



## From 'Nations' to 'Archontias' (I) 'Sclavinia' and 'Sclavoarchontia': Terms and Chronology

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## От «народов» к «архонтиям» (I) «Склавиния» и «Склавоархонтия»: понятия и хронология

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### Abstract

This article deals with the terms 'Sclavinia' and 'Sclavoarchontia', which are used in historiography in different and even contradictory ways, and aims to clarify a highly complicated topic, investigating the ways these terms were used by contemporaries, trying to define differences between them and connecting their use with the political changes of the time. Topics discussed include the chronology of the terms' usage, different ways in which they were being used, relations of 'Sclavinia' and 'Sclavoarchontia' with the Empire, their appearance and disappearance and the political processes connected with it, as well as the analysis of the existing interpretations. The first part mostly discusses chronology and some existing hypotheses. The second (and the main) part analyses the way these terms were used and tries to define them.

The hypothesis presented connects these terms with the re-establishing of imperial authority in the Balkans, marked in the sources by replacing the term

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'Slavic nations', which had been used until the late 8 century to denote the independent Balkan Slavic societies and their lands. The Empire lacked the capacity for direct subjugation of the independent Slavic communities and was forced to rely on complicated measures including colonization and ensuring Slav cooperation in the process. In the themes where the Empire had enough power, Slavic communities were organized as 'Sclavoarchontias', who received archons from the strategos, paid collective tribute and served as symahoi, but kept some inner autonomy. The Empire also tended to ensure the cooperation of Slavic communities around themes by granting titles and subsidies to some powerful Slavic leaders, which led to the creation of client states known as 'Sclavinias'. They were not part of the thematic system, they had their native and hereditary leaders recognized and affirmed by the emperor by titles and seals and act as imperial allies. A prototype of both had appeared at the end of the 7th c., but only when relations of such types had multiplied after Stauracius' expedition in 783, corresponding generic terms appeared and became regular.

### Keywords

Sclavinia, Sclavoarchontia, Slavic archontia, Slavic nations, Byzantium, imperial administrative system, subjugation, conquest of the Balkans

### Резюме

В статье рассматриваются термины «Склавиния» и «Склавоархонтia», которые употребляются в исторических источниках весьма различными, порой противоречивыми способами; предпринята попытка определить, как эти термины использовались современниками, в чем заключалось различие в их значении и насколько употребление того или другого наименования было связано с изменением политической ситуации. Соответственно, в задачу исследования входит описание появления и исчезновения этих терминов и относительной хронологии их бытования, учитывающее изменения во времени отношения с Империей тех, кто обозначался как «Sclavinias» и «Sclavoarchontias». Кроме того, в первой части работы предложен анализ существующих в науке интерпретаций соответствующих обозначений.

Мы полагаем, что появление терминов «Склавиния» и «Склавоархонтia» связано с восстановлением имперской власти на Балканах; они призваны были заменить использовавшийся до конца VIII в. термин «славянские народы», обозначавший независимые славянские общины и их земли. Не имея возможности немедленно подчинить эти общины, Империя была вынуждена принять ряд сложных мер, причем процесс колонизация предполагал, по-видимому, некое добровольное сотрудничество славян. Там, где у Империи было достаточно сил, славянские общины были организованы в «Склавоархонтии», платившие коллективную дань, но сохранявшие некоторую внутреннюю автономию. С другой стороны, Империя стремилась добиться сотрудничества, предоставляя некоторым влиятельным славянским лидерам титулы и субсидии, что приводило к созданию зависимых княжеств, известных как «Склавинии». Последние не входили в систему фем, при этом их местные и наследственные лидеры были признаны

и утверждены императором и выступали в качестве союзников Империи. Прообраз таких двух типов отношений зародился в конце VII в., но термины «Склавиния» и «Склавоархонтия» появились и стали регулярно использоваться лишь в ту пору, когда после экспедиции Ставракия в 783 г. обе упомянутые выше политические модели стали активно тиражироваться.

#### Ключевые слова

Склавиния, Склавоархонтия, славянская архонтия, славянские народы, Византия, имперская административная система, подчинение, завоевание Балкан

If there is anything accepted without argument about the term ‘Sclavinia’ in historiography, it is that this term is crucial for understanding the Balkan reality in the 7–9 centuries.<sup>1</sup> The discussion about this term had lasted for more than a century and reached a loose consensus by the end of the last millennium. The consensus was that ‘Sclavinia’ had been the name for Slavic tribal (or) territorial independent polities that could even be understood as pre-state formations.<sup>2</sup> In 2007 the consensus was challenged with the following thesis: the term had not been used before the 9 century, and “the substantive Sklavinia

<sup>1</sup> “The term ‘sclavinia’ [...] indicates a central concept in the early mediaeval history of the Balkans” [Ostrogorsky 1963: 3]; “Keyword for understanding this situation is the term ‘sklavinia’.” [Chrysos 2007: 124]

