From 'Nations' to 'Archontias' (II) Terms 'Sclavinia' and 'Sclavoarchontia' and Incorporation of Balkan Slavs in Byzantium

От «народов» к «архонтиям» (II) Понятия «Склавиния» и «Склавоархонтия» и включение балканских славян в Византии

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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 'Slavic nations', which had been used until the late 8th 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 century, but only when relations of such types had multiplied after Stauracius' expedition in 783, corresponding generic terms appeared and became regular.

Резюме

В статье рассматриваются термины «Склавиния» и «Склавоархонтия», 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 изменяющиеся во времени отношения с Империей тех, кто обозначались 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 «Склавоархонтия» 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», плативные коллективную дань, но сохранявшие некоторую внутреннюю автономию. С другой стороны, Империя стремилась добиться сотрудничества, предоставляя некоторым влиятельным славян-

ским *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

Defining 'Sclavinia' and 'Sclavoarchontia'

Sclavinias and Byzantine administration

Byzantine authors who used the term 'Sclavinia' (and which can be identified) worked in Constantinople, within the immediate circle of the Emperor or the patriarch. Among them, we have two emperors, one patriarchal syncellus and one sceuophylax of St. Sophia. The rest were either people from the emperor's immediate surroundings or people who occupied high positions in the court.[1] We do not have any reliable instance of the use of the term 'Sclavinia' in a source originating in the provinces. The latter is a significant fact for the Byzantine Balkans dominated by Slavic formations and populations. The term obviously had a limited, capital, and elitist use [Литаврин 1984: 195; Литаврин, Иванова 1985: 87].

However, whether it was official or just literary is a matter for discussion.[2] On the one hand, we have 'Sclavinia' in a letter exchange between the two emperors, which undoubtedly gives it an official character. Nonetheless, it is the only known case in Byzantium. On the other hand, we do not find 'Sclavinia' in the treaty with Bulgaria from 815/816 for example, despite the fact that several times the Slavs *dependent* or *independent* of the emperor are mentioned, as well as *their places* [Бешевлиев 1981: 104; Shepard 1995: 236]. Besides, the word 'Sclavinia' was not found on any seal in Byzantium [Curta 2016: 12].

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[1] George was a syncellus of the patriarch, Ignatius—sceuophylax of St. Sophia (806–815, 845) and Ecumenical Teacher (830–845) [Treadgold 2013: 101–104], Pseudo-Simeon was from the emperor's circle, and John Zonara was also part of the elite. Less certain are the cases of Scriptor Incertus and Chronicle of 811. If their author was the protospatharius Sergius Confessor, he fully fits this pattern: until 833, he was a quaestor, the empire's minister of justice [Treadgold 2013: 92, 95, 96], for George Syncellus' authorship of the Chronography [Idem: 44–49].

[2] "The term ... is most likely a literary, not administrative construct" [Curta 2016: 12]; for opposite opinion: [Gkoutzioukostas 2015: 646; Idem 2017: 11].

However, the word 'theme' (θέμα) similarly could not be found on the seals of the strategoi in the Balkans from the 8th to the 10th century, but this is not a reason to regard it as a literary construct. An important indication is that 'Sclavinia' was used almost exclusively in the plural form. It makes it hard to see whether it as a toponym derived from an ethnonym since such toponyms in plural are not known in Byzantium in the early Middle Ages, but it brings 'Sclavinias' closer to the former administrative terms used in the plural as 'three Galias', 'three Spanias', 'two Britannias', 'two Pannonias', 'two Mysias' and so on [Литаврин 1984: 198]. At least the usage of the plural indicates that it was a generalizing term. Theophanes uses 'Sclavinias', but when he speaks of a concrete 'Sclavinia' he preferred its name: 'Berzitia' or 'Belzitia'. The situation is entirely the same with Constantine Porphyrogenitus for whom there was a generalized term 'Sclavinias', and, by implication, each one that he spoke of fell into this category, but none was explicitly named 'Sclavinia'. Instead, its own name was used as "Croatia and other Sclavinias",[3] but never in such combinations as 'Sclavinia Croatia or Sclavinia Serbia'. In a similar way, even if we do not find the term 'Sclavinia' on a single seal there we probably find names of concrete 'Sclavinia' such as 'Bagentia' [Живковић 2007: 163–167]. In the same manner, we could also answer the question of why we do not encounter the term 'Sclavinia' in the provinces. For the Thessalonians the neighbouring Slavic uprising would not be a rebellion of an abstract 'Sclavinia', but rather the one of Rinhina, Strymon, Druguvitia, Sagudatia, and so on.[4]

