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AUTHORITY AND JURISDICTION IN MEDIEVAL BALKANS. PART I: THE CASE OF BOSNIA AND KOTOR – THE CENTRE OF THE DISPUTE, 10th–12th CENTURY

Abstract

This study explores the complex ecclesiastical landscape of the Western Balkans between the 10th and 12th centuries, focusing on the bishoprics of Bosnia and Kotor as central nodes in jurisdictional disputes among competing archbishoprics – primarily Split, Dubrovnik, Bar, and Bari. The article critically examines the formation, legitimacy, and contested authority of these dioceses. It highlights the strategic use of fabricated documents and invented traditions – such as the “*iura antiqua*” and the *Letopis of the Priest of Duklja* – as tools for asserting ecclesiastical primacy. Special attention is given to the symbolic and political dimensions of ecclesiastical authority, including the reception of Great Moravian religious traditions and the persistence of the Slavic liturgy in Bosnia. The article also investigates the emergence of the Bosnian Church as a heterodox Christian institution and the evolving relationship between Bosnia, the Papacy, and the Hungarian crown. Ultimately, the study reveals how ecclesiastical rivalries were deeply intertwined with political ambitions, shaping the religious and geopolitical contours of the medieval Balkans.¹

Keywords: *Medieval Balkans, Bosnia, Kotor, Archbishopric of Bar, Medieval Dubrovnik, Medieval Dalmatia*

1. INTRODUCTION

The origins of ecclesiastical institutions, such as bishoprics and monasteries have long been a frequent point of interest, not only to medievalists.

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to prof. Emir O. Filipović for his help and guidance through medieval Bosnia during my research.

It was no different in the case of South-Eastern Europe, where many bishoprics were founded or existed already in the times of the Roman Empire (especially on the coast of Dalmatia). However, historical research is often hampered by the lack of written sources or even by preserved sources contradicting each other. In order to better understand the highly complex development of church organisation in medieval Dalmatia and surrounding regions, it is necessary to look at the development of the local individual dioceses in a broader and political context. Several of them were the successors of ancient bishoprics formed mainly around the 4th century.

However, such succession or heritage has often been problematic. Particularly in the High Middle Ages, individual (arch)bishoprics competed in jurisdictional disputes, and the “*iura antiqua*” played a primary role. Simply put, the main question was which bishopric had the older and therefore more noble origin. Often multiple bishoprics claimed the descent and continuity of a single ancient predecessor. There were also, in turn, situations where some bishoprics were successors of ancient dioceses or, not infrequently, of fictitious archdioceses. There were also cases of ecclesiastical settlements which were destroyed by various invasions (by Avars, Slavs or Bulgarians) and these bishoprics were then moved to another place. It was thus a process of defending the continuity and “*iura antiqua*”. This was the case of the metropolis of Salona, which moved to Split and probably of Dubrovnik as well. Split (or Salona) was the only metropolis in Dalmatia until the end of the 10th century. The Slavs destroyed the ancient Salona, and the archbishop had to take refuge in Diocletian’s palace, where medieval Split later emerged. However, even in the High Middle Ages, the archbishops of Split used the title of the old metropolis of Salona to emphasize the continuity and antiquity. Historians have long debated the question of the transfer of this metropolis and its continuity, some saying that the metropolitan archbishopric was not formally established in Split until 925 in connection with the local synods (Prozorov, 2012, pp. 103–122). At that time, there were several bishoprics under Split, including Dubrovnik and Kotor. The territory of the metropolis is said to have extended as far as the Danube,

although in this case it may be a chronicler's fiction or an ideological narrative to counter the claims of other metropolises. Other archbishoprics – Bar or Dubrovnik – tried to operate on a similar principle.

However, the narratives were often created around non-existent ancient archbishoprics, with which medieval bishoprics attempted to claim continuity – as was the case of Dubrovnik itself and, also of the archbishopric of Bar (Antibari). The two rival metropolises, after all, had several papal privileges at their disposal, and even today it is not clear which of these are credible, interpolated or entirely spurious. The complexity of this particular case has been pointed out by Richard F. Gyug in his examination of the liturgical manuscripts from the Bishopric of Kotor, which was practically at the centre of this jurisdictional dispute (Gyug, 2016). The Bosnian bishopric was virtually in an identical position. This ecclesiastical institution had a very different and probably even more complex genesis than the Bishopric of Kotor, which was a suffragan of Bari in Apulia. Serbian historian Ivana Komatina has also dealt with the issue in her analysis of Serbian ecclesiastical history (Komatina, 2016). The relationship between the bishoprics of Kotor and Bari was in turn thoroughly examined by Italian historians – Giorgio Fedalto (Fedalto, 1976) and Fedele Sforza (Sforza, 1975).

Finally, an important aspect that influenced the development of church administration – not only in Dalmatia – was the question of the Slavic liturgy. In fact, the Great Moravian exile also affected this area, although it is not clear whether this occurred in 885, or only after 894 or 907.² The narratives of Svatopluk, ruler of Great Moravia, were also part of this legacy. In the Western Balkans, these narratives became virtually state-forming.³ In Dalmatia, however, the Slavic liturgy (in Great Moravia permitted by the papal privilege of *Industriae Tuae* of 880) encountered harsh resistance from the Latin clergy. Saint Methodius was seen as a heretic who had

² 885 – death of St. Methodius and expelling of his disciples, 894 – death of Svatopluk, 907 – Battle at Bratislava, which brought an end to Great Moravia.

³ We already dealt with this topic while exploring “the legend” behind Svatopluk of Great Moravia: Bučko, 2021, pp. 32–48; See also Homza, 2014, pp. 42–46.

invented the “Gothic letters.”⁴ The Synods of Split, especially those held in 925, 928, 1059/1060, and 1063 spoke out strongly against the Slavic liturgy. It is possible, therefore, that some Great Moravian scholars left Dalmatia for mountainous and peripheral Bosnia, whose natural conditions allowed these relics to survive virtually undisturbed until the High Middle Ages.⁵ In the case of medieval Bosnia, the local heresy (seen as such from the Papal or Hungarian point of view), or heterodoxy, is also known as the Bosnian Church (*Crkva Bosanska*), was often incorrectly associated with the Bogomil movement, is particularly well known in historiography.⁶ However, in reality it was a religious phenomenon, a kind of interfaith hybrid, an indigenous Christian religion based on pre-Christian elements and Great Moravian relics.

It is likely not coincidental that the earliest documented reference to the Bosnian bishopric dates to the 1060s, a period that also witnessed the convening of the Synods of Split addressing the Slavic liturgy. Despite the temporal proximity of these two developments, the precise origins and institutional context of the Bosnian bishopric remain unknown. Numerous scholarly investigations have attempted to clarify the circumstances surrounding its establishment, yet a definitive conclusion has proven unresolvable. This is largely attributable to the scarce of contemporaneous and credible sources. While the emergence of the Bosnian bishopric and the ecclesiastical reforms initiated by the Synods of Split appear to coincide chronologically, no extant source provides direct evidence between the two phenomena.

In this paper, we aim to synthesize the existing body of research concerning the ecclesiastical development of the dioceses of Kotor and Bosnia, both of which have frequently been at the centre of jurisdictional disputes and historiographical controversies. Our objective is to offer a critical and

⁴ For the Councils of Split: Bartoňková, 2013, pp. 102–113; Karbić, Matijević Sokol and Sweeney, 2006, pp. 78–79.

⁵ From the point of view of Byzantium, Croatia and of Hungary, it was considered a peripheral territory, being considerably mountainous and difficult to reach.

⁶ See Runciman, 1947, pp. 100–103; recently also in a book about Nicholas Ujlaki, King of Bosnia in 1471–1477: Hlaváčková, 2022, p. 132, The most extensive scholar work on medieval Bosnia and Bosnian Church: Fine, 2007; See also Šidak, 1955, pp. 11–40; Additional works on the subject: Čošković, 2005 or Ćirković, 1963; Ćirković, 2020, pp. 17–43.

contextualized analysis of these institutions, drawing upon the broadest possible range of primary and secondary sources. Particular attention will be paid to the rivalries involving Bar, Dubrovnik, and Split, which played a decisive role in shaping the ecclesiastical landscape of the region.

Moreover, this inquiry will engage with the symbolic and political dimensions of ecclesiastical authority, including the reception and reinterpretation of Great Moravian relics and their projection within the social imagination of Dalmatia and Bosnia. The evolution of these church structures cannot be disentangled from the political and ecclesiastical ambitions of local elites, notably those of the Árpádian and Nemanjić dynasties.

Given the complexity of these overlapping religious and political dynamics, our study will focus primarily on the period from the Synod of Split in 925 to the emergence of accusations against the Bosnian Church in 1199, while also considering earlier developments that are essential for understanding the broader historical trajectory. Ultimately, our goal is to illuminate specific historical problems within a coherent narrative, one that reflects the intricate interplay of ecclesiastical and political forces that defined the character of the medieval Balkans.