<sup>2</sup> “[R]egions occupied by the Slavs over which Byzantium had lost all control but which did not possess any other administrative system that might have replaced the earlier Byzantine one” [Niederle 1908: 421; Ostrogorsky 1959: 6; Idem 1963: 3]; “nominally Byzantine territories settled by Slavs” [Vlasto 1970: 156]; “region inhabited by Slavs under chieftains over whom the administrative control of the Empire was more theoretical than real” [Charanis 1970: 11]; “Sclavinias were the ancestral forms of early-feudal states” [Литаврин 1984: 199]; “political communities organized on a territorial basis”, or possibly “high (authentically proto-state) form of permanent military-political societies” [Idem 1985: 27, 28]; [Литаврин, Иванова 1985: 85]; [Антолјак 1985: 121, 123]; [Иванова 1987: 57, 59]; “tribes of independent, pagan Slavs, whose lands the Byzantine called “Slavinias” [Treadgold 1988: 19]; “non-subordinated to Empire, based on their own political units—Sclavinias” [Иванова 1988: 10]; “Region occupied by the Sclavenoi” [TODoB 3: 1910]; “Slav [...] independent communities” [Obolensky 1994: 31, 32]; “autonomous gentile (often without fixed territorial boundaries) in (small) tribal groups organized Slav communities inside and outside [...] the imperial territory” [Koder 1995: 1988]; “territory controlled by a named sub-group of Slavs” [Lunt 1995: 338]; “small Slav tribal units” [Whittow 1996: 275]; “Sklaviniai, the regions of the Slavs”, “the independent Sklaviniai of the Balkans [...] the main opponents of Byzantine rule in the area” [Haldon 1997: 56 (f. 45)]; “areas of Slavonic settlement”, “territories previously occupied by Slavonic tribes” [Mango, Scott 1997: 484, f. 1, 669 (f. 2)]; “The term ‘Sclavenia’ [...] seems to mean a Slav tribal territory independent of imperial rule” [Barford 2001: 73]; “territory which had been imperial and to which the Empire still felt it had title, but which had been occupied by Slavs to the extent that imperial administration had ceased to function... When [...] a state emerged on such territory [...] then Byzantine sources replaced the term ‘Sklavinia’ with the state name” [Fine 2006: 40, 41].

applied not to independent lands of Slavs, but rather the opposite, to areas with Slavic population under imperial sovereignty” [Chrysos 2007, 132–135]. This was followed by the debate between Florin Curta and Andreas Gkoutzioukostas [Curta 2011a; Gkoutzioukostas 2015; Curta 2016; Gkoutzioukostas 2017; Curta 2018], concentrated around the use of the term in the 6–8 centuries. Even though this challenge did not change the dominant opinion,<sup>3</sup> it reopened the discussion about the term ‘Sclavinia’.

In the last decades, scientific interest was also focusing around the term ‘Slavic archontia’ (or ‘Sclavoarchontia’) and some serious progress has been made in this direction [Науменко 2008; Цветковић 2016].

However, we are still far from consensus on the exact meaning of ‘Sclavinia’ and ‘Slavic archontia’.<sup>4</sup> It is no wonder that the two categories are often mixed together in historical works—both were Slavic units led by an archon. Depending on the interpretation of the term ‘Sclavinia’, ‘Sclavoarchontia’ gets interpreted differently—either considered to be the last stage of dying independent ‘Sclavinias’, or actually as having the same meaning that the first term.

This article aims to clarify the meaning of these terms and their use in the sources, as well as the reality behind them, being fully aware that the limited information we possess makes all possible conclusions arbitrary, and that even the most accurate definition could never match the complexity of real life.

## Re-examination of the Chronological Framework

‘Sclavinia’ is often understood as the term labelling “Slavic lands in general or any one of them”;<sup>5</sup> therefore, it is expected that the term could be found in the sources from the beginning of the appearance of Slavs. It needs to be pointed out, however, that ‘Sclavinia’ was not used consistently for every Slavic society or land, and that, despite the fact that the terms like ‘Sclavinia’ could be created easily, a toponym was not derived from every ethnonym (for example, there is no ‘Antia’). Still, in the past, this seemed to be correct about the term

<sup>3</sup> “[A] Slavic tribal territory independent of imperial rule, with their own political structures” [Kobylinski 2008: 543]; “any region in the Balkans settled by Slavs out of imperial control” [Fine 2008: 332]; “the regions settled by the Slavs (Sklaviniai)” [Louth 2008a: 126; Idem 2008b: 231]; “independent duchies” [Аџиевски 2009: 822]; “more or less independent but loosely organized barbarian polity beyond the borders of the Empire” [Кодер 2011: 102; Curta 2011b 119]; “proto-state formations” [Živković 2013: 19, 20; Bulić 2013: 184; Vedriš 2015: 583, 585]; “territory inhabited by the Slavs [...] the Slavic landscape” [Malinovská 2015: 1, 2]; “single or multi-tribal territorial entities” [Hupchick 2017: 12].