The way the term 'Sclavinia' was used resembles that of the term 'theme': it first appeared in Theophanes' Chronography as well and was used anachronistically for the time between Heraclius and Irene [Zuckerman 2006: 128, 132; Haldon 2016: 245]. It was used mostly in the plural, but when a particular theme is mentioned its name is used instead, and we cannot find it on seals on the Balkans.

Crucial for understanding the nature of the 'Sclavinias' is that they were not part of the themes, they were rather "neighbouring" or "surrounding" them. This is evident from Theophanes' statement that Nicephorus I commanded soldiers from "all themes" to move to 'Sclavinias'. Similarly, in the letter of Michael II 'Sclavinias' were clearly distinguished from the themes: "Thraciae, Macedoniae, Thessaloniae et circumiacentibus Sclaviniis" [MGH LS, 3: 477 (10, 11)].[5] For Scriptor Incertus 'Sclavinias' gathered by Krum in 811 were also "surrounding" (τὰς πέριξ Σκλαβηνίας). Thus, the determinant

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3 Χρωβατία, ἀλλὰ καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ Σκλαβηνίαι and also οἱ Κριβηταινοὶ ... καὶ οἱ Λενζανῆνοι καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ Σκλαβηνίαι [Porphyrogenitus 1983: 9/ 9, 10, 30, 94 (56, 144)].

4 For a different explanation of the same phenomena see: [Curta 2011: 125].

5 As was correctly mentioned by Treadgold [1988: 73, 236], Slavs in the army of Toma the Slav came from outside of the Empire. The opposite position was supported by Živković [Живковић 2007: 163, 164, 171, 172].

"surrounding" for 'Sclavinias' is encountered in the only case of the official use of this term in Byzantium (letter of Michael II), and also in the Chronicle of 811, for which (under the hypothesis that the author was the former justice minister Sergius) it would also suggest that it is possible that "circumstance" of the Sclavinias was part of the official nomenclature or at least expresses how the 'Sclavinias' were viewed. However, qualifying as neighbouring or surrounding was characteristic not only of the 'Sclavinias'. In the Life of Io-anikios, it is claimed that Krum in 811 gathered "surrounding nations" (τὰ ὅμορα ... ἔθνη) [Mango 1983: 399]. Theophanes uses "surrounding" for the (Slavic) nations who were hired by Khan Teletzius in 763 (προσπαρακειμενος ἐθνῶν). The frequency of terms expressing neighbourhood and surroundings shows that both the 'Slavic nations' and the 'Sclavinias' were understood as something that occurs as a neighbourhood, around Byzantium or Bulgaria, and not an integral part of them. 'Sclavinias' in Dalmatia completely fit this pattern: none of them was a part of the theme Dalmatia.

In addition, we have an obvious chronological correlation between the inclusion of the Balkan territory into Byzantine themes and the disappearance of the term 'Sclavinia' in Byzantine sources: in the mid-9th century it happened in the Central and Southern Balkans, therefore in the 10th century the only remaining 'Sclavinias' in the Balkans were found in the neighbourhood of the theme Dalmatia.

Still, Byzantine "Slavic seals" from the 8–9th century and titles we find on them suggest that their bearers were part of the real or ideal Byzantine hierarchy, which could be a serious argument that they were a real part of provincial administration and of the themes as is suggested [Живковић 2007: 165, 166; Chrysos 2007: 127–130; Gkoutzioukostas 2015: 646].[6]

This raises two questions. First, did those seals belong to leaders of 'Sclavinias' or 'Sclavoarchontias', or even to random individual Slavs at the service of the Empire? Second, did seals and titles necessary, and in every case mean that those persons were part of the Byzantine administrative system?