Medieval Bosnia itself has been the subject of numerous historians, beginning with fundamental works of Vjekoslav Klaić (1849–1928) (Klaić, 1882) and his granddaughter Nada Klaić (1920–1988) (Klaić, 1994). The local situation, even in the context of alleged heresy, has been minutely analysed by John Fine Jr., although he does not mention the period before the end of the 12th century at all (Fine, 2007, pp. 102–103). Croatian historian Eduard Peričić analysed the lengthy disputes between Bar and Dubrovnik (Peričić, 1991). Bar and Dioclea have been thoroughly dealt in the past by Ivan Marković and Dane Gruber.⁷ There is also a monograph by church historian Stjepan Krasić dealing with ecclesiastical history of Dubrovnik, partly based on research of Serafino Razzi (1531–1613) (Krasić-Razzi, 1999). We can also mention the works of Hungarian scholars, namely Gábor Barabás or Bálint Ternovác (Barabás, 2017; Ternovác 2016). Judit

⁷ Studies published as reprints in Jovović, 2014.

Gál also dealt in detail with ecclesiastical situations in the Balkans (Gál, 2020). Bosnian historian Emir O. Filipović explored the beginnings of the Kotromanić dynasty tied deeply with medieval Bosnia (Filipović, 2022). Lovro Kunčević dealt with traditions of Dubrovnik and forming the historical memory (Kunčević, 2022; Kunčević, 2004). Finally, the most recent summary of not only ecclesiastical issues in the Western Balkans has been provided by Danijel Džino (Džino, 2023).

The source base is considerably broad and diverse. We have papal letters and charters (some of questionable authenticity), charters of Hungarian kings, several Dalmatian narrative or official sources and the chronicles of Dubrovnik provenance, etc. No medieval chronicle from Bosnia itself has survived. However, the space is also devoted to *Letopis of Priest of Dioclea*, most often dated to the 1170s dealing in detail with the Western Balkan area.⁸ This Chronicle was recently analysed by Polish medievalist Wawrzyniec Kowalski (Kowalski, 2021). The essential source for the history of Dalmatia is undoubtedly the *Historia Salonitana* – the Chronicle of Thomas of Split from the 1260s (Karbić, Matijević Sokol and Sweeney, 2006)

2. EARLY MEDIEVAL ECCLESIASTICAL DEVELOPMENT IN DALMATIA

For a better understanding of the whole situation, it is appropriate to focus also on the earlier ecclesiastical history of the bishoprics of Bar and Dioclea and others that played a key role in this case. The bishopric of Dioclea seems to have existed as early as the 4th century. Daniele Farlati even mentions several bishops, and there are surviving sources from the early Middle Ages (451, 602) (Farlati, 1817, pp. 1–4).⁹ However, the

⁸ *Letopis of the Priest of Dioclea* (or *Duklja*) belongs to the most enigmatic sources of medieval Balkans. It is not preserved in any medieval manuscripts, we have just late copies from the 16th century (in Croatian), Italian version from 1601 published by Mauro Orbini (*Il regno de gli Slavi*) and Latin copies from the 17th century. For the filiation see: Havlík, 1976, pp. 5–7, Edition see: Živković, 2009.

⁹ For the documents see Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 21, p. 4, no. 46, p. 9–10, no. 47, p. 10; To the location of ancient Dioclea in Montenegro: Šístek, 2017, pp. 34–35

metropolis of these bishoprics in southern Dalmatia was Skadar (Modern-day Shkodër in Albania) the former see of the ancient archbishopric of Praevalitana. Later, in the early Middle Ages it was Dyrrachion (Drač/Durazzo, now Durrës in Albania). It is interesting, however, that in the listing of the bishoprics of the Byzantine Empire – *Notitiae Graecae episcopatum* (no. 3 and 10), both the bishopric of Dioclea and Antibari (Bar) are mentioned within the metropolitan province of Durrës – thus both even existed simultaneously in the 9th century (Parthey, 1866, no. 3, p. 125, Bar in no. 10, p. 220).¹⁰ *Notitiae* No. 3 was composed around 787–865, while *Notitiae* No. 10 was composed at the very end of the 10th or the early 11th century (Stephenson, 2003, p. 118). On the other hand, the bishopric of Bar is thought to have been established probably in the 8th or 9th century, but we have no precise information about its origins (Simeonova, 2019, pp. 107–108; Crnčević, 2013, pp. 94–95). Constantine Porphyrogenitus in his *De administrando imperio* in the middle of the 10th century already refers to Dioclea itself as ruins (Jenkins – Moravcsik, 2020, pp. 163–165). It is possible that the ruins of the local basilicas were so imposing that the rumour (later as narrative) of the seat of the archbishopric was formed. Modern research, however, concludes that Dioclea was not a metropolis, although such information appears in *the Dubrovnik chronicles*, and yet no contemporary and credible sources speak of it (Puljić 2001, pp. 35–36). Let us add that Bar itself is not mentioned in the records of the Synods of Split (925, also the Synod of the 1060s) – as we have said, in the 10th century it was still part of the Durrës Metropolis.

A significant ecclesiastical change in the Balkans occurred around 1020 – a large portion of the bishoprics was in fact removed from Durrës and placed under Ohrid (Stephenson 2003, pp. 118–120). At that time, Bar came under the jurisdiction of Dubrovnik as evidenced by a charter for the Archbishop of Dubrovnik from 1022. Dubrovnik itself earlier belonged to the metropolis of Split (attested in 925), but there is no precise date for the

¹⁰ Most of the bishoprics are in present-day Albania. Dioclea is not preserved in list no. 10 (the list seems to be damaged).

establishment of the diocese. Historians suggest that the bishop of nearby Epidaurus fled to Dubrovnik and thereby establishing the bishopric of Dubrovnik, probably in the 7th century, but the circumstances are not known in detail (Škegro, 2009, pp. 203–216; Kunčević, 2004, pp. 25–27).¹¹ However the Synod of Split in 925 left us with a surprising note – the Bishoprics Kotor and Dubrovnik shared a single seat (Rački, 1877, no. 149, p. 191: “De episcopis ragusitano et catharitano, quorum manifeste una sedes dignoscitur.”). Lovro Kunčević, who extensively analysed the origins of Dubrovnik, believes both cities claimed to be heir of Epidaurus, but Dubrovnik somehow proved credible continuity unlike Kotor (Kunčević, 2004, pp. 24–26). Although it seems that Kotor claimed former territory of the diocese of Epidaurus, there is no narrative preserved about Kotor and its relationship to Epidaurus after all (Medini, 1935, pp. 191–193). It seems that, both Dubrovnik and Epidaurus existed at the same time, and both might have had own bishop – similarly to Dioclea and Bar (Živković, 2008, pp. 176–177, 181).

We may add also, Thomas of Split is making a reference to Epidaurus – which seems to be related to the narrative in *Letopis* and to the narrative of *De administrando imperio*: Refugees from Rome destroying Epidaurus and later building Dubrovnik and even trying to obtain pallium from the Pope (Karbić, Matijević Sokol and Sweeney, 2006, pp. 46; Kowalski, 2021, p. 194). The mentioning of the pallium can be thus considered a clear reference for Dubrovnik’s ecclesiastical ambitions. As we can see, this multi-layered foundation myth of Dubrovnik attested in different sources was strongly tied also with the ecclesiastical development.

As we have already mentioned, all the Dalmatian bishoprics belonged to Split until the end of the 10th century. Turning again to Thomas of Split, he mentions in his chronicle that the bishops of Bar, Kotor, Ulcinj and Svač

¹¹ The question of ecclesiastical continuity and as well history of Dubrovnik is tangled and lacking solid sources. The whole situation is even more complicated by findings of ruins of the basilica in Dubrovnik, dated from the 6th to 9th century, possibly a seat of a bishop. For theory about transforming the bishopric from Dubrovnik to Kotor: Koščak, 1989, pp. 36–37; For analysis of narrative in *De administrando imperio*: see also Jenkins-Moravcsik, 2020, pp. 134–135; Jenkins, 2016, pp. 106–107; Katičić, 1988, pp. 5–38.

travelled to Split for a synod, but during the voyage they shipwrecked, and all the bishops drowned. Therefore, the inhabitants of the concerned towns begged the Pope to remove them from the Split metropolis. The Pope approved the change and granted the pallium for Bar (Karbić, Matijević Sokol and Sweeney, 2006, pp. 65–67). The chronicler does not say when exactly this happened, traditionally the event (according to the continuation of the previous chapter) took place during the reign of Peter Krešimir III (1000–1030) and Byzantine emperor Basileios II (976–1025), so around 1025–1030, when a certain Dabralis assumed the archiepiscopal chair in Split. However, the chronicler does not follow a strict chronological order, because in the following lines he speaks of the baptism of the first Hungarian king Stephen, probably in late 10th century (Karbić, Matijević Sokol and Sweeney, 2006, p. 73). That is why some historians date this event from 998 or even later to 1040–50 (Crnčević, 2013, pp. 94–95 – to 1030; Stephenson, 2004, p. 121 – c. 1025; Rački, 1877, p. 199 – to 1045–1060; Gyug 2016, p. 14 – to 990–1030).