<sup>4</sup> The question whether ‘Sclavinias’ and ‘Sclavoarchontias’ were inside or outside of themes could be used as illustration. Both possibilities are assumed for both terms (for ‘Slavic archontias’ cf.: [Науменко 2008: 189]; for ‘Sclavinias’: [Koder 1995: 1988; Curta 2019: 310].

<sup>5</sup> “‘Sclavinia’ was a generic term for all Slavic regions” [Karbic et al. 2006: 38 (f. 2); similarly: Ostrogorsky 1963: 3; Цавелева 2004: 366 (f. 6)]; “Sclavinia [...] refers to every one of numerous regions throughout the Balkans where the Slavs were” [Fine 2008: 332].

‘Sclavinia’ from the 6 century onward. The use of ‘Sclavinia’ in Theophylact Simocatta’s History, in Miracula of Saint Demetrius and in the Chronography of Theophanes the Confessor served as a proof of this.

However, after the critical edition of Miracula by Lemerle was published, it became clear that the word ‘Sclavinia’ did not exist in the original work [Miracula 1979: 130, 134 (14)]. The Chronography was written at the beginning of the 9 century.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the History of Theophylact Simocatta becomes the only known source written between the 6 and the 8 centuries in which we find the word *Σκλαυηνία*, and, furthermore, it only appears there once.

Writing in 630 AD, Theophylact Simocatta mentions one planned Byzantine campaign in 602 north of the Danube against τῆς Σκλαυηνίας πλῆθύος [Simocattae 1834, VIII, 5, 9, 10 p. 323]. Its interpretation as a noun or adjective gives us two different meanings: “the multitude of ‘Sclavinia’” or “Slavic multitude”. Discussions conducted on this issue have not come to a consensus [Chrysos 2007: 124–126; Curta 2011a; Gkoutzioukostas 2015; Curta 2016; Gkoutzioukostas 2017].

The main weakness of the adjective thesis is that this otherwise linguistically acceptable possibility is, at the same time, unique: no other Byzantine author has used *σκλαυηνία* as an adjective [Curta 2011a: 89; Curta 2016: 2; cf.: Gkoutzioukostas 2015: 644 (f. 63)]. A similar problem, however, appears in the interpretation of ‘Sclavinia’ as a *noun*: it would be the only known case in sources in the 6 and the 7 centuries, and also the only case within Theophylact’s History, and the only case Theophylact created a geographical term from the contemporary ethnonym. The offered explanation that the reason was clarification and avoiding monotony and repetition [Curta 2011a: 91, 93, Idem 2016: 9] is not satisfactory [Стойков 2018: 19–26]. An unexplained term used only once cannot by itself serve for clarification, neither to avoid repetition.

None of the predecessors or contemporaries of Theophylact have used the term ‘Sclavinia’, but it appeared that no one has borrowed it from him either. Patriarch Nicephorus, who created his history as a continuation of the work of Theophylact, did not use ‘Sclavinia’ at all [Mango 1990: 7; Neville 2018: 72]. Theophanes the Confessor, who in the second decade of the 9 century has used ‘Sclavinia’ five times, and who had based his narrative about the time of Emperor Maurice on Theophylact, did not use ‘Sclavinia’ at the point where Theophylact did,<sup>7</sup> nor did he use it in the section based on Theophylact. The first

<sup>6</sup> For the time when the Chronography was written see (started in 807, and finished between 813–815): [Рајковић 1955: 217 (810–815); Turtledove 1982: viii–ix; Treadgold 2013: 35, 39]. For the authorship of the Chronography and sources used see: [Treadgold 2011; Idem 2013: 44–49; Kompa 2015].

<sup>7</sup> Of course, this may be due to the summary way in which this passage is transmitted, but that does not change the fact: in the section based on Theophylact Theophanes did not use ‘Sclavinia’ at all [Theophanes 1883: 284 (6–25)].

use of the word in Theophanes' work considers the events of 658. Thus, we do not have any indications that either Theophylact himself had taken 'Sclavinia' from someone else, or that anyone borrowed it from him! This, along with the fact that *σκλαυινία* had never been used as an adjective in Byzantium, could lead to a third possibility: namely, that the word *σκλαυινία* did not even exist in the original text by Theophylact, but τῆς Σκλαυηρίας πληθύους appeared as a result of a modification of the original phrase "a multitude of Slavs" (which we find seven times in Theophylact's History) performed by one of the copyists in the earliest surviving manuscript from the 10th century, from which all others originated.<sup>8</sup> At the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Leo the Wise expressed the idea that the Slavs had "their own country" (τῆ ἰδία χώρα) when they lived "across the Danube", but not after moving to the Balkans, and such an attitude could be reflected by his contemporaries in the earliest copy of Theophylact's History [Leo VI 2010, 470, <sup>443</sup>, C. 18 & 93].

In any case, the only appearance of the word 'Sclavinia' in Theophylact's work cannot by itself be used as an argument that the term 'Sclavinia' was already common in the 6 and the 7 centuries—alone, it could be no more than an exception that proves the rule.