It is difficult to distinguish in the scope of these seal-owners' leaders of 'Sclavinias' from 'Sclavoarchontias', cf.: [Curta 2006: 103; Науменко 2008: 18; Curta 2011: 116, 117, 124, 127; Vedriš 2015: 584]. In some cases it seems obvious that seal bearers were part of the Byzantine administration, such as *Δαργασκλαβου archon of Hellas, Petros hypatos and archon of Hellas, Λέων ... ἄρχων Βιχητῶν Ἑλλάδος* [Seibt 1999: 28, 34; Idem 2003: 460, 461], and their units were part of the themes. This should mean that they were not 'Sclavinias', but rather 'Sclavoarchontias'.

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[6] Similarly, [Gkoutzioukostas 2017: 11]: 'Sclavinia' "an 'accurate terminological form' to denote a geographical and political entity in the framework of the provincial administration".

On the other hand, seals and titles could also be given to independent foreign rulers, as it was the case with the title Protospatharius [TODoB, 3: 1748; Калинина 2011: 37], Patrikios (khan Telerig), and even Caesar (khan Tervel) [Бешевлиев 1981: 231, 232]. The titles owned by Slavic archons in the 8th–9th century suggest that they were powerful figures: we have *imperial spatharius*, *spatharokandidatos*, and *protospatharius* [Seibt 1999: 28–33; Idem 2003: 460–465]. The ranks *spatharius* and *spatharokandidatos* were usually attached to turmarchs[7] but also to *strategos* of the themes.[8] Protospatharius was the most common title of strategos on the Balkans in the 8th–10th centuries, followed by *patricios*, *spatharius*, and *spatharokandidatos*.[9] These titles were received from the emperor, *protospatharius* belonged to the senate, and *protospatharius* was never owned by the subordinates of strategos [Oikonomidès 1997: 205].[10] Therefore, Slavic seal bearers, in general, possessed titles between these used by turmarchs and strategos. Some of them were clearly leaders of 'Sclavoarchontias'. However, in some cases they could be leaders of 'Sclavinias', especially in cases with the title 'protospatharius', which matched the titles of strategos of themes, thus creating a plausible argument for their independence from the theme's leadership.[11]

One more possible but hypothetical argument for distinction between 'Sclavoarchontias' and 'Sclavinias' could be based on the etymology: the names of 'Sclavoarchontias' in some cases could be connected to former Slavic nations, but most often they derive from Byzantine territorial terms, while 'Sclavinias' seem always to be related to Slavic "national" names.

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[7] [Цветковић 2017: 93, 199]. According to Ostrogorsky, Slavic archontias in the Byzantine themes had the same role and significance as the tourmas in the older and the inner themes of the Empire, and the Slavic units of such archontias—as the tourmas unit [Острогорски 1953: 43].

[8] According to Klitorogium of Philotheos, titles we find on Slavic seals were of the 8th level (spatharius), 9th level (spatharokandidatos) and 11th level (protospatharius), then strategoi could own titles from the 11th (protospatharius), 12th (patrikios), and 13th (hypatos) levels, but lower levels were also common [Oikonomidès 1972: 91–93; Porphyrogennetos 2012: 709, 710, 728–733; Porphyrogenitus 1983: 50/$_{10, 26, 52}$ (232–235)]. For these titles see: [Bury 1911: 111–113].

[9] Spatharius for strategos of Thessalonica in the 9th century was as common a title as protospatharius (11 vs 12), [DOAKS]. Spatharokandidatos was a title usual for former strategoi, but could also be used by one in office (Νικήτα βασιλικῷ σπαθαροκανδιδάτῳ καὶ στρατηγῷ Θεσσαλονίκης [DOAKS]).

[10] For this topic, particularly interesting are duties that could be fulfilled by protospatharius as *representatives of the emperor in the themes* and *frontier general*. Spatharokandidatoi could be *frontier generals, tourmarhoi in the themes*, and *tourmarhoi of federates* [Porphyrogennetos 2012: 52 (732–735)], the last of which can be connected with the later position of Slavs as simahoi in the theme [Caminiatae 1973: 21, $_{2}$, 41, $_{50, 62}$ (20, 38); Leo VI 2010: C. 18 & 95, 470, 456, 457].

[11] We find this title in cases with the well-known and powerful Slavic tribes as "imperial archon and protospatharius τῶν Βελεγεζητῶν", "Ilarion imperial protospatharius and archon of Βα(γι)νιτίας" [Живковић 2007: 16; Коматина 2016: 87]. We should consider the title of the leader of the 836 Slavic rebellion that contains "exarch" in it as belonging to the same high category.