However, the next metropolis in Dalmatia actually became Dubrovnik. This occurred during the pontificate of Pope Gregory V (996–999). Historians believe that the Pope wanted to do a favour for Bulgarian Tsar Samuel, who at that time ruled a large part of the Balkan peninsula, including Dubrovnik (Gál, 2020, p. 23). Sources confirm that Dubrovnik did indeed acquire metropolitan status at that time, and this is also confirmed *expressis verbis* by other popes, e.g., Benedict VIII in 1022 (Puljić, 2001, pp. 27–29, Krasić-Razzi, 1999, pp. 21–23). However, it is not clear whether the document from 1022, which still survives today, is original. It has been studied in detail by the Austrian historian Heinrich Schmidinger (1916–1992), who concluded that the extant version of the charter is likely not the original, but rather a carefully crafted copy, produced with the intention of closely imitating the original document. However, besides some interpolations, the list of suffragan bishoprics (albeit with names slightly changed) and almost the entire text of the charter was considered authentic and credible by Schmidinger (Schmidinger, 1950, p. 47). We can conclude

that this charter can be original or at worst a purported original – partly interpolated. In this charter the pope grants the pallium to Vitalis “archiepiscopo sancte Epitabritane ecclesiae e civitate Labusedi”, and with the suffragan bishoprics of Serbia, Tribunia, Bar, Kotor, and Ulcinj (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 60, pp. 16–17). We assume, therefore, that the sinking of the ship with the bishops on the way to Split must have happened before 999, because from then on Kotor, Bar, Ulcinj and Svač were subordinated to Dubrovnik.¹² However, in this papal letter we also see an attempt to link it to the old bishopric of Epidaurus, which probably disappeared in the 7th or 8th century. It is difficult to tell if someone from Dubrovnik implemented this tradition of continuity (“translatio sedis”) in the papal chancellery or replaced the title from the original charter to claim the continuity. However, Epidaurus was not a metropolis. In fact, Dubrovnik fabricated a narrative of being the successor or heir of the local non-existent metropolis, and for this purpose they also presented to Pope Calixtus II in 1120 a forged bull of Pope Zacharias from 743, in which he grants the pallium to Andrew, the archbishop of Epidaurus (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 50, pp. 11–12). This was undoubtedly an effort to prevail over Bar and a claim to be the sole metropolis and most ancient in the south of Dalmatia (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 82, p. 28).¹³ If the bull of 743 had so far existed, Dubrovnik would undoubtedly have been operating with it in the 10th century (or later), e.g., during the Synods of Split. Dubrovnik itself tried in various ways to emphasize its ancient heritage and continuity (like Bar did) and was even not fearful about forging papal documents.

In any case, as has been said, the establishment of the Dubrovnik metropolis coincided with other ecclesiastical changes in the Balkans at that time. Shortly before the defeat of the Bulgarian Empire (1018), the Byzantine Emperor Basileios II seems to have significantly strengthened the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Durrës and, according to the British historian Paul Stephenson, added eleven more bishoprics under the

¹² Theoretically, the chronicler could have mistaken the time or other bishops.

¹³ Preserved as copy dated to the 12th century but before 1120, when this bull is mentioned by Calixtus II, although it may also be a forgery created or partially interpolated in Dubrovnik.

jurisdiction of Durrës, but this arrangement was short-lived. Basileios II thus apparently wanted to strengthen the ecclesiastical presence of Byzantium in the Adriatic region (Stephenson, 2004, pp. 70, 74–75). After the collapse of the Bulgarian Empire, however, another change took place. In 1020, the Byzantine Emperor demoted the Bulgarian patriarch in Ohrid to the level of metropolitan archbishop but granted him a vast territory and several dioceses. As already mentioned, these were also bishoprics that had previously been subordinate to Durrës. Unfortunately, today we cannot say how these changes affected the South Dalmatian bishoprics such as Bar or Kotor. Since we do not have the charter of Gregory V, we do not know whether Bar and Kotor belonged to the Dubrovnik metropolis at that time or before 1022.

3. DUBROVNIK, DIOCLEA AND BAR – ALLEGED CONTINUITY

In the case of Bosnia, we have sadly no sources regarding the above-mentioned ecclesiastical changes. The very first mention of the Bosnian bishopric is a charter of Pope Alexander II of 18 March 1067, granting a pallium to Peter, archbishop of Dioclea and confirming his jurisdiction over the bishoprics of Bar, Kotor, Ulcinj, Svač, Drivast, Pulat, Serbia, Bosnia, Travunija as well as over Greek, Latin, and Slavic monasteries (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 63, pp. 17–19; Kukuljević-Sakcinski, 1874, no. 147, pp. 126–128 – dated to 1062–1067). At this point, however, it is also necessary to examine the authenticity of the charter, although it has already been dealt with by several historians (Dusa, 1991, p. 58; Gál, 2020, p. 24).¹⁴ Its text was preserved only in a later 16th-century copy. This letter is considered a forgery and could have been primarily related to the territorial ambitions of the Archbishopric of Bar towards its rival Dubrovnik. However, Bar claimed to be the heir to the ancient metropolis of Dioclea by using the title of “*Archiepiscopus Dioclensis*” (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913,

¹⁴ Both authors erroneously mentioning Dubrovnik (Ragusa) as a recipient of pallium, but in the bull there is no mention about Dubrovnik at all.

no. 63, pp. 17–19, no. 68, pp. 21–22).¹⁵ There is also a surprising continuity between Dioclea and Dubrovnik mentioned by *Dubrovnik chroniclers* – Nicolo Ragnina (1494–1582) and also Giunio Resti (1669–1735) probably based on older sources, speaking of a charter of Pope Benedict VII of 981/982, by which the Pope restored the metropolitan rights of Epidaurus to Dubrovnik, while confirming Archbishop John of Dioclea as archbishop of Dubrovnik (Nodilo, 1893, p. 30; Nodilo 1883, p. 202). Some historians consider this charter to be a *deperditum* (Zimmermann, 1998, no. 596, p.184; Gyug 2016, pp. 13–14), while it may be only a fabrication from the Dubrovnik ecclesiastical milieu. However, it is mentioned that the Archbishop of Dioclea had to flee to Dubrovnik at the end of the 10th century because of the Bulgarians. Allegedly, Archbishop John stayed in Dubrovnik for 28 years as the local Metropolitan, and this change was also approved by Pope Benedict VII (974–983) (for analysis of this narrative see Živković, 2008, p. 235). The pallium remained with him, making him *de jure* and *de facto* the first archbishop of Dubrovnik. However, modern research has revealed that ancient Dioclea was not a metropolitan archbishopric – there are no medieval sources confirming this (Puljić, 2001, pp. 35–36, see Peričić, 1991, pp. 58–60 or Marković, 2014, pp. 46–54). The alleged charter of Benedict VII thus combines two “traditions” (of Epidaurus and of Dioclea) and creates a dual narrative for the Dubrovnik archbishopric. Some of the chronicles also mentioned certain John as Archbishop of Epidaurus, which could be linked to the same narrative of the archbishop (or the bishop?) who fled to Dubrovnik (Puljić, 2001, p. 23, 38; Nodilo, 1883, p. 175).¹⁶

The text of Benedict VII’s charter has not survived – not even partially – nor is it mentioned in any other charters, and above all, if such a charter had existed, the prelates of Dubrovnik would have used it to their advantage. Today it is not possible to say when (or under what circumstances)

¹⁵ They used in the same fashion as the archbishops of Split were using title of Salona. “Dioclenensis ecclesia” is mentioned in both of the Bulls of 1067 and 1089. At least one of them could be considered as a forgery made in Bar during the 12th century.

¹⁶ The Annals of Dubrovnik connects the narrative of John of Epidaurus to (fictional) king of Bosnia from Dioclean dynasty.

the reference to the charter of Benedict VII was made. It is possible that it was only in the High or Late Middle Ages; the *terminus post quem* could perhaps be the early 14th century.¹⁷ Otherwise there would have been the opportunity for Dubrovnik to use this charter (or its copy at least) in the disputes with Bar. We presume this story might be at least partially true, but instead of on archbishop it might have been a bishop (or canons?) who fled from Dioclea to Dubrovnik, or this tradition could have been at some point confused with “*translatio sedis*” from Epidaurus to Dubrovnik (Puljić, 2001, pp. 36–37).

Nor is it inconceivable that Bar, thanks to the false narrative of the old metropolis, saw itself as the only legitimate archbishopric in the South Dalmatian area (Crnčević, 2013, p. 95). Either way, it is assumed that the bull of 1067 was “produced” by someone in Bar and subsequently brought to Rome in 1089. The antipope Clement III confirmed to Peter, the archbishop of Dioclea-Bar, the possession of the pallium and his jurisdiction over the aforementioned bishoprics, including Kotor and Bosnia (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 68, p. 21). Eduard Peričić claimed that the inhabitants of Bar thus acquired the status of an archbishopric in 1089 (Peričić, 1991, pp. 65–66; Šišić, 2022, pp. 79–80). However, we can presume that at this time there was not yet a bishopric in Bosnia. In our opinion, both charters were created for the purpose of the territorial ambitions of the Dukljan Kingdom of Serbs, especially at the end of the 11th century (or the beginning of the 12th century), i.e., at the time of the greatest possible territorial expansion, which might have included Bosnia. The places in the charter might not necessarily mean existing bishoprics mentioned in the two charters (1067, 1089), but this of course does not exclude a basic ecclesiastical organization in the given localities. We know several similar cases. The bishops of Salzburg or Passau tried to claim Moravia or Pannonia in this way in both the 9th and 10th centuries, and this is apparently also the case with the diocese of Prague under St. Adalbert during the reign of Boleslaus

¹⁷ In the 13th century when the Dubrovnik-Bar dispute flared up, Dubrovnik would certainly have used this charter.