### 'Sclavinia' from Theophylact to Theophanes

We do not find the term 'Sclavinia' in any other Byzantine source from the 7 and the 8 centuries, including the second collection of Miracula and the history of Patriarch Nicephorus, which speak of Slavs many times. Of course, this is not a sufficient proof that the term was not in use—preserved sources are few and do not represent the whole corpus that once existed. One possible argument to suggest that the term was in use in the 7 and the 8 centuries is that we find it used five times in Theophanes Confessor's Chronography, for events in 658, 689/690, 758 and 810.<sup>9</sup> This fact could be interpreted in three

<sup>8</sup> As was already suggested [Stojkov 2016: 1, 2], four of the five preserved manuscripts originated from the same manuscript from the mid-10th century Vaticanus Graecus 977 [Иванов 1995: 13; Olajos 1979: 261, 264; Neville 2018: 48]. Neville dated this text to the 12th century, but corrected herself on p. 73. If the term had been added to the earliest manuscript as simple mistake or modification, it was further transmitted to others. A similar case can be seen with the modification in one of Miracula's manuscripts from the 10th century (Vaticanus Graecus 797), where in one place, instead of Σκλαβηγῶν, we find Σκλαβηγιῶν [Miracula 1979: 130, 134 (14); Curta 2011a: 88]. We have a time match with the earliest manuscript of the History of Theophylact; both are found at just one place in the texts, in both cases it was used in relation to Slavs who were somehow connected or allied to the Avars and who would have been used for a great attack on Byzantium. Of course, this is a possibility that cannot be proven or excluded for now.

<sup>9</sup> Once for Constans' expedition in 658, twice for the campaign of Justinian II in Thrace and Thessalonica (689), once for the campaign of Constantine V in 758 and once for the settlement of colonists in the Sclavinias by Nicephorus in 810 [Theophanes 1883: 347 (6–7), 364 (5–9, 11–18), 430 (21–22), 486 (17–22)].

ways: ‘Sclavinia’ was borrowed from other sources, ‘Sclavinia’ was put there by the author of Chronography, or ‘Sclavinia’ was used as a metonymy.

### Metonymy Hypothesis

The third possibility is argued by Chrysos who disclaims as *metonymy* all cases of ‘Sclavinia’ in Theophanes for the 7 and the 8 centuries and accepts only the last one for 810 [Chrysos 2007: 126, 127].

The claim that Theophanes used the term in two different ways does not seem to sustain itself.<sup>10</sup> It is not methodologically correct to interpret every use of ‘Sclavinia’ that is not proven to be territorial as non-territorial. It is also risky because the metonymy is difficult to prove or disprove, which allows too much subjectivity in interpretation. ‘Sclavinia’ could be a metonymy for ‘Slavs’, but equally ‘Slavs’ could be a metonymy for ‘Sclavinia(s)’ or ‘Slavic places’. It is practically impossible to separate the land from people, especially while talking about a military expedition, when the land and her inhabitants are equally targets of aggression.<sup>11</sup> This is easy to notice in the parallel with the terms ‘Bulgars’–‘Bulgaria’ in Chronography: every expedition against ‘Bulgaria’ is also against ‘Bulgars’.

‘Sclavinia’ appeared in Theophanes not just in the singular, but also in the plural. In contrast, in Theophanes we cannot find ‘Bulgaria’ in the plural because there is only one ‘Bulgaria’, but many ‘Sclavinias’. This also speaks against the interpretation of ‘Sclavinia’ as metonymy.

Following the parallel with ‘Bulgaria’–‘Bulgars’, we can notice that ‘Bulgaria’ could also be a metonymy in some cases, but not always.<sup>12</sup> ‘Bulgaria’ is not used when the Byzantine expedition was not against Bulgarian territory but against some invading Bulgarian army—only ‘Bulgars’ is used in such cases.<sup>13</sup> Following this parallel, the term ‘Sclavinias’—metonymy or not—has to be used for ‘Slavic lands’ invaded by Romans (i.e. ‘Rhomaioi’).

Instead of this, Chrysos interprets expeditions against ‘Sclavinias’ as “against Slavs, looking out for them wherever he could locate them but not

<sup>10</sup> ‘Sclavinias’ in Theophanes “seems to mean absolutely the same thing in each case...” [Setton 1950: 522, 541, 542, (f. 154)].

<sup>11</sup> Cf. for equalization of ‘states’ and ‘nations’ in: “Chazaria, Bulgaria and other neighbouring nations” [Theophanes 1883: 434 (16, 17)].

<sup>12</sup> In 760 Constantine V sent men through the non-guarded passes “into Bulgaria”; in 773/4 peace was signed “neither Bulgars to enter Rhomania, neither emperor to try to invade Bulgaria”; Nicephorus I went against Bulgars but “invaded Bulgaria [...] through impassable places”, and many of his soldiers were killed “in Bulgaria” [Theophanes 1883: 436 (15), 447 (6–7), 491, (3, 4)].