What did 'Sclavinia' and 'Sclavoarchontia' mean?

What was common in the formations called 'Sclavinias' in the 9th and the 10th centuries that allows to put them in a specific category?

In the first place, they were dependent on a certain state. It is the same in Byzantium, Kievian Rus' (until the middle of the 10th century), and the Frankish West. 'Sclavinias' were led by their indigenous Slavic archons whose succession of power, according to Constantine Porphyrogenitus, was hereditary [Porphyrogenitus 1983: 29/$_{78, 79}$, 126]. Such archons could be recognised eventually in Tihomir, Dargasklavo, Esagios, Akamiros and Βοιυδάργῳ [Seibt 2003: 460–465] in the 8th and the early 9th centuries: people with non-Christian names that were confirmed (through titles and seals) by the Emperor. From the case of Akamiros in 799 and the uprising in 836, it is clear that such archons possessed their own loyal military force that they could exploit for their purposes diverging from the interests of the Empire [Живковић 2007: 165].[12]

The Sclavinias had military obligations to the state. Thus, Thomas the Slav in 823 recruited soldiers from the Sclavinias as well as from the themes; later Dalmatian Sclavinias participated in the campaign against Bari under the imperial command [Porphyrogenitus 1983: 29/$_{105–115}$, 128]. This is equally valid for the Sclavinias under the Franks, Bulgaria, and Kievian Rus'.[13] The position of σύμμαχοι will be retained even after the assimilation of the Sclavinias in the Byzantine administrative system, as is testified by Kaminiates [Caminiatae 1973: 21, $_2$, 41, $_{50, 62}$. (20, 38)].

Paying tribute was yet another form of dependency (at least in some cases) [Науменко 2008: 168]. 'Sclavinias' in Kievian Rus' paid tribute (polyudie).[14] Slavic tribes in Bulgaria had been "under tribute" since 681 [Theophanes 1883: 359 (17); Louth 2008: 233; Hupchick 2017: 49]. Stauracius imposed tribute on the 'Slavic nations' he subordinated [Theophanes 1883: 456 (26–30); Shepard 1995: 234].[15] On the other hand, 'Sclavinias' in Dalmatia did not pay taxes. Part of the 'Sclavinias' attacked in 758, according to Theophanes, were made ὑποχειρίους, but some were just pillaged [Ibid.: 430 (21–22)].

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[12] There is an important parallel between one of the 'Sclavinia' archons in Kievian Rus' (so-called by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, see f. 39) such as Mall, who did not only kill the Kievian prince Igor in 945 but also was impudent enough to dream of taking supreme power over Kievian Rus'; and the similar case of Akamiros who dared to interfere in the struggle for power in Byzantium in order to change the supreme ruler.

[13] In the 810s, the Timochani, for example, were in "alliance" (*societate*) with the Bulgars [Einhardi Annales 1826: 205, 20–22].

[14] "Their Slav tributaries, the so-called Krivichians, and the Lenzanes, and αἱ λοιπαὶ Σκλαβηνίαι" [Porphyrogenitus 1983: 9/ $_{9–10}$, (56, 57)]; "τὰς Σκλαβηνιας of the Vervians and Drugovichians, and Kirivichians, and Severians, and the rest of the Slavs who are tributaries of the Russians." [Ibid.: 9, $_{107}$ (62, 62)].

[15] It is not clear whether it was imposed only once or on a permanent basis [Treadgold 1988: 73].

Ezeritai and Milingoi seem not to have had a regular and fixed tribute until 842 [Porphyrogenitus 1983: 50 /$_{22, 23}$, 232]. The leaders of some 'Sclavinias' could even receive some of the imperial taxes.[16] The Byzantine titles of some of the Slavic archons were linked with receiving a subsidy from the Empire [Neville 2004: 19–27].

In order to establish a clearer meaning of 'Sclavinia', it is important to define what was not 'Sclavinia'. The most helpful source on this matter is Constantine Porphyrogenitus who often speaks of 'Sclavinias' in De Administrando, but had never used 'Sclavinia' for 'Milingoi' or 'Ezeritai' in the Peloponnesusus. There are three fundamental differences between them and the subjects he called 'Sclavinia'. First, archons of Milingoi and Ezeritai were appointed by the strategos of the theme, hence they did not have to be domestic, the position was certainly not hereditary, and they had the rank of officials in the theme. Second, which follows from the first difference is that they were part of the theme. Thirdly, Ezeritai and Milingoi had to pay a fixed annual tax [Porphyrogenitus 1983: 50/$_{22, 23}$, 232].

