of Dubrovnik should henceforth be placed under the authority of the archbishop of Bar.¹³ In other words, according to *Historia Salonitana*, Bar became an archbishopric at some point in time prior to the mid-eleventh century.

The transformation of Bar into an important city in southern Dalmatia began under Stefan Vojislav (1040–1043), the eponymous founder of the Vojislavljević dynasty, and could be attributed to his rise to power. Vojislav had been in imperial service since 1018 but when in 1034 he led a failed anti-Byzantine revolt he was captured and imprisoned in Constantinople. After he managed to escape and return home, Vojislav carried out a series of successful attacks against the Byzantines and their Slavic allies. Eventually, as the Byzantine forces suffered a terrible defeat in the historic Battle of Bar (1042), Dioclea got its independence from the empire.¹⁴ Vojislav established his capital at Skadar but maintained other courts at Trebinje, Kotor and Bar as well.¹⁵ According to the somewhat dubious source known as the *Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclea*, Stefan Vojislav even managed to annex some lands from the territory of the neighboring Duchy of Dyrrachium.¹⁶

The bishopric of Bar, on the other hand, may have had to wait until 1099 to receive the elevation to the rank of an archbishopric in the Church hierarchy: in confirmation of this later date is a letter of 1078 to Prince Michael of Dioclea (1046–1081), in which Pope Gregory VII (1073–1085) refers to a certain Peter who was a bishop of Bar; had Peter possessed a higher title, the pope would have used it.¹⁷ If the letter to Michael by Pope Gregory VII implies a correspondence between Dioclea and Rome regarding the bishopric of Bar and a request for its upgrade into an archbishopric under Rome's jurisdiction, one could surmise that Constantine Bodin (1081–1101),

¹³ *Historia Salonitana*, XV.

¹⁴ On the Battle of Bar (1042), see the written sources in Đ. Borozan, *Crnogorske dinastije. Vojislavljevići, Balšići, Crnojevići* [Biblioteka Crna Gora XVII], (Podgorica: CID, 2017), 77–78.

¹⁵ J. V. A. Fine, Jr, *The Early Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1991), p. 206.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 206–207.

¹⁷ H. E. J. Cowdrey, *The Register of Pope Gregory VII 1073–1085: An English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 258. Cf. Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans*, p. 206. On Michael, son of Vojislav, and his policy, see G. Theotokis, *The Norman Campaigns in the Balkans, 1081–1108* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014), 150–151.

Michael's son, may have been hoping for an alliance with the invading Normans, as both he and the Normans were papal vassals.¹⁸

Bodin at first supported the Byzantines against the attack of Robert Guiscard and his Normans on Dyrrachium in 1081, but then stood idle, allowing the Normans to take the city.¹⁹ At about this time, Bodin married Jaquinta. She was the daughter of Argyritzos (Archirizus), a nobleman who had been a leader of the pro-Norman party in Bari and was later forced into exile in Dioclea/Duklja. The union cemented the alliance between Dioclea and Norman Sicily against the Byzantine Empire.²⁰ Raymond of Aguilers, a chronicler of the First Crusade (1096–1099) and an actual participant in it, reports that Dalmatia had four cities: Zadar, Split, Bar and Ragusa; after crossing Dalmatia, the crusaders reached Skadar and there they found 'the Slavic king', that is, the ruler of Duklja.²¹

Constantine Bodin's relations with the West included his support for Pope Urban II (1088–1099) against an antipope (Clement III) in 1089. This, according to some scholars, secured him a major concession, namely the upgrading of the bishop of Bar to the rank of an archbishop. Some sources claim, however, that the bishop of Bar was elevated to the rank of archbishop by the antipope Clement III (1080–1100).²² But no matter what the true story of the elevation of Bar's bishop to the rank of an archbishop might be, it is obvious that Bar became a metropolis at the very end of the eleventh century.

¹⁸ Theotokis, *The Norman Campaigns in the Balkans*, 163–164.