<sup>13</sup> In 774 the Emperor received news “from Bulgaria”, that “the lord of Bulgaria” was sending an army against Berzitia to resettle its population into Bulgaria and to prevent it the Emperor decided to organize an expedition “against Bulgars”—i.e. the invading army [Theophanes 1883: 447 (11–14)].



against a particular territory. [...] Of course, the Slavs referred to here must have been settled somewhere, but it seems that the objective was the warriors, not their locality or any form of their political structure” [Chrysos 2007: 127, 128]. However, Theophanes is clear that Byzantine armies in these expeditions did pillages, subjugation, resettling of population and put some under taxation,<sup>14</sup> which makes Chrysos’ interpretation impossible and the territorial aspect unavoidable. At least one of the expeditions against ‘Sclavinia’—the one in 689/690 reached Thessalonica therefore went through territories of at least two Slavic tribes: Strymonites and Rinhinoi.

This conclusion becomes even stronger when we compare Theophanes’ information about the expedition against ‘Sclavinia’ in 658 with the one existing in Syrian sources. There we can find out that: “Eo Constans rex Romanorum regiones Sclavorum ingressus proelium fecit cum rege eorum et vicit eum et cum victoria exiit” [Eliae 1910: 68 (12–14)]. According to this, in the Syrian original of this information in Theophanes (see below) “Slavic regions” existed, invaded by Constans, and there the Slavs had their “king”. Therefore, territorial and political aspects are clear.

Chrysos’ argues that later authors who were basing their work on Theophanes, such as George Kedrenos, Leo Grammaticos and John Zonara, replaced ‘Sclavinia’ because they recognized it as a metonymy [Chrysos 2007: 128]. This is, on one hand, irrelevant because, even if these authors understood Theophanes’ ‘Sclavinias’ as metonymy, this does not necessarily mean that ‘Sclavinia’ was used as metonymy by the author of Chronography himself. Secondly, this argument is more than disputable, because these authors, with the exception of Kedrenos, replaced ‘Sclavinia’ not only in cases of assumed “metonymy”, but in all cases; i.e., for them the term itself seems to be inadequate. Also, if Zonara was the author of the 12th century Lexicon [TODoB 3: 1221; Treadgold 2013: 338], then it is obvious that for him ‘Sclavinia’ had clear territorial meaning.<sup>15</sup> Just one of these authors, viz. Kedrenos, fits Chrysos’ interpretation (replace or delete ‘Sclavinia’ except for the events of 810), but this seems to be more accidental than on purpose. Kedrenos simply combined two sources—Pseudo-Simeon up to 813 and Scylitzes after that date [Treadgold 2013: 341], and, in this way, the ‘Sclavinia’ that Pseudo-Simeon used for 814 never appeared in Kedrenos. We will speak more on the replacement of the term ‘Sclavinia’ with other terms in later sources; here it is enough to point

<sup>14</sup> In 658: ἡχμαλώτευσεν πολλοὺς καὶ ὑπέταχεν [Theophanes 1883: 347, 6-7], 689: αἰχμαλωτίσαι [...] πολλὰ πλῆθη τῶν Σκλαβῶν τὰ μὲν πολέμῳ, τὰ δὲ προσρῦντα παραλαβὼν [Ibid.: 364 (6–12?)], 758: ἡχμαλώτευσεν καὶ τοὺς πολλοὺς ὑποχείριους ἐποίησεν [Ibid.: 430 (21, 22)]. Cf. in Staurakius’ expedition against “the Slavic nations” in 783: ὑπέταξε πάντας καὶ ὑποφόρους ἐποίησε [...] καὶ πολλὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν καὶ λάφυρα... [Ibid.: 456 (26–30)].

<sup>15</sup> Σκλαβινία, ἢ Βουλγαρία; col. 1507: Πανονία, ἢ Βουλγαρία [Zonarae 1808: col. 1653].



to the two earliest authors that used Chronography—Anastasius Bibliothecarius and George the Monk. Anastasius did not change the term ‘Sclavinia’ in his translation of Chronography [Anastasi 1885: 218 (10), 231 (15–17), 282 (21), 325 (17)] while George the Monk deleted it completely. Anastasius did not follow Theophanes’ terminology blindly—he, as George the Monk did, erased the term Slav in the information about Bulgaria. The fact that ‘Sclavinia’ was kept in his translation points to the conclusion that Anastasius recognised ‘Sclavinia’ as a territorial term, not as a metonymy—it was the time when ‘Sclavinia’ was widely used in the West [MGH LL Formulae, 1: 314 (34); MGH DD LD: 30 (28); MGH E: 392 (20–21); Chrysos 2007: 131; Fine 2006: 36; Curta 2011a: 86 (f. 3)]; but in the second half of the 9 century the term ‘Sclavinia’ went out of use in Byzantium (see below), and this was reflected in George the Monk. Therefore, neither of these authors recognised Theophanes’ ‘Sclavinia’ as a metonymy.