A similar distinction could be seen in the descriptions given by Leo VI and Constantine Porphyrogenitus about the ways Basil I dealt with Slavs in the Balkans:

— The emperor "appointed for them archons whom they themselves approved and chose, from the family which they themselves loved and favored. And from that day to this, their archons come from these same families, and from no other" [Porphyrogenitus 1983: 29/ $_{78,79}$, 126] which the author directly linked with 'Sclavinias'.— The emperor "convinced these peoples to abandon their ancient national ways (τῶν ἀρχαίων ἐθνῶν ἔπεισε) and, having made them Greek, subjected them to rulers according to the Rhomaic model (ἄρχουσι κατὰ τὸν Ῥομαικὸν τύπον ὑποτάξας), and having graced them with baptism, he liberated them from slavery to their own rulers (τῆς τε δουλείας ἠλευθέρωσε τῶν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχόντων) and trained them to take part in warfare against those nations warring against Romans" [Leo VI 2010: 470, $_{454–458}$, C. 18, 95].

The third such parallelism could be seen in the Book of ceremonies: between 856–867[17] two delegations visited the Emperor. One was of Σκλάβοι Θεσσαλονίκης ἀρχοντίας called the subject of the emperor, another was Slavs who revolted ἐν χώρᾳ τῇ Σουβδελιτία [Porphyrogennetos 2012: 634, 635] and who were not directly called subjects of the Emperor.[18]

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[16] For example, Croatia, Zahlumia, and Travunia received Byzantine taxes from Dalmatian cities [Porphyrogenitus 1983: 30/ $_{124–142}$, (146, 147)].

[17] For dating see: [Ферјанчић 1959: 76, f. 284].

[18] It could be compared to the terminology used by Constantine Porphyrogenitus for 'Sclavinias' in De Administrando; when speaking about them in a territorial sense,

Therefore, there were two ways the Empire could deal with Slavs, the first of which is linked with the term 'Sclavinia' and the second could be linked with 'Sclavoarchontias'.

In Leo VI's description, we can recognise the process of turning 'Sclavinia' or 'Slavic nation' into 'Sclavoarchontia'. In his description, two moments are especially important. First, the term 'Greek', which here could not mean ethnical change. This term was used by Westerners instead of the term 'Romans', neither was it common in Byzantium nor did the Byzantines use it as an endonym. It seems to appear in the 10th c. Byzantium in reference to some simahoi troops, cf.: [Greenfield, Talbot 2016: 77]. The meaning of this term had to be Romano-barbarians, not fully Romanized barbarians. The second moment is in the same direction: even in his time the Slavs "just as strongly retained their ancient and customary independence" [Leo VI 2010: 448–449, 470. C. 18, 93]. Both moments underlined that Slavs kept some kind of autonomy and were not fully Romanized under 'Sclavoarchontias'.

If the above identifications are correct, 'Sclavinias' were client states out of themes, they had a domestic Slavic archon recognised by the emperor, maintaining the direct relations with him, the 'Sclavoarchontias' were formations inside the themes, autonomous but subordinate to strategos who appointed their archons, with the status of 'simahoi', paid tribute as collective, and their relations with the Empire went through the strategos, cf.: [Науменко 2008: 186–189].

It is important to notice that the Christianisation of the Slavs did not precede their political subjugation, and even during the process of including 'Sclavinias' into the imperial system it was not forced by the Empire [Иванова 1988: 26]. This phenomenon possibly indicates a high degree of independence of 'Sclavinias' and the autonomy in 'Sclavoarchontias' after that. According to Leo VI: "Even after they received the sacrament of salvific baptism, up to our own times, they just as strongly retained their ancient and customary independence" [Leo VI 2010: C. 18, 93 447–449 (470)].

The influence of the Empire stretched beyond the borders of the themes and kleisoures, including various vassal transitional forms from formal recognition of the suzerainty of the Empire to a more real subjugation. One of these transitional forms seems to be the 'Sclavinia'.

Another way to further clarify the meaning of 'Sclavinia' is to look at what was different in the situation before and after 'Sclavinias'.