II or the possible efforts of Bishop Jaromír of Prague at the end of the 11th century claiming territories without sees or to put in other words – they claimed different areas into their own dioceses.¹⁸

4. RISE OF DUKLJA

In the last quarter of the 11th century, however, another interesting event occurred. In Dubrovnik, in the 1070s, a certain Vitalis (II) was archbishop, but he lived very capriciously,¹⁹ the sources mention a “pubblico concubinario” (Nodilo, 1893, pp. 42–43) and despite numerous letters from the Pope, he was unwilling to listen to his admonitions (Cowdrey, 1998, p. 440; Antoljak, 1968, p. 190; Prlender, 2009, pp. 5–8).²⁰ Croatian historian Ivica Prlender believes that Vitalis (II.) resisted accepting the changes introduced by the reformist papacy and that he even encouraged the use of Glagolitic (Prlender, 2009, p. 5). The people of Dubrovnik therefore decided to imprison the archbishop and elect another. The Pope heard about this and sent a legate to Dalmatia. In his letter of 20 March 1074, he harshly admonished the people of Dubrovnik for this action and demanded the release of the archbishop.²¹ According to *the Dubrovnik chronicles*, Vitalis had already been excommunicated by Pope Alexander II (1061–1073), but he continued to use the episcopal insignia (Nodilo, 1893, p. 43). Another letter

¹⁸ For the highly complex situation of the Prague bishopric and its foundation charter from 1086 see: Reitinger, 2017, pp. 92–99; Sobieska, 2014, pp. 82–83; For the ambition of Passau and Salzburg in Moravia and Pannonia see: Večerka – Bartoňková, 2011, no. 122, pp. 218–223; pp. 253–283 (*Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum*).

¹⁹ There are some opinions saying Dubrovnik was not an archbishopric during 1040–1050s, see Krašić-Razzi, 1999, p. 27 – based on few mentions of Vitalis just as a “bishop of Dubrovnik”.

²⁰ According to Resti (Nodilo, 1893, p. 43), this archbishop was excommunicated by the legate of pope Alexander II. It could be also possible that the same legate (with consent of clergy and people of Dubrovnik?) appointed Peter of Bar as archbishop in Dubrovnik. The legate – Gerard of Siponto was also mentioned during the Council of Split in 1075. See also Karbić, Matijević Sokol and Sweetney, 2006, pp. 86–87.

²¹ Resti does mention certain Peter, but without any more information: Nodilo, 1893, p. 43: “...venne alla creazione del nuovo arcivescovo che fu Pietro, successor di detto Vitale, con la dignità dell pallio e con la supposizione dei suffraganei tre regni circonvicini.”, for the letter of 1074 preserved in the register of Gregory VII see: Kostrenčić, 1967, no. 101, p. 134.

of Gregory VII (21 May 1076) already speaks of the granting of pallium to Archbishop Peter of Dubrovnik and places the dioceses of Zachlumie, Serbia, Travunija, Kotor, Bar, Ulcinj, Drivast, Pilot, and Skadar under him; Bosnia is not mentioned here (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 65, p. 20). It has been speculated that the spiritual administration in Dubrovnik was entrusted by the Pope to Peter, Archbishop or Bishop of Bar, although theoretically this may be a coincidence of names. This hypothesis was firstly proposed by by Franjo Rački (1828–1894), (Antoljak, 1968, p. 190; Rački, 1873, pp. 75–76). However, Peter with a “double” title (“*Petrus Antibarensem episcopum atque Ragusanum*”) appears in the letter of Gregory VII of 9 January 1078, which was addressed to King Michael of Dioclea (“*Regi Sclavorum*”). This very well-known letter suggests that there was some kind of dispute between the metropolises of Dubrovnik and Split, although we do not know its nature (perhaps jurisdictional). There could be at least one plausible explanation – it was jurisdictional dispute over Kotor, as Marko Draganović presumed in the past (see in Sforza, 1975, p. 15).²²

At the same time, Michael also asked the Pope to settle this dispute and the Pope Gregory called him “*karissimus filius beati Petri*” which may testify to a special relationship between the king and the Pope.²³ This letter confused many historians because of that double title which does not at all indicate which of cities (if one of them at all) was the see of metropolitan archbishopric (Marković, 2014, pp. 85–86; Gruber, 2014, pp. 345–349; Gyug, 2016, p. 25). The ecclesiastical unification of Dubrovnik and Bar probably really took place around 1074 or 1078, but we lack further evidence how this dual administration even functioned. However, it also remains unclear what Dubrovnik could have gained in offering the position of their archbishop to Peter of Bar (see also Gruber, 2014, p. 346).²⁴

²² According to Draganović, Kotor did not want to belong to the archdiocese of Dubrovnik and rather decided for Split, but this plan was not successful, so Bari seems to be an ideal metropolitan.

²³ This specific honorific title is not found anywhere else, although the title “*filius carissimus*” appeared also in letter addressed to Svatopluk of Moravia in letter of pope Stephen V. See: Betti, 2013, p. 186.

²⁴ For the argumentation see note above – Gruber, 2014, especially p. 346.

In any case, there is a charter of Pope Paschal II from 1102 in which he granted the pallium to Archbishop Dominic of Dubrovnik and placed the bishoprics of Zahlumie, Serbia, Tribunia, Kotor, Budva, Ulcinj, Skadar, Drivast, and Pilot under his authority (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 77, pp. 25–26). *The Dubrovnik chroniclers* do not mention Peter of Bar, and yet chronicler Giacomo Luccari does mention him by 1078 in a list of Dubrovnik archbishops.²⁵ The aforementioned bulls of 1067 and 1089 fit the context of this case – an ambition of Bar to obtain metropolitan rights in any possible way even forging the narratives and papal letters. We must also stress that the list of the bishoprics subjugated to Bar (in the bulls of 1067 and 1089), is the same as the list in the *Letopis*.²⁶ Although it is not possible to tell, whether the *Letopis* (? Glagolitic original) took the information from these forgeries or vice versa.

It is undoubtedly evident that Dubrovnik was a metropolitan archbishopric in the 1070s, and there were already attempts of the bishopric of Bar to obtain the pallium and likely also ecclesiastical-jurisdictional supremacy over Dubrovnik at some point. According to historians, this was King Michael of Duklja's way of ensuring that his kingdom had its own archbishopric (Mitrović, 2017, pp. 52–54; Prlender, 2009, pp. 4–9; Komatina, 2016, pp. 137–139). The question remains as to how this plan was to be implemented and which of the documents can be considered authentic and credible. In any case, the charter of Gregory VII of 1078 (preserved in the Vatican Register), which mentions Peter as bishop of both Bar and Dubrovnik, can be considered authentic. The Pope still speaks here of a potential grant of

²⁵ Luccari, 1790, p. 289: “1078 Pietro translato da Antivari” Although this information (only as note written in the list of Archbishops of Dubrovnik) could have been taken from the charter of 1078. Peter is actually missing in the first edition of the book: Luccari, 1605, p. 176; Resti mentioned Peter as archbishop of Bari in 1088 during the political turmoil in Dioclea, but without additional information if he also took the see of Dubrovnik. Nodilo, 1893, p. 44.

²⁶ Chapter IX of the *Letopis* is specifically emphasizing which suffragans were under the archbishop of Dioclea by decision of King Svatopluk – see: Živković, 2009, pp. 56: “Antibarium, Buduam, Decaterum, Dulcinum, Suacium, Scodram, Drevastum, Polletum, Sorbeum, Bosonium, Tribunium, Zaculum”; for the bishoprics in the bull of 1067: Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 63, p. 17: “Antibarensem, Ecaterensem, Palachiensem, Suatinensem, Drivastinensem, Polatinensem, Serbiensem, Bosoniensem, Tribuniensem ecclesiam”.

pallium. The 1076 charter must be regarded as obviously spurious in this respect. We assume that Peter of Bar really received the pallium only in 1089, by which time he may have administered both bishoprics, or been represented in one of them by a vicar or suffragan bishop at least. However, the 1089 charter does not in any way mention Dubrovnik – was it already administered by another archbishop at that time? That remains unclear.

5. KOTOR AS SUFFRAGAN OF BARI

However, the whole case is greatly complicated by the 11th and 12th century letters addressed to the archbishops of Bari, to whom the Popes also subordinated the bishopric of Kotor. The bishopric appears in several letters addressed to the archbishops of Bari or Dubrovnik simultaneously. Kotor is also mentioned in the letters to the archbishop of Bari, where the bishop of Kotor figures as his suffragan. It is attested in the charter of Pope John XIX from 1025, although the charter is considered a forgery (Nitto de Rossi, 1897, no.13, p. 21; see also Gyug, 2016, p. 26, note 72). In addition to this, there exists a charter of Alexander II of 1063 of a similar character, the charter being preserved in the original (Nitto de Rossi, 1897, no. 25, pp. 42–43, no. 33, pp. 61–63 (here the charter of Urban II, 1089 of similar content as well). In any case, it proves the existing status quo about the relationship of Kotor to Bari, although it is impossible to answer under what circumstances or for what reasons the bishop of Kotor decided to belong to Bari. It remains plausible that the phenomenon is linked to the Byzantine administrative presence on both shores of the Adriatic, which was effectively terminated in Apulia following the Norman conquest of Bari in 1071. Krasić thinks Kotor was unwilling to accept the ecclesiastical transformations in Dalmatia and the turn of 10th and 11th centuries and did not accept Dubrovnik as its metropolitan archdiocese, therefore opted for Bari (Krasić – Razzi, 1999, pp. 26–27).