### Inherited or Added Term

If ‘Sclavinia’ in Chronography is not a metonymy, then we are facing a dilemma: did the author of Chronography take the term from his sources and, accordingly, was the term in use from the middle of the 7 century and afterwards [Антолјак 1985: 121; Curta 2016: 11, 12]? Or, did he instead insert into his narrative a new term used at the time when he was writing (807–815)?

In resolving this question, we should compare Theophanes’ Chronography with the history of Patriarch Nicephorus, written at the end of the 8 century and based on the same Byzantine sources for the period 668–769 [Рајковић, Томић 1955: 239; Turtledove 1982: xv; Mango 1990: 15, 16; Литаврин 1995: 223]. Nicephorus did not use ‘Sclavinia’ at all. There are five places common for both authors connected to Slavs about the events in 681, 689, 705 and 763. ‘Sclavinia’ is used in Chronography for one of them: the campaign of Justinian II against Sclavinia and Bulgaria in 689/690. There, Theophanes used ‘Sclavinia’ twice, and Nicephorus used ‘Slavs’ and ‘Slavic clans’ [Mango 1990: 38, 7–9 (p. 92); Theophanes 1883: 364 (5–9)].

For other cases in which Theophanes used ‘Sclavinias’, he had other sources unknown to Nicephorus. For 658 and 758 in the Chronography, the Syrian sources were particularly important [Mango 1990: 1, 2, 14, 15; Debić 2015, 378].<sup>16</sup> The campaign of 658 had been noticed in some Syrian sources, already mentioned Elia Metropolitan of Nisiba (‘regiones Sclavorum’—Eliae 1910: 68; Èlie 1910: 88), but the western campaign of Constans in 658 was also mentioned in Chronicon Anonymum from the 7 century [Guidi 1903: 55; Рајковић 1955: 221, (f. 8)]. Elia cites Jesudenah, the metropolitan of Basra in

<sup>16</sup> On Theophanes using Syrian sources translated into Greek cf.: [Turtledove 1982: xv]. See also [Treadgold 2013: 41–43; Debić 2015; Conterno 2015].

the 9 century, who does not seem to depend on Theophanes there (Elia, for example, speaks about “their king”) but seems to have used the same Syrian source as the author of Chronography. The “eastern connection” is also visible for the campaign of 758, which Theophanes puts in a series of news related only to the east.<sup>17</sup> But, in Syriac, the words for the ‘Slavs’ and ‘Slavic countries’ did not differ graphically [Сериков 1994: 289 (f. 50)], which means that the translator or editor chose ‘Sclavinia’ instead of other options. Therefore, the term ‘Sclavinia’ could not had been put there before the translation to Greek that happened after 780.<sup>18</sup>

The term ‘Sclavinia’ is basically equal to the terms derived from the names of specific Slavic ‘nations’ (‘ethne’) such as Croatia, Serbia or Berzitia, and Subdelitia. We cannot find such terms in Theophylact Simocatta, Miracula or Nicephorus, but in Theophanes, besides ‘Sclavinia’, we find Βερζιτία and Βελζητίας. Such toponyms were not used in the part common with Nicephorus before 769, and they appeared in the time afterwards: one under 773/4 (Berzitia) and the other under 799 (Belzitia). This also suggests that Slavic toponyms of the ‘Sclavinia’ type became common in Byzantium later, after the history of Nicephorus was finished, and that they did not exist in the sources used by Nicephorus and Theophanes.

We have enough reason to conclude that Theophanes did not borrow the term ‘Sclavinia’ from the sources he used for 658, 689, 758, and 810 (the last one being contemporary to him). The term had to be put in Chronography by the author. This conclusion is supported by the uniform way in which the term is used [Setton 1950, 522, 541, 542, f. 154]. ‘Sclavinia’ only applies to the relations of Byzantium with the Slavs and is not once used for the relations between the Slavs and Bulgaria, the Avar khaganate or the Caliphate. All of it speaks about a conscious, editorial use of the term, and not about simply borrowing from his sources, where it could had been used in a different sense and context.

### ‘Sclavinia’ as a Contemporary Term (9–10 c.)

For the first time ‘Sclavinia’ was definitely used for contemporary written events in 810 (Chronography). Two other sources from the first half of the 9 century also used it for contemporary events. The first was the letter from Michael II to Ludwig the Pious from April 10, 824, which mentioned the

<sup>17</sup> In the period between the summer of 756 and the summer of 760, not counting the campaign against the Macedonian Sclavinias, Theophanes only reports news related to Christians in Syria and Palestine and the Caliphate policy, with even the two Arab campaigns against Byzantium being given from an Eastern perspective.