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instead of 'Sclavinia' he used: ἡ χώρα Χρωβατίας [Porphyrogenitus 1983: 30/ 113, 31 / 28, 29 (144, 148)], ἡ χώρα Σερβλίας [Ibid.: 30/ 127 (146)], Ζαχλούμων χώρα [Ibid.: 32/ 21, 22, 33/ 1, 2 (152, 160)], ἡ τῶν Τερβουνιωτῶν καὶ τῶν Καναλιτῶν χώρα [Ibid.: 34/ 1, 2 (162)], ἡ Διοκλείας χώρα [Ibid.: 35/ 1, 2 (162)].

Slavs and the Empire before Sclavinias (the 7th–8th century)

Following the conclusion that 'Sclavinia' designated an entity dependent on the Empire, it seems logical to assume that before the appearance of the term and establishing of 'Sclavinias' the Slavs communities were independent. This is also the dominant position in the current discourse [Treadgold 1988: 19; Живковић 2007: 142–147, 149–155, 160–162; Fine 2008: 65, 71; Науменко 2008: 184; Sophoulis 2009: 122; Bulić 2013: 183, 184], even though there is room for some ongoing discussion.[19] The Slavs settled as conquerors on the best imperial lands such as Strymon, Thessalonica, Misya, Thessaly [Miracula 1979: 175, $_{1-12}$; Свод 1995: 328, 329, 346, 347; Mullerus 1861: 574]. The limited reach of Byzantine rule in the Balkans before the end of the 8th century is clear by archaeological and numismatic findings, seals, known episcopal sees, signs of economic activity, and information about the involvement of Balkan territories in the inner imperial life in Nicephorus and Theophanes. All this serves as evidence that before the end of the 8th c. just the city of Thessalonica, the theme of Hellas (Corinth and Athena), and a part of Thrace were real parts of the Empire [Barford 2001: 70–73; Curta 2011: 97–99, 112–115, 119–126; Sophoulis 2009: 122 f. 12; Ragia 2011: 96, 103, 106–109; Curta 2019: 306]. Byzantine expeditions against Slavs in the 7–8th c. were against independent enemies, not rebels.[20] In the only case we know more details about the expedition the Emperor officially informed his enemies about the attack, i.e. treated them as independent [Miracula 1979: 220 $_{12-20}$; Живковић 2007: 155]. Stauracius even organised a triumph after his victories against the Slavs [Theophanes 1883: 457 (4–6)]. The same conclusion is supported by a non-Byzantine title given to some Slavic rulers at the end of the 7th century: Ῥιγγίνων ῥηγός, οἱ τῶν τοῦ ἔθνους τῶν Δρουγουβιτῶν ῥῆγες [Miracula 1979: 209(3), 214 (19), 220 (19)]. The common practice to enslave Christians (something illegal in Byzantium [Литаврин 1995: 246 (f 109)]) at least until 768 [Mango 1990, 86 (8–15), 162]; cf.: [Miracula 1979: 213 (10–13)] clearly shows

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[19] Chrysos argued that "the Slavic tribes settled themselves in accordance to the conditions of some sort of agreements", in some "unattractive for the Slavs, but important for the Empire" places, and concluded that „the sovereignty of the Byzantine Empire in its legal and political dimension was perhaps hampered, but not seriously questioned during this turbulent period of the Middle Ages" [Chrysos 2007: 133–135; Similarly: Leveniotis 2011; Λεβενιωτησ 2015: 622].

[20] For supporting his thesis Chrysos put in descriptions of events which followed the arrest of Rinhinoi rex Perboundos [Miracula 1979: 208–211], words as "plans to rebel", "to prepare the insurrection", "revolt" which do not exist in the source in any form [Chrysos 2007: 133]. Cf. the opposite example in: [Porphyrogenitus 1983: 29/$_{7, 28, 29, 37}$ (232, 233)] where *the apostasy* of Peloponnesian Slavs is clearly labelled. That emperor ordered Perboundos arrested also is not an argument for his dependence on the Empire (as supposed in [Живковић 2007: 152]); emperors gave orders for arresting duxes that were not under their rule if they could, as is clearly shown by kidnapping the dependent to Bulgars Severian dux Slavun from his own country [Theophanes 1883: 436 (15)].