In 1172 Pope Alexander III issued a charter definitively confirming that Kotor belonged to Bari. The charter speaks of a dispute between the former archbishop of Bari and the current archbishop of Dubrovnik precisely

because of Kotor (Nitto de Rossi, 1897, no. 52, pp. 99–101). Giorgio Fedalto believed that the papal office had contaminated (if by a mistake or with an intent it is hard to say) the Bar-Dubrovnik dispute in this document (Gyug, 2016, pp. 27–30; Fedalto, 1976, pp. 78–79). However, we can easily clarify the whole case – there are documents from 1167, about the bishops of Svač, Bar, Drivast and others who disobeyed his metropolitan in Dubrovnik (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 95, p. 32, no. 96, p. 32).²⁷ In our opinion, Kotor at that time rightfully claimed to be the suffragan of the Archbishop of Bari, and it is possible that the latter subsequently conducted the whole dispute with Dubrovnik, which is mentioned in the charter of 1172. There might have also been a Bari-Dubrovnik correspondence, but this has not survived. Letter of 1172 seemed to solve the ecclesiastical situation of Kotor, on other hand not the political one – Stefan Nemanja, grand župan of Serbia, took control of the city in 1186 and soon it was Norman kings of Sicily, although their influence might have been temporary or ephemeral.²⁸

6. BOSNIAN BISHOPRIC – BETWEEN BAR AND DUBROVNIK

But let us return to Bosnia – another focal point of this lengthy dispute. The documents of 1067 and 1089, however, do not provide any details, nor do they mention the names of the bishops of Bosnia. Thus, from the available sources, we do not know who founded the bishopric and when exactly it was established, and finally whether the two papal charters are indicative and whether they are not purely territorial projections of the Archdiocese of Bar-Diočlea as well of the Kingdom of Duklja itself. Hungarian medievalists Judit Gál and Bálint Ternóvacz believe that the bishopric had no structures and was neither Western nor of Eastern rite (Gál, 2020, pp. 29–30; Ternóvacz, 2016, pp. 217–218). However, this conjecture

²⁷ We can assume this might be also the case of bishop of Kotor. According to Resti, the Archbishop of Dubrovnik excommunicated bishop of Kotor: Nodilo, 1893, p. 52. See also letter of pope Anastasius IV from 1153 deposing the bishops of Ulcinj and Drivast and also proclaiming interdict on Kotor and excommunicating the local count: Gyug, 2016, p. 28.

²⁸ For a complex overview of Norman presence in Dalmatia: Abulafia, 1976, pp. 412–428; Curta, 2019, p. 660; For Stefan Nemanja see also: Papović, 2024, pp. 443–445.

cannot be supported by any source. It is, of course, also questionable whether the documents of 1067 and 1089 really prove the existence of a Bosnian bishopric. Since the document of 1067 is viewed as spurious and the bull of 1089 was issued by an antipope and preserved in a later copy. All the chronicler's references regarding Bosnia are of later origin, and the next authentic mention of the Bosnian bishopric dates to the end of the 12th or beginning of the 13th century. The charter of 1089, as has been said, was created based on a falsity – namely, because of political projections and ambitions of both the Archbishopric of Bar-Dioclea and the kingdom and by local dynasty. There was also a theory of founding the bishopric of Bosnia by Peter Krešimir IV, King of Croatia and Dalmatia, but there is no solid evidence (Džino, 2023, pp. 196–197).

The mention of “*Bosoniensem ecclesiam*” could only refer to the territory directly under the jurisdiction of the archbishop, where there was not necessarily a bishopric, or it could have been the institution of an archpresbyterate or other ecclesiastical body, which we know, for example, from Pannonia in the 9th century or in the Kingdom of Hungary in the 11th century.²⁹ A similar situation may have existed with the bishopric *Serbia*, which was also subordinate to Bar, but it is not clear whether this was a later (Orthodox) bishopric in Ras (Raška) from which the Serbian autocephalous archbishopric emerged (Vlasto, 1970, p. 212; Komatina, 2016, p. 104, 154). As has been said, we do not know the origin of the Bosnian bishopric, and even on the basis of the source base it is not possible to give a definite solution. With high probability we could see Dubrovnik behind the emergence of ecclesiastical institutions in Bosnia, as it follows from strong mutual political, commercial and, finally, direct ecclesiastical ties attested later in the 12th century. It is possible that the Dubrovnik metropolitans might have consecrated bishops in Bosnia arbitrarily (*ad hoc*) in the middle of the 12th century – for the purpose of Christianizing the local population and perhaps without any approval from Rome. It is surprising,

²⁹ That is the institute of archipresbyter (archpriest) as central priest for certain castle or area. This institution is attested in Pannonia around 860 and also in Hungary in the 11th century. For Pannonia see: Večerka and Bartoňková, 2011, p. 279 (Conversio); For Hungary: Pomfýová, 2015, pp. 71–72.

however, how Dubrovnik's traditions were firmly tied and tangled to Bosnia. Zdenka Janeković Römer has pointed this out when examining the development of the Dubrovnik nobility (Janeković Römer, 2015, pp. 74–77). Also, the very legend of the founding of Dubrovnik is closely intertwined with the *Letopis*, parts of which seem to have found their way into the *Annals of Dubrovnik*. Specifically, they say that Dubrovnik was founded by Pavlimir Belo of the Dukljan-Bosnian dynasty with the help of the Romans and refugees from Epidaurus (Kowalski, 2021, pp. 179–249). *Letopis* perceived the same Pavlimir as a member and heir of the Dukljan dynasty, but on the other hand *Annals of Dubrovnik* perceived him as King of Bosnia (Kowalski, 2021, pp. 219–223). After all, this tradition (or memory) could have served later as one of the pillars in relations between Bosnia and Dubrovnik. We can also mention the case of the Dubrovnik noble family of Goze (also known as Pecorario), from which Archbishop Vitalis I (in office 1022 – approximately 1047) was said to be of Bosnian origin (Janeković Römer, 2015, pp. 74, 78–79).

We have further reports about Bosnia from the 1130s and 1140s, although it is very likely that Koloman, King of Hungary (1095–1116) at the end of the 11th or beginning of 12th century, already intended to dominate this area in a connection with the territorial expansion of Hungary towards Croatia and Dalmatia. This assumption would be partially supported by Koloman's charter of 1103, preserved in a copy from 1367 (Smičiklas, 1904, no. 7, pp. 10–11; as falsum in Györffy, 1992, no. 120/II, pp. 338–339). In this charter, Koloman confirmed the possessions of the Split archbishopric, which had already donated by the previous kings of Croatia and Dalmatia (see also Ladić and Budeč, 2009, p. 12.) Diplomatic criticism, however, revealed the charter of Koloman to be a forgery, according to our opinion it was interpolated. Koloman's intitulation is undoubtedly interesting, specifically speaking of the title “Rex Rame”. Rama in this case was supposed to represent Bosnia, which appears in this form more regularly among the titles of Hungarian kings from the 1130s or 1140s onwards. Koloman's charter itself was probably produced around 1165–1170 at a politically tense time when Dalmatia was retaken by Byzantine emperor Manuel Komnenos.

The charter was probably produced by someone in the Split ecclesiastical milieu (either in the chapter itself or in one of monasteries in Split) to strengthen Hungarian position in Dalmatia and Bosnia. At this time, the archbishopric of Split had to compete with the territorial claims of the Dalmatian magnate Kačić family. The abovementioned charter granted the archbishop the territories claimed also by Nikola Kačić, Prince of Omiš. This dispute eventually resulted in the violent death of Archbishop Rainer of Split in 1180 by Kačići. (Karbić, Matijević Sokol and Sweeney, 2006, pp. 119–129; for the context Ladić and Budeč, 2009, pp. 12–14). Koloman's charter is thus thought to have projected the extent of the St. Stephen's realm as well. Thus, there must have been anti-Byzantine circles in Split, and the charter was intended to defend Koloman's territorial gains and their pertinence to the Crown of St. Stephen. The 1160s also appears as the time when Árpáadian kings wanted to fortify their position by certain privileges to the Church and cities of Dalmatia, we can highlight also the charter of King Stephen III of Hungary in 1163 issued for the Church of Split with certain "Cotroman" as witness, although with uncertain relations to ban Kulin or Kotromanići and at the same time nominating Hungarians as bishops in Dalmatia (Smičiklas, 1904, no. 93, pp. 96–97; see Gál, 2020, p. 60 – although mistakenly stating that the charter was issued in Dalmatia, in reality it was in Titel; for Cotroman see: Filipović, 2022, pp. 87–88).