<sup>18</sup> Probably by George Syncellus, who was born in the East and who translated and continued Theophilos’ Chronology from 750 to 780 [Treadgold 2013: 41–45].

participation of ‘circumiacentibus Sclaviniiis’ in the uprising of Toma the Slav in 823 [MGH LS 3: 477 (10, 11)]; the second was the Life of Saint Gregory Decapolite by Ignatius the Deacon, written in 840s.<sup>19</sup> Two other texts, known as the “Chronicle of 811” and “Scriptor Incertus de Leone Armenio”, clearly based on eyewitness accounts, mentioned ‘Sclavinias’ under 811 and 814 as Krum’s allies<sup>20</sup>, and could also be classified as contemporaries.

9-century sources that used ‘Sclavinia’ were, to a sufficient level, independent of each other<sup>21</sup> and used the term for contemporary events, which means that the term was in regular and actual use in that period.

Between 850 and the middle of the 10 century, there are no Byzantine sources we could find that used the word ‘Sclavinia’. Then it appeared again in a few sources. One (Pseudo-Simeon) simply transmits information from an old text [Symeonis Magistri 1838: 617 (10–13)]. ‘Sclavinia’ also appeared in one manuscript of the *Miracula (Vaticanus Graecus 797)*, and in the oldest manuscript of Theophylact’s *History (Vaticanus Graecus 977)*. The most important one is Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who used it many times writing about his own time [Porphyrogenitus 1983: 9/<sub>107–110</sub>, 29/<sub>68</sub>, 30/<sub>94, 95</sub>: 62, 124, 144]. The only serious difference was the place it was used for: Dalmatia, instead of the interior of the Balkans. This was the last actual use of the term in Byzantium. ‘Sclavinia’ appeared in three other sources in the Byzantine Empire in the 12 century, but they had either used it in a completely different meaning or just repeated old sources.<sup>22</sup>

One of the important questions here is whether the gap in the use of the term between 850 and 950 is a mere coincidence due to the lack of sources, or it reflects a real abandonment of the term.

<sup>19</sup> It spoke about a “not small rebellion” led by the ‘egzarchon’ of one ‘Sclavinia’ near Thessalonica in 836 [Dvornik 1926: 61 (20), 62 (4)]. The Life was written after the death of the saint (November 20, 841 or 842) and before 847. In 847/848 one of the two informants of Ignatius died, and he himself was last recorded alive in 847 [Mango 1985: 644, 645; TODoB 2: 880; Brubaker, Haldon 2000: 211; Treadgold 2013: 104].

<sup>20</sup> Τὰς πέριξ Σκλαβηνίας was paid as mercenaries by Krum in 811 [Gregoire 1963: 423] (Scriptor Incertus); in 814 in Constantinople, a rumour was heard that Krum collected an army of πάσας τὰς Σκλαβηνίας [Idem 1934, 768] (Chronicle of 811). According to Mango and Treadgold, these seem to be parts of the History of Sergius the Confessor, written between 833 and 835 [Mango 1983: 400; Treadgold 2013: 92, 95, 96, 97]. However, a number of modern historians do not agree that these two fragments were written by the same author (for this see: [Neville 2018: 78, 81]). Proposed dates for their writing fall in the time period before Nicephorus Phokas (for discussion in the literature on this topic see: [Stephenson 2006: 93–100]), but in general early dating dominates.

<sup>21</sup> For example, at the time the term was current, Chronography was almost unknown and for sure could not have influenced an iconoclast emperor such as Michael II, while the time when the Chronography was popularized (after 843) symptomatically was also the time when the term ‘Sclavinia’ disappeared from the sources for the whole century.

<sup>22</sup> [Zonarae 1808: col. 1653]; [Etymologicon Magnum 1816: 225, 48]; [Cedrenus 1838: 771(23)–772(1)].

It seems that we possess enough sources from the period to make a valid conclusion. Some of them, such as John Kaminiates or the Chronicle of Monemvasia, speak widely about the Slavs in past and present, and one of them is even official: the *Taktika* of Leo the Wise. In addition, from this period we have some Histories that used Theophanes' Chronography as the starting point in one way or another. Some of them, like Josiph Genesii and Theophanes Continuatus, continued the Chronography and did not use the term in their Histories. More interesting is the other group, which incorporated Theophanes' Chronography into their histories. George the Monk first created a history based mainly on Theophanes and other sources, and completely discarded the word 'Sclavinia' from his work.<sup>23</sup> Leo Grammaticos (and later John Zonara) did the same. The only authors in this group who used 'Sclavinia' are Pseudo-Simeon and, later, George Kedrenos, who actually copied Pseudo-Simeon [Treadgold 2013: 77, 78, 94, 110, 339, 340].

