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*THE CHRONICLE OF THE PRIEST OF DUKLJA*  
IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN HISTORIOGRAPHY  
OF THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES

**ABSTRACT:** *In this article I try to show the multidivisional structure of the work known as *The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja (Ljetopis Popa Dukljanina)* by looking at the model rulers depicted in the text. Each of these figures came from a different European tradition and connects the chronicle to the historiography of different regions of Central and Southeastern Europe. Motifs of Moravian, Czech and Hungarian origin, stories known from the northern parts of Dalmatia and local tales from the Dubrovnik area provided a foreground to Duklja-dedicated section of the story, introduced by the figure of St. Vladimir. In this article, I mainly try to appreciate the elements of fiction in the medieval text and by referring to the various traditions of Central European historiography to show its intertextual environment.*

**KEYWORDS:** *The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja, Saint Vladimir of Duklja, Svatopluk of Moravia, Medieval Dubrovnik, Medieval Duklja, Thomas the Archdeacon, History of Southeastern Europe.*

***The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja and an attempt to describe it***

There is perhaps no need to convince anyone in Montenegro that *The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja* is one of the most intriguing medieval texts. Montenegrin historians have devoted considerable attention to this work, treating it as one of the most important narrative sources of the history of the Adriatic lands, and above all as the source of the legend of St Vladimir, whose cult and symbolic presence is strongly expressed in the local pub-

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lic sphere.<sup>1</sup> *The Chronicle* can also inspire new Montenegrin literature, as exemplified by the works of Mladen Lompar, Jevrem Brković or Milovan Radojević.<sup>2</sup> And yet, as was noted a long time ago, this is a mysterious text and full of travails lurking for the unprepared reader. On the seaside promenade in Bar, its enigmatic author stood frozen in stone with a pen and the manuscript in his hand, but who was he really?

As I began working on the monograph dedicated to *The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja*, it seemed at first that it would be a study that would primarily summarise the extensive research corpus on the source.<sup>3</sup> My ambition was to bring together what had already been written on the subject, to determine what could be concluded with certainty about the text, its author, its recipients and their cultural environment, to rank the many questions and insights. In the course of writing, it became clear that such an assumption was wrong. Many historians have devoted an important part of their research to this text. My ambition was to respect this. However, there were so many hypotheses about *The Chronicle*, and so few answers, that each authoritative statement created more and more problems and prompted the formulation of further questions. It turned out, therefore, that I was more concerned with posing them than with giving clear-cut (in my opinion, given the current state of knowledge — unauthorised) answers.<sup>4</sup> In this short paper, I will try to describe the most important of my observations, trying above all to show the intertextual connections of *The Chronicle* and its place in the historiography of Central and South-Eastern Europe.

<sup>1</sup> Radoslav Rotković, *Neistoriska paradoksanja S. Mijuškovića o Dukljaninu*, *Kritika*, 6 (1969), pp. 370-377; Aleksandar Radoman, "Gesta regum Sclavorum". *Nova istorijska mistifikacija*, Matica crnogorska, Proleće 2013, pp. 103-124; idem, *Ko je naručilac Dukljaninova Kraljestva Slovena?*, *Matica: Časopis za društvena pitanja, nauku i kulturu*, 65 (2016), s. 163-178; idem, *O pismu izvornika hronike Kraljevstvo Slovena Popa Dukljanina*, *Lingua Montenegrina*, 2 (2008), pp. 103-107; Stevo Vučinić, *Prilozi proučavanju Ljetopisa popa Dukljanina i ranosrednjovjekovne Duklje*, Cetinje 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Anka Vučinić Gujić, *Elementi postmodernizma u poeziji Jevrema Brkovića i Mladena Lompara*, Cetinje 2019; Jevrem Brković, *Ljetopis Domaša Dukljanina*, Zagreb 1997; Milovan Radojević, *Dominik*, Podgorica 2001.

<sup>3</sup> The monograph was published in 2021: W. Kowalski, *The Kings of the Slavs : The Image of a Ruler in the Latin Text of The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja*, Leiden/Boston 2021, pp. 340. Earlier I had dealt with this subject in a series of papers, among others: idem, *Rupture - Integration - Renewal : The Gathering in Dalma and the Creation of a Political Community in the Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclea*, *Slavia Meridionalis*, 19 (2019), s. 1-28; idem, *Wielkie zło i herezja Eutychesa. Wokół wątku podboju Dalmacji w Latopisie popa Duklanina*, *Balkanica Posnaniensia. Acta et Studia*, 25 (2018), p. 53-67.

<sup>4</sup> For an extensive analysis of the state of research, written, albeit from a Montenegrin perspective: Marijan Mašo Miljić, *Dinastija Vojislavljević u crnogorskoj, hrvatskoj i srpskoj historiografiji (monografske publikacije) – pregled*, [in:] *Vojislavljevići. Zbornik radova*, ed. N. Samardžić, Cetinje-Podgorica 2015, pp. 405-656.