that these Slavs did not respect "the sovereignty of the Byzantine Empire in its legal and political dimension"[21] but were rather "completely independent" [Живковић 2007, 161]. The same was the situation in Thrace at the end of the 7th c. [Miracula 1979: 210, ₂₄, ₂₅; Живковић 2007: 147] and in Peloponnesus in the 8th c. [Свод 1995: 328, 329, 346, 347; Porfirogenito 1952: 91, ₃₃, ₃₄; MGH LS, 3: 477 (10, 11)]. The position of the Slavic tribes in this period could be described most accurately by words used in Byzantine sources: "without being subject to the Emperor of the Byzantines nor to any other" [Литаврин 1995a: 328, 329].[22]

Therefore, before being transformed into dependent 'Sclavinias', Slavic communities were independent from the Empire. This shift could also be followed through terminological changes in the sources.

The end of the era of Slavic nations

In the 6th–7th centuries one of the most frequently used categories for the Slavs was 'ethnos' (nation), a term that implies factual independence from the Empire. The Slavs were 'nations' for the Byzantine authors not only before settlement in the Balkans (Procopius, Maurice, Theophylact Simocatta), but also after (Theodor Syncellus: $\Sigma \varkappa \lambda \acute{\alpha} \beta \omega \nu \ \varkappa \alpha \grave{\iota} \ \lambda o \iota \pi \tilde{\omega} \nu \ ... \ \varepsilon \vartheta \nu \tilde{\omega} \nu$) and in the acts of the 6th Ecumenical Council [Свод 1995: 85, 212]. It is especially evident in Miracula: the Slavs were a 'nation', but Belegezitoi, Sagudatoi, Druguvitoi, Strymonitoi, Rinhinoi, Berzitoi and others were also 'nations' in their own right [Miracula 1979: 126 (28), 175 (4–6), 194 (26), 209 (10–12), 214 (19, 22, 28); Иванова 1987: 57].[23] The Slavs in Peloponnesus were labelled as a "Slavic nation" up until 805, when they were conquered and "completely destroyed" as a nation [Свод 1995: 328, 329, 346, 347].

The situation in the History of Nicephorus is already different. The term "Slavic nations" referred to those Slavic communities which were subdued by the Bulgars in 681 [Mango 1990: 26 (24), 90], and after this they were no

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[21] As Chrysos claims [Chrysos 2007: 135].

[22] Similarly, for Slavs not under Byzantine control as in the time of Michael III in Dalmatia: "independent ($\alpha \grave{\upsilon} \tau o \varkappa \acute{\varepsilon} \varphi \alpha \lambda o \iota$), subject neither to the emperor of the Romans nor to anybody else" [Porphyrogenitus 1983: 29/ ₆₁, ₆₂ (124)] and in Peloponnesus: "independent and self-governing" ($\alpha \grave{\upsilon} \tau o \nu \acute{o} \mu o \iota \ \varkappa \alpha \grave{\iota} \ \alpha \grave{\upsilon} \tau o \delta \acute{\varepsilon} \sigma \pi o \tau o \iota$) [Porphyrogenitus 1983: 50/ ₃₀ (232)]. It would obviously be a mistake to take too seriously the pretension in De Administrando for Slavic servitude from the beginning: this source, distant to the time of the events, has a serious ideological agenda to prove beyond any doubt the imperial right upon the Slavs against all possible Frankish and Bulgarian pretensions by presenting the Slavs as imperial subordinates from the time of the settling on the Balkans, and, accordingly, their factual independence before Macedonian dynasty as a consequence of the mismanagement of some unworthy emperors [Porphyrogenitus 1983, 29/₅₈₋₆₆, 31/ ₆,₇, ₅₈₋₆₀, 32/ ₅₋₁₅, ₂₁₋₂₉, ₁₃₃, ₁₃₄, ₁₄₂, ₁₄₃, ₁₄₆₋₁₄₈ (124, 146, 150; 152, 154, 158, 160). Cf.: [Λεβενιωτησ 2015: 609–612, 618].