¹⁹ Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans*, p. 222. For a survey of Balkan history in the period between the late 1000s and the late 1100s, see X. Маганов, *Средновековните Балкани. Исторически очерци* (София: Парадигма, 2002), 155–218. According to P. Komatina, by 1081 Bodin was a Byzantine title holder: П. Коматина, „Византијска титула Константина Бодина” — *Зборник радова Византолошкој институту* 48 (2011), 61–74.

²⁰ P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans*, 900–1204 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 144.

²¹ N. Klaić, *Izvori za hrvatsku povijest do 1526. godine* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1972), 84–85. In a text dating from 1153/54, the Arab geographer al-Idrisi places the territory below Ragusa, including Kotor, in the province of *Isglawonia* (i. e., Slavonia): see N. Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata u razvijenom srednjem vijeku* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1976), 370–372. According to J. Fine, at that time the term 'Slavonia' was regularly applied to that region and to the state of Duklja there: see J. V. A. Fine Jr, *When Ethnicity Did Not Matter in the Balkans: A Study of Identity in Pre-Nationalist Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia in the Medieval and Early-Modern Periods* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), p. 101.

²² L. Thallóczy, C. Jireček, E. Sufflay (eds.), *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia*, Vol. I (Vindobonae, 1913), 21–22.

The historical basis for this promotion was that, in the early Church, the nearby city of Dioclea had been an archbishop's see. John Fine points out that "under Bar as suffragan bishops would be: Kotor, Ulcinj, Svac, Skadar, Drivast, Pula (Polati), Serbia, Bosnia, and Trebinje. It is noteworthy that Zahumlje was not included under Bar. Possibly Zahumlje had already broken away from Dioclea. Thus, in obtaining its promotion to an archbishopric, Bar acquired a much larger diocese, and it obtained much territory than earlier".²³ Despite Bodin's submission to Rome, however, the Latin Church only gained ground in the coastal areas of his realm, while the inland parts remained under Constantinople. But briefly the Dioclean church would be subject to Rome, and Bar itself was to remain a Roman Catholic bishopric throughout the Middle Ages.²⁴

The last years of Bodin's rule bore witness to the decline of Dioclean (or Zetan) hegemony in the history of the Serbian lands.²⁵ After his death (*ca.* 1101), a succession crisis broke out in Dioclea, with Bodin's widow, Jaquinta, taking an active part in the ensuing civil strife. That crisis triggered a long series of events. In 1113, one of Jaquinta's sons, George (or Đorđe Bodinović Vojislavljević, 1113–1118), ascended the throne. However, his relatives, the Branislavljevići, were acting as pretenders of his throne. In 1118, the Byzantines with the help of the Branislavljevići attacked Dioclea and conquered most of it. Defeated, George escaped to Rascia/Raška. Byzantium enthroned Branislav's son, Grubeša (1118–1125), as king of Dioclea. In 1125 George, with the help of Rascian forces, attacked Dioclea. In the ensuing battle at Bar (1125), Grubeša was killed and George retook his kingdom. He decided to split control of Dioclea with Grubeša's two brothers, Draghina and Dragil, and is said to have maintained friendly relations with them.

The civil strife in Dioclea (or Zeta, as it began to be called in the twelfth century) did not end in 1125, with George's ascending the throne of Dioclea for the second time (1125–1131). Around 1131, the Byzantines, with the help of George's relatives, declared war on Dioclea once again. Byzantine forces succeeded in conquering the Dioclean territory from Bar to Podgorica. The Rascian forces, which had previously supported George, now sided with the Byzantines. In the end, George was captured and taken prisoner to Constantinople where he died. A Byzantine protégé, Gradinja, was crowned as king of Dioclea in 1131 or 1135. He was to be the last ruler of Dioclea to bear the title of 'king'. Gradinja ruled into the 1140s as a

²³ Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans*, p. 223.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

²⁵ Матанов, *Средновековните Балкани*, с. 129.

Byzantine vassal. In about 1146 he was succeeded by his eldest son, Radoslav (1146 — ca. 1148/1149), who only bore the title of *knez* (i. e. ‘prince’).