Before I go on to identify what I believe to be the most important aspects that relate to *The Chronicle* and its author, I must recap a few facts that relate to the text.<sup>5</sup> It is known in two main versions: a longer, Latin one and a shorter, Croatian one, which is also distinguished by different ending. The history of the textual witnesses to both versions is very confusing: the oldest manuscript historians have at their disposals, a witness of the Croatian variant, dates from 1546. To complicate matters further, there is also an earlier translation of the Croatian text into Latin from 1510 prepared by Marko Marulić on the basis of an unpreserved manuscript, possibly written in *bosančica* or glagolitic script. However, it is important to point out that the Croatian variant lacks a whole section of the text related to Duklja. Whether we consider the Croatian text to be an abbreviated translation of the Latin version or a translation of slightly different Latin manuscript that was later incorporated into *The Chronicle* is of secondary importance to the main issue, for we need to conclude that the Croatian text functioned on a distinctive foundation and its author either did not know or was not interested in the excerpt devoted to Duklja.

In these circumstances, only the Latin variant could be regarded as the work of “pop Dukljanin” [Priest of Duklja]. This version is known from two manuscripts, but both date only from the mid-17th century. The oldest witness of this narrative, however, is given by its Italian translation prepared by Mauro Orbini and published in print in 1601. It seems that the work itself is much older (it is debatable whether its origins go back to the 12<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century), and may contain both 12<sup>th</sup>-century fragments and 16<sup>th</sup>-century additions. We really know very little about the author of *The Chronicle*. He is referred to as “Priest of Duklja” (*Presbyter Diocleas*). He may indeed have come from Duklja, i.e. today’s Montenegro, perhaps he really wrote in the town of Bar. When this may have taken place and whether this was actually the case - we do not know. In the case of *The Chronicle* one might as well assume a compilation of older texts, skilfully combined (perhaps previously translated) by one or many authors. I have made the assumption that what is certainly known about the Priest of Duklja is that he wrote (or compiled his text) in Latin, and that he completed his work before 1601.

Little is known about *The Chronicle* itself either. In fact, we know that the text in terms of genre is neither a chronicle nor annals, i.e. *ljetopis* (as it is traditionally called in local languages). It is much closer to a genealogy, so

<sup>5</sup> The problem of many versions of the text was elaborated in detail in the prefaces to the critical editions: *Letopis popa Dukljanina*, ed. F. Šišić, Beograd - Zagreb 1928; *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina*, ed. V. Mošin, Zagreb 1950; *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina. Uvod, prevod i komentar*, ed. S. Mijušković, Beograd 1988; *Gesta regum Sclavorum*, vol. 1, ed. D. Kunčer, Beograd 2009; *Popa Dukljanina Sclavorum Regnum*, ed. D. Radojević, Cetinje 2016.

the oft-used title *Barski rodoslov* (*Genealogy of Bar*), at least in terms of defining the genre, seems more accurate. It is, however, a very heterogeneous genealogy: for the most part a succinct and rather repetitive genealogical list, full of short entries, but in a few parts supplemented by elaborate plots, genre-wise belonging to the deeds of rulers (*gesta*) and in one excerpt being a hagiography, perhaps an older life skilfully integrated by the chronicler into a broader vision of local history. Is the *The Chronicle*, then, a compilation stitched together from several disparate Dalmatian traditions?<sup>6</sup>

There are many indications that this possibility should at least be considered. In the first part of *The Chronicle*, the focus is on legends and traditions related to northern Dalmatia (Salona/Split), while others concern Dubrovnik/Ragusa. Bar and Duklja play a side role in these sections of the text. Even if the storylines about the invasion of the Goths or about the foundation of Ragusa are assumed to have been creatively transformed by the Priest of Duklja, they rather certainly did not originate in Bar. This issue has been attempted to be resolved by suggesting a staged process of text production, which may have been linked to the travels of its presumed author. Suggestions that Gregory of Bar or Rudgier, a Bohemian Cistercian wandering on the Adriatic coast, could be considered an anonymous Priest of Duklja responded to the diverse nature of the work itself;<sup>7</sup> another solution would be to consider *The Chronicle* a compilation, at least in part based on older texts, but there is no conclusion on the language used or terminological inconsistencies that would unequivocally indicate this.<sup>8</sup>

The source value of the work is an important pointer as to how the text was formed. Slavko Mijušković called *The Chronicle* a piece of fiction, denying it much factual value.<sup>9</sup> Many scholars shared this view. Meanwhile, the difference between section about Duklja and the rest of the work seems fundamental in this context. The storyline about Duklja is today often regarded as a moderately accurate description of the formation of Dioclean state in the

<sup>6</sup> That was a hypothesis presented by Milorad Medini: *Kako je postao Ljetopis Popa Dukljanina*, Rad JAZU, 173 (1942), pp. 113-157, continued later by Aleskeev Sergej Viktorovič, *Letopis popa Dukljanina: Struktura drevneslovjanskoga rodoslovnoga predanja*, [Алексеев, С. В., *Летопись попа Дуклянина: структура древнесловянского родословного предания*], Znanie. Ponimanie. Umenie, 3 (2006), pp. 140-148; idem, *Trebinjska legenda Dukljanina: poruka istoričeskoj rekonstrukcii*, [Алексеев, С. В., *Требиньская легенда Дуклянина: попытка исторической реконструкции*], Znanie. Ponimanie. Umenie, 4 (2013), pp. 183-188.