In any case, the next document concerning Bosnia dates from 1136. At that time, King Béla II of Hungary entrusted his son Ladislav with the Bosnian duchy (Smičiklas, 1904, no. 45, pp. 46–47). It is likely that Hungary was already more firmly established in the Bosnian area, otherwise the ruler would hardly have granted the duchy. The Serbian historian Tibor Živković has suggested that the Árpád family acquired only the county of Rama as dowry (specifically Béla II by marriage to the Serbian duchess Helena of the Vukanović dynasty), and that their title "Rex Ramae" only covered the county, located in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina (Živković, 2008, pp. 269–270). Interesting in this case is Daniele Farlati's remark that it was Béla II who converted Bosnia to the Catholic faith and to the Apostolic See. He also writes that the first bishop was a certain Vladislav, and at that time

he was the suffragan of Dubrovnik, according to a charter of Pope Innocent II, dated 1141, which was kept in the monastery of Our Lady of Dubrovnik (St. Maria in Castello). Other suffragans were the bishops of Budva, Kotor, Ulcinj, Svač, Skadar, Drač, Drivast, Pilot, Serbia, Travunija and Hum (Farlati, 1779, p.43). Similar data are presented by Mauro Orbini in his *Il regno de gli Slavi* (Orbini, 1601, p. 247). We are not primarily familiar with this source he mentioned, but we have another document of Pope Innocent II (June 11, 1142) confirming the pallium and privileges for Andrew, archbishop of Dubrovnik. The suffragan bishoprics differ this time. Neither Drač, Svač nor Bosnia is mentioned in the charter of 1142, preserved as original (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 84, pp. 28–29). We can presume, there was some kind of tradition of extensive jurisdiction of Dubrovnik. Finally, it is very questionable whether the information of later authors is sufficiently reliable. Bosnia is not mentioned in any other papal documents until 1187 (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 103, p.34). Farlati however, states that the Bosnian bishop Vladislav was based in Kreševo, which is also very questionable information. The Dubrovnik chronicler Nicolo Ragnina also writes about the fact that Bosnia was a suffragan bishopric of Dubrovnik at this time. According to the chronicler, the Archbishop of Dubrovnik received as many as thirteen bishoprics under his jurisdiction from the Pope including Bar. He also writes that Andrew was archbishop for seventeen years (from 1141), which seems to be in concordance with other sources (Nodilo, 1883, p. 214; Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 91, pp. 30–31).

It seems that in the 1140s and 1150s, there was a greater penetration of Hungary into the Bosnian territory. Indeed, we have information about the Bosnian Ban Borić (with the possessions in Slavonia), who was apparently in a semi-autonomous position to Hungary (Font, 2021, p. 145).³⁰ He even attacked Dubrovnik according to Orbini (Luccari, 1790, p. 34; Orbini, 1601, p. 347). This ban was also the first to endow the Knights Templar in Hungary, apparently in the early 1160s (Dobronić, 2002, pp. 28–29). The Bosnian bishop Milovan is also mentioned on the conflict with Dubrovnik

³⁰ M. Font mistook Borić with Boris, son of Coloman and states that the banate of Bosnia existed only from the second half of 13th century. See also Karbić, 2005, pp. 49–51.

in 1153 (Luccari, 1790, p. 34; see also Stephenson, 2004, p. 227). A bishop named Micovan (sic!) is also mentioned by Farlati, who mentions an obscure conflict between the bishop and the Metropolitan of Dubrovnik (Farlati, 1779, p. 41). More information is provided by Guinio Resti, who says that the bishop was disobedient, trying to break out of the metropolis and keep the people in schism or possibly in heresy (Nodilo, 1893, p. 53). The disputes in question probably broke out after the installation of the new archbishop in 1158 (Tribunus Micheli). However, as has been said, the papal documents of these times do not mention the Bosnian bishop. Orbini says that the Bosnian Ban attacked Dubrovnik because of a dispute between the Bosnian bishop and his metropolitan (Orbini, 1601, p. 347). We do not know how the situation developed further, we assume that the Bosnian bishopric still existed, but we have no news about the bishops. As has been said, there is no mention of it in the numerous papal documents preserved from the 1150s to the 1170s.

During this period, however, the most bitter dispute raged between the metropolises of Bar and Dubrovnik. There might be of course political ambitions clothed as ecclesiastical disputes. It is probable that both metropolises wanted to bring as many suffragan bishoprics in the area as possible under their control. Several popes confirmed the rights of the Dubrovnik archbishopric (1102, 1120, 1153, 1158), but there is also the text of an undated charter from Pope Calixtus II (1119–1124), in which he grants the pallium to Elias, the archbishop of Dioclea, and places the bishoprics of Dioclea, Bar, Budva, Kotor, Ulcinj, Svač, Skadar, Drivast, Pilot, Serbia, Bosnia and Travunija under his authority (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 81, p. 27). The summary of the bishoprics is notably extensive. The text of the charter is preserved, much damaged, in Codex 7109 in the Vatican Library. The Hungarian medievalist Judit Gál, in dealing with Hungarian influence in Dalmatia, has also taken note of this protracted dispute between Bar and Dubrovnik. Gál says that Bar received the pallium in 1089, but for the 1067 charter she erroneously attributes that the pallium was granted for Dubrovnik (also in Dusa, 1991, p. 58; Gál, 2020, p. 24). The situation is even

more complicated by another charter following soon – the letter of pope Calixtus II granting pallium to Gerard, the archbishop of Dubrovnik dated in 1120, which seems to be preserved as an original document (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 82, p. 28).

The most intense phase of conflict between Bar and Dubrovnik seems to have taken place in the middle of the 12th century. According to Eduard Peričić, Archbishop Elias of Bar protested strongly in Rome and the Pope indeed granted him the pallium around 1120 (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 81, p. 27; Peričić, 1991, p. 68; see also Gál, 2020, p. 26). We can only guess if this happened at all, since there are no solid sources. It seems that Dubrovnik's authority over Bar was restored again after 1142, possibly due to political turbulences in Duklja or the death of Elias of Bar (see again Peričić, 1991, p. 68 also see Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 77, p. 26 – “Avarorum” here might stand for Bar). We already mentioned Andrew of Dubrovnik receiving the pallium in 1142. He remained in office until 1157 and with Tribunus Micheli of Venetian origin succeeding him. Tribunus obviously had ambitions to restore or even to expand the archdiocese by subjugating several bishoprics belonging to the metropolitan of Durrës – like Skadar and Albania (Arbania) or even Durrës, all sanctioned by the popes – during a time of mutual distrust between papacy and Byzantium (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 95, p. 32, no. 97, p. 32, no. 98, p. 32–33). However, many of the suffragan bishops disobeyed the archbishop of Dubrovnik, as it attested by several papal letters to them even mentioning the punishment of excommunication. It was the case of the bishops of Drivast, Ulcinj, Bar and Kotor (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 88, p. 29–30). Bar, we can assume, naturally claimed metropolitan rights in Southern Dalmatia and Kotor on the other hand defended itself as suffragan diocese of Bari (Nitto de Rossi, no. 52, pp. 99–100).³¹ Sadly, we do not have enough sources referring to the outcomes of these arguments. It seems Bar spent some decades as a mere diocese under the jurisdiction of Dubrovnik.

³¹ According to the letter 1172 of pope Alexander III: “super episcopate Chatarino ultra mare in Dalmatie maritimis ... cognovimus antecessorum tuum eiusdem episcopatus possessionem ... tibi et eidem ecclesiae tue auctoritate apostolica confirmamus...”

The situation probably changed in the 1170s, with a certain Gregory as bishop and later as archbishop of Bar. Not much is known about his origin. Farlati stated (although without mentioning a specific source) he came from Zadar noble family of Grisogono (Farlati, 1817, p. 123). We know Gregory cooperated with Rainer of Split, probably counting also on Rainer's good relations with the papacy, which proved to be fruitful (Majnarić, 2008, pp. 84–85). Gregory even stressed in one of his letters that Dalmatia was always divided into two archbishoprics – Salona as primate, “the mother” and Bar as “daughter” (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 99, p. 33).³² According to research done by Ivan Majnarić, it seems Gregory was installed as Archbishop of Bar at the Council of Split in 1177 by decision of Pope Alexander III (Majnarić, 2008, pp. 85–86). We do not know the extent of the archdiocese of Bar at that time or which suffragans were subjugated to Bar – if after all was Gregory a metropolitan archbishop. He appeared then with the title “Antibarensis archiepiscopus” in two charters from the end of the 12th century. First charter is a judgement dated July 9, 1194, made by the archbishop of Split in dispute between Templars and Monastery of St. Cosma and Damian in Rogovo. Gregory is mentioned among “testes... venerabili viri” (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 109, p. 36; Smičiklas, 1904, no. 253, pp. 268–270). Another source is his last will, without date, but often dated approx. 1195–1197, written at Zadar monastery of Saint Chrysogonus (Sveti Krševan) (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 110, p. 36; Smičiklas, 1904, no. 265, pp. 282). There is a strong presumption, Gregory was of Dalmatian origin. He needed to leave his see before 1189 because of the expansion by Stefan Nemanja and his strong support for the Orthodox church.³³ The position of the Latin church changed with Vukan Nemanjić ruling as King of Duklja advocating for the restoration of the archbishopric of Bar

³² “nam Salonitanam ecclesiam primatum in tota Dalmatie provincia et ecclesie sue matricem fuisse non ignorat...”