In other words, Dioclea’s long internecine strife had a devastating effect on its status: it was reduced back to a principality dependent on Byzantine support, and was increasingly losing territory to Rascia/Raška. Thus, Prince Radoslav only held a small strip of land on the Dalmatian coast, from Kotor to Ulcinj. By 1166, much of Dioclea was occupied by Raška. In 1183 Stefan Nemanja (1166–1196), who was a member of the Vukanović dynasty and Grand Župan of Raška, conquered Bar. In 1186, after defeating the last Dioclean prince, Michael (1162–1186), Stefan Nemanja annexed Dioclea in its entirety. The historical sources, primarily the *Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclea*, provide no evidence of the causes of this conflict, nor do they explain why Byzantium found it necessary to intervene, from time to time, in either Dioclea or Raška.

According to Tibor Živković, the main reason for the wars between Rascia and Dioclea stemmed from their conflicting economic interests: the rulers of Dioclea wanted to conquer certain inland regions in Travounia, Bosnia and Rascia in order to provide raw materials for the maritime towns, and above all Kotor, which they had captured around the middle of the eleventh century. At the same time, Serbia’s rulers wanted to bring, under their own control, the nearest maritime centers of commerce and production. As for Byzantium, it interfered in this strife only when its own geostrategic interests in that area were under threat.²⁶

As regards the archbishopric of Bar, in the 1100s it was engaged in a bitter rivalry with Ragusa (Dubrovnik), the prelate of which had been promoted to the rank of archbishop shortly after 1023. In the course of the long dispute between Ragusa and Bar regarding jurisdiction over the southern Dalmatian towns and the hinterland, both cities produced falsified documents, making it difficult to make sense of the actual course of events. In 1167, Pope Alexander III (1159–1181) urged the clergy in Bar and Ulcinj not to obey their bishops for as long as those bishops did not recognize the metropolitan’s authority of the archbishop of Ragusa.

When in 1189 the bishop of Bar, Gregory, fled from Bar because he feared Župan Nemanja, the archbishop of Ragusa, Bernard (1189–1201), took advantage of the situation and stroke decisively against Bar. He went to Rome and succeeded in gaining jurisdiction over the north Albanian dioceses. As

²⁶ T. Živković, „Duklja između Raške i Vizantije u prvoj polovini XII veka” — *Зборник радова Византолошкој институту* 43 (2006), 451–467.

a result, Bar and its former suffragan bishoprics were now placed under the spiritual authority of the archbishopric of Ragusa.²⁷

In 1199, the Nemanjići succeeded in restoring the archiepiscopal status of the see of Bar, with John I (1199–1247) becoming the first archbishop of Bar under the new dynasty. Following the death of Archbishop John in 1247, the archbishop of Ragusa tried to place Bar under his own jurisdiction, claiming that the seat of Bar was vacant. But the citizens of Bar rejected the Ragusan's claims to their archbishopric.²⁸ Shortly afterward, Pope Innocent IV (1243–1254) appointed an archbishop of Bar: this was the famous Italian diplomat and traveler to the court of the Great Khan, Giovanni Pian del Carpine.²⁹ In 1252, the archbishops of Ragusa and Bar appeared before the pope, each one of them presenting documents in support of his claims. The dispute ended with the archbishopric of Bar emerging as a winner.

Politically, the city of Bar remained under the Nemanjići until the mid-fourteenth century when the Balšići took the crown of Zeta.³⁰

²⁷ P. Fabre, L. Duchesne, *Le Liber censuum de l'église romaine* [Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 2e sér, 6], 2 vols. (Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1905–1910), Vol. II, p. 102.

²⁸ J. V. A. Fine Jr, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 139–140.

²⁹ A. Orbini, "Fra Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, ambasciatore di Roma" — *Miscellanea franciscana* 43/1–2 (1943), 55–79.

³⁰ Borožan, *Crnogorske dinastije*, 187–194.