<sup>7</sup> This idea was proposed by Tibor Živković in his *Gesta regum Sclavorum*, vol. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ksenija Vladimirovna Hvastova, *K voprosu terminologii Letopisi Popa Dukljanina* [Хвостова, Ксения Владимировна, *К вопросу терминологии Летописи Попа Дуклянина*], Slavjanskij archiv, 2 (1959), pp. 30-45.

<sup>9</sup> Slavko Mijušković, *Predgovor*, [in:] *Ljetopis popa Dukljanina. Uvod, prijevod i komentar*, ed. idem, Belgrade 1988, pp. 91-93 [the first edition: Titograd 1967].

11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Within various methodologies, the preceding parts of the text are either considered reliable or completely unreliable, or are artificially treated as linked to Duklja or other regional medieval polities and the ruling dynasties. Meanwhile, *The Chronicle*, like most medieval narrative sources, differently framed the issue of 'historical truth' and the role of the chronicler in presenting history.

### **Fiction as a field of historical research**

Let us see what the anonymous author (or authors, i. e. the historiographical Priest of Duklja), was actually writing about: in his work, he presented first and foremost a vision of a dynasty that once ruled over the area that today includes Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and to some extent Macedonia and Albania. Such a kingdom never existed, and similarly, most of the rulers mentioned in the text are known only from it, while the names of others are associated with historical rulers, but often appear in completely different roles - so it is difficult, for instance, to consider Svetopelek or Tomislav from *The Chronicle*<sup>10</sup> as the same historical figures attested in various sources on Great Moravia or Croatia, respectively. At the same time, however, it is impossible to conclude that no relationship along this intertextual lines occur. On the contrary, the fictionality of the Priest of Duklja's work, especially its first section must have had a pragmatic function. For medieval chroniclers, history was primarily meant to fulfil didactic, illustrative roles as it was meant to present certain models to be imitated and reproduced. Medieval narratives were often firmly rooted in traditions, textual or more difficult to grasp - oral, which built up an ideological message. This is precisely why I wanted to give credit to elements in *The Chronicle* that, from today's scholarly perspective, are assessed as fictitious or even fantastic.

I therefore decided to study these rulers of a never existing kingdom, known in historiography as the Kingdom of the Slavs. In doing so, I wanted to recognise the traditions in which the history of its rulers was embedded. In order to do this, I selected four key, narratively developed sections of *The Chronicle*. Significantly: three of these are most commonly regarded as legendary histories, while the fourth bears clear features of hagiography and, as such, must also be examined in terms of the genre features and specific message (these were the stories about the invasion of Goths, the deeds of King Svetopelek, the deeds of Pavimir Bello and the life of King Vladimir). Each part presents a different pattern of power realisation and each in its own way

<sup>10</sup> *Ljetopis*, ed. V. Mošin, p. 48-58; *Gesta regum Sclavorum*, ed. D. Kunčer, pp. 34-62; 66.

established new rules for the functioning of the kingdom; rules, which in the Priest of Duklja's account renewed the dynasty and laid the foundations for its continued existence.

While reading selected sections of *The Chronicle*, I have been concerned with the transformations within narrative traditions relating to the *gesta* of rulers, *origo gentis* stories or motifs of holy kings. I have looked at certain molecules of *topoi* or 'clusters of ideas' that allow the interpretation of certain passages in this work. I have also tried to trace the emergence of individual subplots based on a common structure, on the one hand, and departures from it, on the other.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, I have attempted to address the following question: what does the exposition of particular types of rulers tell us about the origin and purpose of the Priest of Duklja's text. How could he incorporate certain elements of previously known traditions or legends into the framework of his work. In a word: how Priest of Duklja built a coherent story and why, in presenting it, he used the particular set of tropes and concepts. My aim was to show the wider context in which *The Chronicle* may have developed, since its connections not only with Dalmatian, but more broadly European historiography are evident.

### **Chieftains of the Goths. A history of sin and conquest**

The Priest of Duklja began his account about the royal dynasty with the invasion of the Goths. It is the leaders of the Goths who emerged as the ancestors of the Slavic kings in the text.<sup>12</sup> Two Goth chieftains arrived in Dalmatia at the head of their army: one of them bore the historical name Totila, the other an otherwise unknown name: Ostroil. In the depiction of the brothers' wanderings, one can find traces of older ethnogenetic legends, as well as (altered in a way that is difficult to discern) legends about Attila, the leader of the Huns (I will return to that case below). The Priest of Duklja's description of Gothic invasion apparently corresponds with the narrative of Thom-