³³ Gregory needed to leave Bar because of the aggressive policy of Stefan Nemanja, firstly fled to Dubrovnik then to Zadar. In Dubrovnik he is attested as witness in the charter (August 20, 1189) of Desislava, the wife of prince Mihailo of Dioclea. Sirotković and Kolanović, 1998, no. 13, pp. 53–54; Gál, 2020, pp. 26–27.

in 1199.³⁴ The activity of Gregory led many historians to believe that he is the author of *Letopis* or at least he translated it from the Glagolitic/Cyrillic original to Latin (Peričić, 1991, pp. 133–134). Emphasizing the dichotomy of Salona-Dioclea (Split-Bar) and his struggle for an independent church of Bar make him probable enough, but there is no solid evidence for the definitive solution.

7. SLAVIC LITURGY IN BOSNIA AND THE QUESTION OF HERESY

As has been said above, the spurious charters of 1067 and 1089 made the Bosnian bishopric subject to the Bar metropolis. In addition to the charters, *Letopis of Priest of Dioclea*, which dates probably from the 1170s, also speaks of this ecclesiastical connection between Bosnia and Bar (counting Bosnia as one the bishoprics subjugated to Bar). The chronicle was apparently written (also using older sources) to highlight the antiquity of the Dukljan archbishopric (Bar in this case) and the Dukljan dynasty, which, among other things, founded Dubrovnik. The chronicle even uses Svatopluk, ruler of Great Moravia (†894) to emphasize that it was he who founded the Archbishopric of Duklja (Dioclea).³⁵ This work thus primarily projects the political and ecclesiastical ambitions of the Dukljan state and

³⁴ Stefan Nemanja seems to be even intervening in the dynastic situation in Duklja because of his family ties to the prince Mihailo (Michael) II of Dioclea. According to Sima Ćirković, Mihailo was the nephew of Nemanja. There is an undated letter (aprox. 1180) of Gregory of Bar to Gualter, cannon of Split saying about the threats made by Stefan Nemanja to the Church of Bar and to Mihailo himself was troubled by him. Kukuljević-Sakcinski, 1876, no. 159, p. 115; Strangely enough one sentence with the phrase “ab avunculis molestatus” was omitted by Smičiklas, 1904, no. 169, p. 170. For relations between Stefan Nemanja and Mihailo see: Ćirković, 2004, pp. 31–32; Živković, 2008, pp. 319–321. Vukan Nemanjić – around 1199 petitioned for granting the pallium for new the archbishop of Bar (John), which was successful. See Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 115, p. 38.

³⁵ The literary potency of Svatopluk of Moravia has been pointed out by and analysed recently by: Kowalski, 2021, 108–178; and also, by Slovak medievist Homza, 2014; Homza, 2024, pp. 127–150 or in the past by Havlík, 1976; Havlík, 1994. We also dealt with the heritage of Svatopluk in our dissertation: Bučko, 2021, pp. 28–60.

church.³⁶ However, according to the latest research done by Polish mediaevalist Wawrzyniec Kowalski, the narrative of the chronicle is not always consistent. The Chronicle, according to Kowalski, does not even stress continuity between Dioclea and Bar or as matter of fact, like the relation between Salona and Split.³⁷

Bosnia held a distinctive position capturing unique Great Moravian relics, surprisingly in the context of a Bosnian bishop at the end of the 12th century, as we will investigate this subject later. We can assume, therefore, that in the c.1140s and 1150s there was a consecration of Bosnian bishop. However, whether this action was somehow sanctified also from Rome cannot be answered. Between the 1160s and the 1180s, there was apparently *sede vacante*, perhaps because of various political or ecclesiastical disputes, which were only resolved probably with the accession of ban Kulin around 1180. Whether the episcopate in Bosnia was somehow formally anchored, or whether a chapter existed at this time, is impossible to say today. Historians mostly rule it out and say that the chapter was not established until the 1230s.

Several later sources mention a bishop named Radagost (also in the form as Radigost or Radogast) in Bosnia towards the end of the 12th century. This is undoubtedly a Slavic pagan name, very non-standard for a bishop of the Roman Catholic Church (Šmitek, 2010, p. 195).³⁸ The Bosnian diocese, i.e., the Bosnian Church, obviously belonged jurisdictionally to the Western Church at the time, but its Slavic liturgy meant that it was not considered a part of the Latin episcopal network. Vice versa: its inclusion among the churches of the West meant that it was never accepted as equal

³⁶ It is possible that this is also why Vukan Nemanjić wanted to take control of Bosnia (by accusing Kulin) since it was already, back in the 11th century, part of the Kingdom of Duklja or perhaps his action was shaped by idea of “Regnum Sclavorum” according to narrative of *Letopis* – creating great Slavic Kingdom. Vukan also might have believed in getting Bosnia from the Hungarian kings, since it was considered part of Hungary. Konstantin Bodin enlarged Duklja around 1080 by conquering Bosnia and Raška, Živković, 2008, p. 294.

³⁷ Kowalski believes that (any) relationship between Dioclea and Bar might have been notoriously known. Kowalski, 2021, p. 150.

³⁸ As “Radagost” in Resti; as “Radogast” in Ragnina; and as “Radigost” in Luccari: Nodilo, 1893, p. 63; Nodilo, 1883, p. 219; Luccari, 1790, p. 30.

by the Churches of the East. From the point of view of Rome, it was a deviation in faith, even to the point of alleged heresy marked as Patarin, but not of Bogomil heresy, as many scholars had mistakenly stated in the past or recently.³⁹ It is plausible that Great Moravian religious remnants and the continued use of the Slavic liturgy played a role in shaping the ecclesiastical identity of Bosnia, particularly during the tenure of Radagast. This possibility gains further weight when considering the account of the Dubrovnik chronicler Giunio Resti, who reports that Radagost was consecrated in 1189, lacking proficiency in Latin, took his oath to the metropolitan (Bernard, the Archbishop of Dubrovnik) in his native Slavic tongue. In doing so, he explicitly invoked the ancient privilege granted by Pope John VIII in 880 (Nodilo, 1893, p. 63).⁴⁰ We can agree with Lubomír Havlík or Wawrzyniec Kowalski that this document is nothing else than very well-known charter of pope John VIII from June 880 called as *Industriae Tuae* which was addressed to Svatopluk and the Pope had sanctioned the use of the Slavonic language in liturgical practice in Great Moravia and installed Methodius as metropolitan archbishop of Moravia with suffragan bishopric in Nitra (Havlík, 1972, p. 198; Havlík, 1976, p. 33; Kowalski 2021, p. 126).⁴¹ We do not have any traces of how this letter survived in Bosnia or in Dubrovnik up to the 12th century. We can only guess if Radagost wanted to use it as a tool defending Slavic liturgy in Bosnia before the pope and simultaneously creating a narrative of Bosnia as Kingdom of Svatopluk as it is attested in *Chronicles of Dubrovnik* (Nodilo, 1883, p. 193).⁴²

³⁹ For scholar view on Bosnian Church see: Fine, 2007, p. 21–22; Runciman, 1947, p. 100–103; See also recent overview Mentel, 2024, pp. 301–315.

⁴⁰ “...Questo arcivescovo Bernardo fu quello, che consecrò Radagost, vescovo di Bossina, il quale portò li presenti al pontefice dalla parte di Culino, bano di Bosna, ed il quale riconobbe l’ arcivescovo di Ragusa. Ne sapendo le lettere latine, ne altre, eccetto le slavoniche, quando fece il giuramento della fedeltà ed obediencia al suo metropolitano, lo fece in lingua slava, la quale per antico privilegio gode questo beneficio, avuto dal pontefice Giovanni VIII, nell’ anno 880.” We can only guess if the letter was preserved in Cyrillic/Glagolitic script, probably not in Latin, as Radagast did not know it.

⁴¹ Another significant moment was placing Great Moravia and its ruler – Svatopluk, under the patronage of St. Peter, thus becoming equal as Frankish Kings, for further implications Betti, 2013, pp. 183–192.

⁴² “815 – L’anno di Cristo 815 Stefano, o vero Svetolicio in lingua slava, re di Bosna”

This episode not only underscores the persistence of Slavic ecclesiastical traditions in the region but also suggests a conscious appeal to historical precedent in legitimizing local religious customs. It further illustrates the tensions between Latin ecclesiastical norms and Slavic liturgical identity, which were central to the broader disputes surrounding the Bosnian Church. While Radagast's actions might have been rooted in the (orthodox) Christian tradition, they may eventually have contributed to the later perception of Bosnia as religiously deviant. The persistence of non-Latin practices, even if historically justified, was increasingly viewed with suspicion by the Papacy and probably also by Hungarian authorities – eventually culminating in the heresy accusations with ulterior political motives of the late 12th and early 13th centuries.