Unfortunately, the part of the Chronicle of Pseudo-Simeon for the time before 813, which was based on a mixture of Theophanes Confessor and George the Monk, has not yet been published [Browning 1965: 406, f. 40; Moravcsik 1983: 501; Neville 2018: 121], but at least we could use, with caution, the text presented in Kedrenos "who plagiarized Pseudo-Simeon" [Treadgold 2013: 396 (f. 40)]. Using this premise, we can state that Pseudo-Simeon discarded the events from 758 and exchanged the term 'Sclavinia' with 'Slavs' in events from 658 and 689. He kept 'Sclavinia' in the events of 810, talking about the colonisation measures of Nicephorus, but made the location of these 'Sclavinias' unrecognisable by dropping out information about the colonists leaving Strymon after Krum's victories. He also repeated the information from Scriptor Incertus about Krum gathering allies from "all 'Sclavinias'. These modifications can be understood if we take into consideration that Pseudo-Simeon was part of the intellectual circle of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, in which 'Sclavinia' was used for Slavic formations in Dalmatia and out of the Balkans, but not for Macedonia<sup>24</sup> or Peloponnesus. It made the information of Byzantine campaigns against 'Sclavinias' in Thrace and Macedonia in the 7–8 centuries terminologically incorrect and something that had to be "fixed".<sup>25</sup> In addition, the information about 810 and colonisation of Christians "from all

<sup>23</sup> Compare the description of the campaign of Justinian II, which was against 'the Slavs' and 'the Slavic clans' (Nicephorus), or against 'Sclavinia' (Theophanes), but, according to George the Monk, Justinian "headed for a trip to the western regions, conquered the *great multitudes (plethe) of Slavs*" [Georgii Monachi 1904: 729(18)–730(4)]. For the time George's History was written, see: [Neville 2018: 87] (first version written in 846/847), [Brubaker, Haldon 2000: 172 (probably before 867); Treadgold 2013: 115, 116] ("after 867 but before 882" "and most probably between 870 and 875").

<sup>24</sup> In this article, we use Macedonia in the modern territorial sense.

<sup>25</sup> This is probably the reason why George the Monk, Leo Grammaticus and Zonara dismissed the information about the colonization in 810.

themes to the ‘Sclavinias’”, specifically in Strymon, seemed as a pure contradiction because Strymon was already a theme, and Constantine Porphyrogenitus even believed that Strymon was a ‘kleisoura’ from the time of Justinian II. Thus ‘Sclavinias’, the target of Nicephorus’ colonisation measures and Krum’s allies, could be re-interpreted by Pseudo-Simeon and his contemporary readers as Slavic principalities in Dalmatia.

Therefore, the gap of the use of ‘Sclavinia’ in Byzantine sources between 850–950 seems to be real, and should be connected with the fundamental political transformation in the Balkans as the result of Byzantine and Bulgarian expansion in the first half of the 9th c., which led to the disappearance of ‘Sclavinias’ in the interior of the Balkans and moved the imperial-Slavic border into Dalmatia.

#### ‘Slavic archontia’ (‘Sclavoarchontia’)

One of the oldest known cases of the use of the term is in the Life of Saint Methodius from Thessalonica, written in the end of the 9th century. For an event in the 840s is used the term “кѠАЖЕНИЕ [...] СЛОВѢНСКО” [Климент Охридски 1973: 187; Поп-Атанасов 2011: 49]. This is an exact translation of Greek ‘Slavic archontia’ [Божилев 1994: 24, 28] but not of ‘Sclavinia’, as some suggest [Chrysos 2007: 130; Curta 2011a: 87]. We could suppose that this was also the case of *Σκλάβοι Θεσσαλονίκης ἀρχοντίας*, mentioned in events between 856 and 867 [Porphyrogenetos 2012: 635 (3)], and Slavs under some archons in themes Thessalonica and Strymon, mentioned by Kaminiates in early 10 century. Later, in the 11 century, we find the exact term on a seal [Божилев 1994]. Byzantine seals of Slavic archons from the 8–9 c. could also serve as a plausible argument that the term existed even earlier.

For the authors who interpret ‘Sclavinia’ as an independent Slavic polity, it is easy to find a difference with ‘Sclavoarchontia’ in this regard, because the dependency of the latter on the Empire is obvious. But, if ‘Sclavinia’ was used for Slav formations dependent on the Empire, it makes it difficult to distinguish them from ‘Sclavoarchontias’ on that basis. They must be different words for the same category, or their difference has to be in the character and the extent of this dependency. The way Constantine Porphyrogenitus used ‘Sclavinia’—for the 10 century Croatia and Serbia—presents a good warning against the tendency to make these two categories one. Obviously, ‘Sclavinia’ could be pretty close to factual independence, and actually outside of imperial borders.

\* \* \*

Taking everything into consideration, the traditional chronology seems to be wrong: the term ‘Sclavinia’ was not in regular use in Byzantium in the 6–8 century. Its use for the Central and South Balkans coincides with the time

these territories were made dependent of the Empire, and for Dalmatia—with the time when Slavic principalities there recognised the imperial authority, at least theoretically. This makes the interpretation of the term 'Sclavinia' as Slavic formations somehow dependent on the Empire plausible. 'Sclavinia' was in use approximately at the same time as 'Sclavoarchontia', and both terms were likely used for Slavic units dependent to the Empire. Their correlation and differences, the realities that led to their appearance and disappearance are subject of the second part of this article.

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