<sup>11</sup> In doing so, I drew on the work of Ernst Curtius and Leo Spitzer, but also on scholarship of Czesław Deptuła and Jacek Banaszkiwicz and their research of the *origo gentis* stories about the Piast dynasty: Czesław Deptuła, *Galla Anonima mit genezy Polski. Studium z historiozofii i hermeneutyki symboli dziejopisarstwa średniowiecznego*, Lublin 1990; Jacek Banaszkiwicz, *Polskie dzieje bajeczne mistrza Wincentego Kadłubka*, Wrocław 2002; idem, *Gall jako historyk poważny, czyli dlaczego dzieje i Bolesława Chrobrego, i Bolesława Krzywoustego są prawdziwe i niegroteskowe*, *Przegląd Historyczny*, vol. 99, 3 (2008), pp. 399-410; idem, *Jedność porządku przestrzennego, społecznego i tradycji początków ludu (uwagi o urzędzeniu wspólnoty plemiennie-państwowej u Słowian)*, *Przegląd Historyczny*, vol. 77, 3 (1986), pp. 445-466.

<sup>12</sup> *Ljetopis*, pp. 40-43; *Gesta regum Sclavorum*, pp. 4-18.

as the Archdeacon of Split. Both chroniclers knew some tradition about the sin of the Christians, the punishment in the form of the barbarian invasion and the fall of Salona, which is presented as the centre of the local community before the invasion.<sup>13</sup> Both repeated some information about heresy, but in *The Chronicle* it might have been the heresy of Eutyches, mentioned at the beginning, which was embraced by the empire in the west, in *Historia Salonitana* on the other hand the heresy is mentioned in the connection with the glagolitic rite (in this text also referred to as Arianism or Gothic heresy). The Priest of Duklja linked the Goths with the beginnings of the Slavic kingdom, but he did not call the first two rulers by king's title at all - this will be a departure from the general pattern, among the rulers of the fictitious kingdom mentioned in the text, apart from the last one, only the chiefs of the Goths are not referred to by the term *rex*.

What these details could tell us about the legend about the invasion and punishment for sin, that fell upon Dalmatians? For one thing, the meaning of the story is different in *The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja* and in *Historia Salonitana* of Thomas of Split. The latter explicitly described the invasion as part of the legend of the fall of Salona; the situation in the city is presented with tropes used to describe the biblical Sodom and Gomorrah. The Goths are a kind of God's scourge on the city's debauched and witchcraft-wielding inhabitants. The Priest of Duklja's interest in the story was somewhat different: the narrative of the fall of the coastal cities is, as we shall see below, crucial, but the nature of the sin among their inhabitants is not revealed.

At this point it is worth noting that the name Totila, as one of the leaders of the Goths, appeared in both chronicles. In medieval historiography, the name Totila was very commonly used alternatively with Attila. In fact, Totila was often considered to be the ruler of the Huns, Attila — the Goths.<sup>14</sup> The fact that the figures of Totila and Attila may intertwined, and that the narrative of the destruction of the coastal cities may be connected to the story of yet another takeover of Dalmatian land, is demonstrated in the account from the *Hungarian-Polish Chronicle*, especially if we compare it with another text - the already mentioned Croatian variant of *The Chronicle*. This version ends with a description of the assassination of King Zvonimir by his own

<sup>13</sup> *Thomae archidiaconi Spalatensis Historia Salonitanorum Atque Spalatinorum Pontificum. Archdeacon Thomas of Split History of the Bishops of Salona and Split* [later: *Historia Salonitana*], Latin text: O. Perić, eds. D. Karbić, M. Matijević Sokol, J. R. Sweeney, Budapest – New York 2006, pp. 32-43.

<sup>14</sup> Ryszard Grzesik, *Attyla a Słowianie. Przyczynek do wyobrażeń o kontaktach huńsko-słowiańskich w średniowiecznych źródłach narracyjnych*, *Roczniki Historyczne*, 59 (1993), pp. 33-42; idem, *Czy w średniowiecznych kronikach węgierskich istniały dwa modele przekazu o rodzimych początkach?*, [in:] *Hungaria – Slavia – Europa Centralipp. Studia z dziejów kultury środkowoeuropejskiej we wczesnym średniowieczu*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 117-124.

subjects, resulting in the fall of the Croatian dynasty and the conquest of its lands by Hungary. The account from the *Hungarian-Polish Chronicle* is similar: Attila, here the king of the Hungarians, turns into the executor of a divine plan to avenge King Casimir (or Trezimir in another variant) murdered by his own subjects: the Croats and the Slavs.<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that the text of the *Hungarian-Polish Chronicle* is probably older than the record of the Croatian version of the *Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja*, as we know it.<sup>16</sup> What they have in common, is a description of the battle, almost identical in several details, and an essential mention of the sin that must be avenged. This sheds new light on the relationship between the Croatian and Latin versions of *The Chronicle* — it is the Croatian text, expanded with the story of Zvonimir, that seems to tie together the beginning and the end of the story of the invasion on Dalmatia. In the Latin version, the nature of the Christians' sin remains unrevealed.<sup>17</sup> This may indicate the differences in the understanding of the history of the kingdom described in the two primary variants of the work. Whereas at the beginning of his Latin narrative the Priest of Duklja referred rather to the Dalmatian tradition about the destruction of coastal cities in response to the sin of the inhabitants, the author of the Croatian text - situates the invasion of the Goths within a more complex plot about regicide. Such differences in approach between the two authors in question have obvious consequences for their understanding of the community - the Latin version lacks the ultimate collapse of the kingdom, unlike in the Croatian version, in which the Croats themselves ultimately become responsible for the fall of the native dynasty. It is also worth noting that the assessment of Totila and Ostroil in both versions of *The Chronicle* was not unequivocally negative. The favourable features of the figures of Totila and Ostroil were due to the strength that allowed the barbarian chieftains to conquer Dalmatia and thus fulfil part of God's plan. In describing the next Gothic leaders, however, the chronicler already drew attention to their pagan religion, which prevented a permanent conclusion of the foundation of the realm.