Let us add that despite earlier Hungarian intervention in Bosnia, the local bishopric still belonged to Dubrovnik. As we shall see, there were tendencies to change this situation. In the early 1180s, the papal legate Theobald was sent to Dalmatia. Pope Alexander III informed the prelates of Dalmatia of this in his letter of 4 October 1180 (Smičiklas, 1904, no. 166, pp. 167–168; Barabás, 2023, pp. 258–259). The basis of his mission was investigating the status of the church following the violent death of Spalatin archbishop Rainer (Majnarić, 2008, pp. 99–100). This can be seen as one of the starting points leading to greater interest of the Papacy towards Croatia, Dalmatia and Bosnia. Probably shortly thereafter (i.e., still in the autumn of the same year), a letter of the legate Theobald addressed to the Bosnian Ban Kulin was apparently written. The legate says that he wanted to visit and see Kulin but could not for some undisclosed reason. The Pope had dispatched a letter through the legate (we do not know the content, unless it is a copy of the abovementioned letter of October 4, 1180), and the legate also asked Kulin for two servants, furs, and leaves it to Kulin's discretion if he would like to bequeath anything to the Pope, presumably meaning a possible gift (Smičiklas, 1904, no. 167, pp. 168–169). One can only agree with John Fine's view that Bosnia at this time was perceived as an orthodox Catholic country (Fine, 2007, pp. 109–111). It is also

considered that Bosnia was in a semi-independent position to Hungary. According to later papal letters, the Bosnian Ban was considered a vassal of the Hungarian king. However, in 1192 there came a change in jurisdiction. According to the papal charter of Celestine III, Bosnian bishopric was to be placed under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Split. At that time, it was prelate of Hungarian origin as was custom throughout the 12th and 13th century (Smičiklas, 1904, no. 237, pp. 251–252; Gál, 2020, p. 44–53). This change however was purely respected *de iure* and not *de facto* as can be seen from further development. It was finally settled in 1246 by transferring the bishopric seat to Djakovo and placing the bishopric under the metropolitan archdiocese of Kalocsa.

There is also an interesting document from Dubrovnik dated May 3, 1195, mentioning Bernard, who consecrated the bishop of Bosnia (without stating his name) and breaking usual practice and traditions involving the canons of Dubrovnik (Šufflay – Thallóczy, 1913, no. 110, p. 36). From the letter of papal legate John de Casamaris, we know that bishop of Bosnia died before the Abjuration of Bilino Polje took place in April 1203 (Theiner, 1863, no. 4, p. 19).⁴³ Radagast may have served as a bishop in 1189–1203 and in 1195 the investigation of Bernard could have taken place *ex post*. Or there might have been another bishop in 1194/1195–1203.

The situation in Bosnia underwent a radical transformation shortly after 1199, catalysed by a letter from Vukan Nemanjić, King of Duklja, to Pope Innocent III. In this correspondence, Vukan not only emphasized his familial ties to the Papacy, but more significantly, he accused Ban Kulin of Bosnia, along with his family and approximately 10,000 of his subjects, of heresy (Smičiklas, 1904, no. 310, pp. 333–334). This marked the beginning of what would become known as the “Bosnian case”, a matter that would attract increasing interest from both the Papacy and the Hungarian crown.

The investigation into these allegations was entrusted to Archbishop Bernard of Split, as Bernard of Dubrovnik had vacated his see around 1199 and subsequently became Bishop of Carlisle in England in 1203 (Smičiklas,

⁴³ “...in regno Bani Culini de Bosna non est nisi unus episcopatus, et episcopus modo mortuus est.”

1905, no. 23, pp. 28–29; Lučić, 1975, pp. 187–194). Bernard seems to have been an archbishop of Dubrovnik from November of 1189 but there is certain archbishop “H.” in an agreement between Dubrovnik and Ravenna dated November 21, 1188.⁴⁴

From 1199/1200 onward, Bosnia’s distinct religious practices, which had long existed on the periphery of Latin Christendom came under intensified examination. This moment represents a turning point in the papal and regional perception of Bosnia, setting the stage for a series of ecclesiastical and political interventions in 13th century. The broader implications of this development, particularly the evolving relationship between Bosnia, the Papacy, and Hungary and rise of power of Kotromanići will be addressed in greater detail in a subsequent study.

8. CONCLUSION

The development of the Dalmatian and neighbouring dioceses during the 11th and 12th centuries was marked by considerable complexity and ambiguity. It is evident that the ecclesiastical landscape of the region cannot be described as either simple or linear. In many instances, it is not possible to establish a definitive baseline for institutional development. Although plenty of papal letters and documents have been preserved, their authenticity and reliability remain subject to scholarly debate.

A recurring phenomenon in this period was the fabrication of ecclesiastical narratives and documents by local prelates. In Dalmatia, such fabrications often concerned claims to metropolitan rights (*iura antiqua*) and jurisdiction over suffragan bishoprics. These efforts were part of a broader pattern also observable across Central Europe.

⁴⁴ Smičiklas, 1904, no. 222, pp. 237–238 – the letter of Pope Clement III to Dubrovnik; Smičiklas, 1904, no. 214, pp. 231–232 – The Agreement between Dubrovnik and Ravenna. I would like to thank to Zoran Perović from Državni arhiv, Dubrovnik for sending me a photocopy of this charter. There is no other source about an archbishop (elect?) called “H.”, however he may have succeeded Tribunus (last mentioned in charter from June 21, 1188, see Smičiklas, 1904, no. 211, pp. 226–227). But he may have died quite soon with Bernard succeeding him in November 1189.

A particularly intense dispute emerged between the ecclesiastical authorities of Bar and Dubrovnik. During the 11th and 12th centuries, both sees constructed competing narratives regarding their supposed metropolitan predecessors. These narratives were not historical in nature; they were deeply intertwined with claims to ecclesiastical primacy and institutional antiquity. The underlying objective was to assert metropolitan authority and thereby secure a prominent position within the regional ecclesiastical hierarchy. These disputes were further complicated by secular interests, particularly those of the Kingdom of Duklja or later by Nemanjići. During this time, the Archbishop of Bari also intervened in the conflict, reflecting the broader geopolitical significance of the dispute.

The bishoprics of Kotor and Bosnia became focal points in the rivalry between the metropolitans of Bar and Dubrovnik. Bar sought to legitimize its claims by presenting itself as the successor to the non-existent metropolis of Dioclea using *Letopis of Priest of Duklja* as an ideological tool, aiming ultimately to establish an archbishopric within its own territory with numerous suffragan bishoprics, Kotor and Bosnia among them. Dubrovnik, in turn, emphasized its ancient origins, often relying on forged papal bulls to substantiate its claims. Bosnia, although was perceived as a peripheral region – even by the Kingdom of Duklja – was nonetheless claimed by the latter. The motivations behind this claim remain unclear, though access to natural resources may have played a role.

By the year 1200, the religious practices in Bosnia had attracted the attention of the papacy, which ultimately condemned them as heretical. This development was not merely theological but also political, shaped by the ambitions of Vukan Nemanjić and Emeric, King of Hungary and probably of Hungarian ecclesiastical circles as well. It might be because of expansionist policy of Bodin which might forged certain narratives (captured in *Letopis*) and thus gave a pretext for Vukan Nemanjić and his ambitions. Despite external pressures, Bosnia evolved into a semi-independent or fully independent polity, characterized by the emergence of the radicalized Bosnian Church and the rise of the Kotromanić dynasty as an autochthonous ruling house.

Kotor, meanwhile, established itself as a strategic maritime centre. It likely sought to cultivate independent ties with Bari as early as the 11th century, aiming to secure a more prosperous and autonomous position. Nevertheless, Dubrovnik continued to assert jurisdiction over Kotor until the matter was formally resolved in 1172. Soon thereafter, Dubrovnik's secular authority would come under increasing pressure from the expanding power of the Nemanjić dynasty until 1371 and lasting influence of the Norman kingdom of Sicily.

These ecclesiastical rivalries, “forged identities” and contested jurisdictions not only shaped the religious landscape of the medieval Balkans but also reflected the intricate entanglement of spiritual authority and political ambition that defined the region's historical trajectory.

We are fully aware of the complexity and multifaceted nature of the topic at hand. Our aim was not only to highlight several intricate issues related to ecclesiastical development, but also to offer a critical overview alongside our own interpretations and working hypotheses. We recognize that these reflections represent only a partial view of a much broader historical and theological landscape. This subject undoubtedly calls for further investigation, and we hope that our contribution will serve as a starting point for future research and dialogue.

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VLAST I JURISDIKCIJA NA SREDNJOVJEKOVNOM BALKANU. I DIO: SLUČAJ BOSNE I KOTORA – SREDIŠTE SPORA, 10–12. STOLJEĆE

Sažetak

Tokom 11. i 12. stoljeća crkveni razvoj Dalmacije i njezinih susjednih područja bio je iznimno složen i obilježen suprotstavljenim tvrdnjama o vlasti. Lokalni biskupi često su izrađivali krivotvorene dokumente i izmišljene povijesne narative. Najžešći sukob izbio je između Bara i Dubrovnika, koji su stvarali suparničke tradicije o drevnoj crkvenoj prvenstvenosti, često potpomognute izvorima kao što su *Ljetopis Popa Dukljanina* ili krivotvorene papinske bule. Ti su sporovi bili usko povezani s političkim ambicijama vladara Duklje, a kasnije i dinastije Nemanjića, kao i s utjecajem Barija i Kraljevine Ugarske. Biskupije Kotor i Bosne postale su ključne tačke sukoba: Kotor je nastojao postići autonomiju i učvrstiti veze s Barijem, dok je Bosna – premda smatrana perifernom – bila predmet pretenzija više sila te je oko 1200. godine papinstvo proglasilo njezine vjerske prakse heretičkim. To je oblikovalo njezin kasniji poluneovisni razvoj, nastanak Crkve bosanske i uspon dinastije Kotromanića.

Ključne riječi: *srednjovjekovni Balkan, Bosna, Kotor, Barska nadbiskupija, srednjovjekovni Dubrovnik, srednjovjekovna Dalmacija*