### **The history of baptism and the foundation of the kingdom**

For such a conclusion to take place, the Christianisation was necessary. This comes about through the reign of King Svetopelek. In this episode,

<sup>15</sup> Ryszard Grzesik, *Sources of a Story About the Murdered Croatian King in the Hungarian-Polish Chronicle*, *Povijesni prilozi*, vol. 24, 24 (2003), pp. 97-104.

<sup>16</sup> *Kronika węgierskopolska*, ed. S. Pilat, MPH, vol. 1, ed. A. Bielowski, Lwów 1864, pp. 485-515; Ryszard Grzesik, *Kronika węgiersko-polska*, Poznań 1999, 5-19.

<sup>17</sup> Wawrzyniec Kowalski, *Wielkie zło i herezje Eutychesa. Wokół wątku podboju Dalmacji w Latopisie popa Duklanina*. *Balkanica Posnaniensia*, 25 (2018), pp. 53-67.



the influence of the Great Moravian tradition becomes noticeable. The central figure in the story is initially the missionary Constantine, but the second part of this section focuses on the king, who at the time of the synod in Dalma, the *omphalós* of the realm, assumed the role of the real founder of the community reconciling the Slavs and Latins.<sup>18</sup> This story may have been part of a more widespread Dalmatian tradition about the founder of the dynasty (as probably evidenced by the expression: “from Svetopelek to Zvonimir” in the margins of the *Supetar cartularius*)<sup>19</sup>, and it contained elements of legends about coastal cities as heirs to ancient centres and their reconstruction, that began in the symbolic centre of Svetopelek’s kingdom and Dalmatia as a whole: the Dalma plain.

Where did the traces of the Great Moravian tradition come from into this story of the unification of two groups: the Slavs and the Latins? Through which channels and through what texts did their transmission occur? The most probable is the circulation of hagiographic texts produced in Bohemia via glagolitic centres of Northern Dalmatia or in medieval Bulgaria, where the centre in Ohrid may have played a key role in the process of spreading these stories. Among the corpus of texts on Svetopelek, some reproduced a negative image of the ruler.<sup>20</sup> Such features are absent from the Priest of Duklja’s narrative. Constantine’s brother Methodius, on the other hand, did not appear in *The Chronicle*. Was this related to the accusation of heresy known in Dalmatia (this is precisely how Thomas the Archdeacon charac-

<sup>18</sup> Dalma has often been regarded as the former Delminium, today’s Duvno near Tomislavgrad. However, there are hypotheses that locate the site in Dioclea. In the light of the text itself, both these identifications are dubious. Ludwig Steindorff, *Tumačenje riječi “Dalmatia” u srednjovjekovnoj historiografiji. Istovremeno o saboru na “Planities Dalmiae”*, [in:] *Etnogeneza Hrvata*, pp. 148-159; idem, *Die Synode auf der Planities Dalmiae. Reichsteilung und Kirchenorganisation im Bild der Chronik des Priesters von Dioclea*, *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 93 (1985), pp. 279-324; Tibor Živković, *O takozvanom saboru na Duvanjskom polju*, *Zbornik za istoriju Bosne i Hercegovine*, 4 (2004), pp. 45-65. Older literature: Muhamed Hadžijahić, *Pitanje vjerodostojnosti sabora na Duvanjskom polju*, *Godišnjak - Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine, Centar za balkanološka ispitivanja*, 6 (1970), pp. 201-261; Luka Jelić, *Duvanjski Sabor*, *Vjesnik Hrvatskog arheološkog društva*, vol. 10, 1 (1909), pp. 135-145; Vjekoslav Klaić, *Narodni sabor i krunisanje kralja na Duvanjskom polju*, [in:] *Zbornik Matice hrvatske o tisućoj godišnjici Hrvatskog kraljevstva*, ed. F. Lukas, Zagreb 1925, pp. 3-18.

<sup>19</sup> Držislav Švob, *Pripis Supetarskog kartulara o izboru starohrvatskog kralja i popis onodobnih banova*, *Historijski zbornik*, vol. 9, 1-4 (1956), pp. 101-117.

<sup>20</sup> *Tempore Michaelis imperatoris – Legenda Moravica*, *MMFH*, v. 2, pp. 265-266; *Christiani monachi Vita et passio sancti Venceslai et sanctae Ludmille ave eius*, *MMFH*, v. 2, p. 192; *Legenda Beatus Cyrillus*, *MMFH*, v. 2, pp. 302-303. See: Lubomir Havlík, *Dukljanska kronika a Dalmatská legenda*, Praha 1976, pp. 103-112 (Montenegrin translation: *Dukljanska hronika i Dalmatinska legenda*, Podgorica 2008).

terised Methodius<sup>21</sup>)? Finally, what is the connection between the narrative of Svetopelek as king of the Slavs and the description of the great empire of Moravian ruler known from the Hungarian medieval historiography, in which a kingdom resembling that of Alexander the Great was attributed to a legendary Ménmarót, which is believed to be a personification of Svatopluk of Moravia.<sup>22</sup>

King Svetopelek, as he was characterised in *The Chronicle*, appears unambiguously as rex-founder but also as king-legislator - *rex iustus et bonus*. The story of his coronation blends with the tradition about the restoration of the old ecclesiastical hierarchy. The role of Salona and Dioclea is crucial in this story, but there is no indication that the text itself, as is often argued, was written in order to maintain the claims and aspirations of Bar archbishopric. Moreover, traces of the tradition about Svetopelek in Ragusa suggest that the narrative did not necessarily originate in Duklja.<sup>23</sup> The Central European context of the literary threads associated with the figure of Moravian Svatopluk seems to confirm such a presumption.<sup>24</sup>

### The warlike king and the restoration of the realm

Further in the text, a role similar to that of Svetopelek was also played by King Pavlimir Bello, who became a restorer of the kingdom and found-

<sup>21</sup> *Historia Salonitana*, pp. 78-79. See also: Radoslav Katičić, *Methodii doctrina*, Slovo, 36 (1986), pp. 11-44; Lujo Margetić, „*Liber Methodius*” i pitanje vrele devete glave *Ljetopisa Popa Dukljanina*, *Časopis Instituta za crkvenu povijest Katoličkog bogoslovnog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu*, vol. 24, no. 46 (2000), pp. 1-9; Ludwig Steindorff, „*Liber Methodius*”. *Überlegungen zur kyrillomethodianischen Tradition bei Priester von Dioclea*, *Mitteilungen des bulgarischen Forschungsinstitutes in Österreich*, 8 (1986), pp. 157-173; Hrvoje Gračanin, Marko Petrak, *The Notion of the Methodii Doctrina in the Context of the Church Synod of Split (AD 925)*, in: *The Byzantine Missionary Activity and Its Legacy in Europe. Proceedings of the 4th Symposium “Days of Justinian I”, Skopje 11–12 November, 2016*, ed. Mitko B. Panov, 28–42. Skopje, 2017.

<sup>22</sup> R. Grzesik, *Węgry a Słowiańszczyzna w najwcześniejszym etapie dziejów w świetle słowiańskich i węgierskich źródeł narracyjnych epoki średniowiecza*, in: *Hungaria – Slavia – Europa Centralis. Studia z dziejów kultury środkowoeuropejskiej we wczesnym średniowieczu*, Warsaw 2014, pp. 93-106. About the place of Svatopluk in Czech historiography: Marek Vadrna, *Obraz krále Svätopluka I. v českých kronikách*, in: M. Homza et al., *Svätopluk v európskom písomníctve. Štúdie z dejín svätoplukovskej legendy*, Bratislava 2013, pp. 230-273.

<sup>23</sup> Havlík Lubomir, *Dubrovnícké kroniky a tradice a Svatoplukovi*, *Slovanský Přehled*, part 3, 58 (1972), pp. 197-200.

<sup>24</sup> See: Martin Homza, *Sémantická potencia osobného vlastného (rodného) mena Svätopluk, ako východisko svätoplukovskej legendy*, in: M. Homza et al., *Svätopluk v európskom písomníctve. Štúdie z dejín svätoplukovskej legendy*, Bratislava 2013, pp. 37-47; idem, *Stredoveké korene svätoplukovskej tradície u Slovákov (čierna a biela svätoplukovská legenda)*, in: M. Homza et al., *Svätopluk v európskom písomníctve. Štúdie z dejín svätoplukovskej legendy*, Bratislava 2013, pp. 48-141.

er of new municipal centres.<sup>25</sup> In *The Chronicle* three main functions are assigned to him. Within the interpretation of the history of the dynasty proposed by the Priest of Duklja, he is first and foremost the restorer of the Slavic kingdom, his actions correspond to those of the usurper Časlav, and are their inverse reflection. In this way Pavlimir erases the curse weighing down on Časlav and his pedigree by his father, King Radoslav. Another narrative function of Pavlimir Bello is revealed in the story about foundation of Ragusa. This story seems to be a part of local Ragusan tradition about the origins of the city, but has been creatively arranged by the Priest of Duklja to include the figure of the king. Pavlimir appears in this passage as a representative of the Romans, a hero arriving from across the sea, setting the community on a new course, again, like Svetopelek before him, consolidating the Latins and the Slavs. This thread is not related to Duklja. It may represent Travunjan tradition, although in the late medieval *Annales Ragusini*, King Bello is linked to Bosnia.<sup>26</sup> It is not clear how the tradition about the king passed into the story about the founding of Dubrovnik. It is clear that, to some extent, the king took over the role previously assigned in the narrative to the archbishop of Ragusa.<sup>27</sup> In fact, as Lovro Kunčević has shown, the character of Pavlimir was known in Dubrovnik at least from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onward,<sup>28</sup> but is it possible that the story itself originated outside the city? This seems unlikely. In the Priest of Duklja's chronicle no attempt is to be discerned that could link Pavlimir to Duklja; on the contrary, the territorial expansion of his rule gives the impression of imperial actions. In this part of the narrative, the description of Pavlimir's actions is realised with a reference to the *rex bellicosus* model and in particular by means of *topoi* related to the legends about Alexander the Great.<sup>29</sup> Comparative analysis of the narrative structure indicates that this section of the work might have been incorporated into *The Chronicle* under the influence of local traditions from the Dubrovnik area at the end of the Middle Ages.

<sup>25</sup> Tibor Živković, *The Legend of Pavlimir Bello*, [in:] T. Živković, *Forging Unity. The south Slavs between east and west 550-1150*, Belgrade 2008, pp. 205-225.

<sup>26</sup> *Annales Ragusini Anonymi item Nicolai de Ragnina*, ed. Speratus Nodilo, Zagreb 1883, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Lovro Kunčević, *The Oldest Foundation Myth of Ragusa: The Epidaurian Tradition*, *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 10 (2004), pp. 21-31 ; Tibor Živković, *On the Foundation of Ragusa: The Tradition vs. Facts*, *Historical Review*, vol. 14 (2007), pp. 9-25. [T. Živković, *Forging Unity. The south Slavs between east and west 550-1150*, Belgrade 2008, pp. 171-192].

<sup>28</sup> Lovro Kunčević, *Mit o Dubrovniku. Diskursi identiteta renesansnog grada*, Zagreb-Dubrovnik 2015, pp. 35-36.

<sup>29</sup> Wawrzyniec Kowalski, *Król Pavlimir Bello i Aleksander Wielki. Wzór wojowniczego władcy w „Regnum Sclavorum”*, [in:] *Poszukiwanie przeszłości. Szkice z historii i metody badań historycznych*, ed. P. Wiszewski, J. Wojtkowiak, Wrocław 2014, pp. 35-49.

### King-martyr as a peripheral phenomenon

King Vladimir may be considered the last of the pivotal rulers.<sup>30</sup> There are doubts as to whether the section dedicated to this character was not previously an independent work.<sup>31</sup> Even if it was, it was integrated into the matter of *The Chronicle* in such a way as to align the text with the Priest of Duklja's vision of history. In this approach, King Vladimir already represented the rulers of a realm with a different centre of gravity and changed political ambitions. Thus in fact we are dealing with the introduction to the Dioclean part of *The Chronicle*. The previously vast Slavic kingdom, whose ideal borders were established by the invasion of the Goths and renewed and confirmed by Svetopelek and Pavlimir, is trimmed down to the territory of the Tetrarchy: Zeta, Trbunia, Hum and Podgoria.<sup>32</sup> Such a depiction marked a break with the previous image of the Slavic kingdom in its ideal, wider boundaries. What is not entirely clear, however, are the connections between the Vladimir story and the later Greek hagiography dedicated to Saint Jovan Vladimir. References to motifs known from the Priest of Duklja's narrative (above all: Vladimir and Kosara) can also be found in the Byzantine historiography, but at the same time they can be linked with the popularity of certain *topoi* from the romance stories about Joseph and Aseneth.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Ljetopis*, pp. 78-85; *Gesta regum Sclavorum*, pp. 124-138.

<sup>31</sup> The bibliography on St. Vladimir of Duklja is extensive. Essential reading are the papers collected in: *Dukljanski knez Sveti Vladimir (970-1016). 1000 godina crnogorske državotvornosti*, ed. S. Perović et al., Podgorica 2016 and *1000-godišnjica svetoga Jovana Vladimira*, ed. Đ. Borozan, Podgorica 2017. See also: Dragoljub Dragojlović, *Dukljanski knez Vladimir i albanski Novatiani*, *Istorijski zapisi*, vol. 38, 1 (1975), pp. 93-104; Stojan Novaković, *Prvi osnovi slovenske književnosti među Slovenima. Legenda o Vladimiru i Kosari*, vol. 1, Beograd 1893, pp. 238-284; Jarosław Dudek, *Święty Jan Włodzimierz (?-1016) w życiu i w religii. Niefortunny polityk i patron Serbów i Albańczyków*, [in:] *Gdzie jesteś człowieku? Funeralia lednickie – spotkanie 13*, eds. Wojciech Dzieduszycki, Jacek Wrzesiński, 223-230. Poznań 2011; Đorđe Đekić, *Geste or Jovan Vladimir's Biography*, *Facta Universitatis. Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology and History*, vol. 12, 2 (2013), pp. 183-189; Norman W. Ingham, *The Martyrdom of Saint John Vladimir of Dioclea*, *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics*, 35-36 (1987), pp. 199-216; Nenad Ljubinković, *Legenda o Vladimiru i Kosari – između pisane i usmene književnosti*, [in:] N. Ljubinković, *Traganja i odgovori. Studije iz narodne književnosti i folkloru*, vol. 1, Beograd 2010, pp. 153-162. For the hypothesis that the life of Vladimir could be in fact a forgery: Stefan Trajković-Filipović, *Inventing the Saint's Life: Chapter XXXVI of "The Annals of the Priest of Dioclea"*, *Revue des études Byzantines*, vol. 73, 2013, pp. 259-276.

<sup>32</sup> *Ljetopis*, 75-77; *Gesta regum Sclavorum*, pp. 116-118.

<sup>33</sup> See: Ljubica Jovanović, *Aseneth's Gaze Turns Swords into Dust*, *Journal for the Study of the Pseudoepigrapha*, 21.2 (2011), pp. 83-97; Josip Bratulić, *Apokrif o Prekrasnom Josipu u hrvatskoj srednjovjekovnoj književnosti*, *Radovi Staroslovenskog instituta* 7 (1972), pp. 31-122.

The model of the king-martyr itself shows some parallels with depictions of the death of rulers known from the periphery of newly-Christianised Europe. When comparing the figure of Vladimir and the sources on Václav of Bohemia, one finds a recurrence of themes of betrayal, murder, regret and repentance. The theme of marriage is also not entirely absent from the stories about the holy kings.<sup>34</sup> The role of these narratives was most often to lay the foundations for dynastic cults. The hagiography of King Vladimir also seems to have had this function. The fact that it appears in the second part of the Priest of Duklja's work, and not, as in the Bohemian, Rus' or Scandinavian contexts, in the association with the process of Christianisation or the formation of a dynasty, means that we can consider the figure of a king-martyr within *The Chronicle* as the attempted introduction of new concepts of the dynasty, from this point in the text onward described by the Priest of Duklja on new principles.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Vladimir is a figure of new beginning, associated with a Dioclean section of the work.

### Conclusion

The conclusions drawn from the accounts of the four origins of the dynasty described in *The Chronicle* reveal the supra-regional contexts of the work. *The Chronicle* was probably written on the basis of diverse sources, which have not been preserved today. At the same time, the anonymous author tried to ensure the continuity of his narrative by introducing figures of rulers with characteristic features. These were breakthrough rulers, transforming the kingdom described in the work. The four transformations of the realm were linked precisely to the figures of the model rulers, but the tradition the Priest of Duklja used was each time different. The topical structure, to some extent determined the manner of depiction and had a greater influ-

<sup>34</sup> See: Joanna Nastalska-Wisnicka, *Rex martyr. Studium źródłoznawcze nad legendą hagiograficzną św. Wacława (X-XIV w.)*, Lublin 2010; Dušan Třeštík, *Manželství knížete Václava podle II. staroslověnské legendy*, [in:] *Husitství – reformace – renesance: sborník k 60. narozeninám Františka Šmahela*, ed. Jaroslav Pánek, Prague 1994, pp. 39-46.

<sup>35</sup> Norman W. Ingham, *Genre Characteristics of the Kievan Lives of Princes in the Slavic and East European Perspective*, [in:] *American Contributions to the Ninth International Congress of Slavists*, vol. 2, ed. P. Debreczeny, Columbus 1983, pp. 223-239; idem, *The Martyrdom of Saint John Vladimir of Dioclea*, *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics*, 35-36 (1987), pp. 199-216; idem, *The Martyred Prince and the Question of Slavic Cultural Continuity*, [in:] *Medieval Russian Culture*, ed. H. Birnbaum, Berkeley – Los Angeles 1984, pp. 31-53; idem, *The Sovereign as Martyr, East and West*, *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 17, 1 (1973), pp. 1-17; Emil Hilton Saggau, *The Byzantine Influence on Early Slavic Passion-Bearing Saints*, *Hiperborea* 8 (2021): 184-203; Simon Malmenvall, *Ruler Martyrs on the Periphery of Medieval Europe*, Belgrade 2021.

ence on the shape of the Priest of Duklja's proposed vision of history than has been previously assumed.

The adoption of such premises sets out possible new ways to study this text within the historiographical traditions of medieval Europe. Such research has been undertaken in the past, but too often the comparative context has been ignored. Meanwhile, in the perspective of research on the importance of fiction in medieval writing about history, there is still much to be said, and *The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja* may be one of the more graceful texts to explore.

Wawrzyniec KOWALSKI

#### THE CHRONICLE OF THE PRIEST OF DUKLJA IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES

##### *Summary*

The article explored the multidimensional structure of *The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja* by analyzing the model rulers depicted in the text. Each ruler was linked to different European traditions, connecting the chronicle to the historiographies of Central and Southeastern Europe. The text incorporated motifs from Moravian, Czech, and Hungarian traditions, as well as stories from northern Dalmatia and the Dubrovnik area. Focusing on the Duklja section introduced by St. Vladimir, the article examined the fictional elements within the medieval text and situated it within its intertextual context, referencing various Central European historiographical traditions.