[23] 'Tribes' and 'clans' were also used but were less common: [Miracula 1979: 215, 16].

longer called 'nations'. Those fought and subjugated by Byzantium as well were not 'nations': they, like the Slavs under Bulgaria after 681, were called 'clans' or 'multitudes'. Similarly in Theophanes the Slavs were labelled as 'nations' before settling in the Balkans, and in two more instances afterwards: when they were subordinated by the Bulgars in 681, and when they were subordinated by Byzantium with the Stauracius expedition in 783 [Theophanes 1883: 359 (13), 456 (27)]. In the description of the battle with the khan Teletzius in 763, we can notice that the term 'Slavic nations' existed in the source that Nicephorus and Theophanes had used, but this term seemed to be already unacceptable for them and was purposely edited by erasing either the word 'Slavs' or the word 'nations'.[24]

In contrast to Nicephorus who does not distinguish terminologically 'Slavs under Bulgaria' and 'Byzantine Slavs'—they are equally 'clans' or 'multitudes' for him—Theophanes makes this important difference. For him the 'Byzantine Slavs', with the exception of the Stauracius expedition, were 'Sclavinias'. They are the only 'Sclavinias' in his Chronography. This suggests that at the time when Nicephorus was writing in Constantinople, the Slavic communities were no longer seen as independent "nations", but there was still no terminology in place to express the new relations, perhaps because they were not completely established.

This terminological difference between Theophanes and Nicephorus helps us to clarify the time when this change from 'nations' to 'Sclavinias' had happened. Nicephorus' History was written somewhere between 775 and 797,[25] and Chronography between the years 807 and 815. The term 'Sclavinias' replaced 'Slavic nations' after 783 (Theophanes' last use of 'Slavic nations') and maybe even after 797 (when Theodor Studite used 'nation' for Strymonites, see below).

Something else can also give us a hint for determining the time of the change more precisely. Beginning with 789 in the Charlemagne courts, a clear tendency of *imitatio imperii* appeared with a strong fixation on Byzantium [Фавие 2002: 521–528][26], leading to a purposeful imitation of some Byzantine practices and terminology. This was also the year when the term 'Sclavinia' appeared for the

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[24] There Nicephorus speaks of "allies, not a small *multitude of Slavs*" [Nicephori 1990: 76, $_{13}$, 148] and Theophanes: "allies from *neighbouring nations*" and πλήθους ἐθνῶν [Theophanes 1883: 433 (2–7)].

[25] For the time when Nicephorus' work was written: [Mango 1990: 8–12 (before 780 г.); Литаврин 1995: 222 (between 775 and 787); Turtledove 1982: xii, (between 775–797, probably before 787); Brubaker, Haldon 2001: 171 (probably in 780); Treadgold 2013: 27, 35 ("probably soon after 790", "about 791" "but certainly before 797")]. See also: [Neville 2018: 73].

[26] "From Byzantium some signs of equality with the basileus were already borrowed. Clearly, the fixation in this direction was strong. The example is provided by the chancellery..." [Фавие 2002: 524].

first time in some chronicles connected to the Frankish court [MGH S, 1: 174 (21), 221 (75)–222 (1); MGH SS, 6: 84; Свод 1995: 447, 464, 466, 467, 471 f. 5; Фавие 2002: 426, 427]; while in the more "independent" chronicles different terminology (excluding the term 'Sclavinia') was preferred.[27] It suggests that possibly the Frankish court also "borrowed" the term 'Sclavinia' from the Empire, and therefore it had to appear in Byzantium before 789.[28]

It seems very likely that Nicephorus I inherited the term 'Sclavinias' from Irene. When 'Sclavinia' appeared for the first time as a term linked to contemporary events in 810, it was not something new but something pre-existing. Cf.: [Haldon 2016: 258]. It was customary and established enough to be used, even to describe the far past. Nicephorus I actually tended to go a step further and make 'Sclavinias' a part of themes through their colonization by a Christian population.[29] At this time (at least temporary) new themes in Slavs territories such as Strymon, Thessalonica, Peloponnesus, and Dyrachium were created [Curta 2011: 142; Idem 2019: 306–308].[30]

If this is true, at the time the Chronography was written 'Sclavinia' had been a relatively new, but already established term, expressing the political formula the Empire had created with some Slavic communities. It is the reason Theophanes used it *only* for the relationship between Byzantium and the Slavs. Soon the term would be extrapolated and used for Slavic communities with a similar status outside of the Byzantium. This usage was first registered in Scriptor Incertus and the Chronicle of 811.[31] In the 10th century, Constantine Porphyrogenitus transferred it to the Slavic formations not only in Dalmatia, but also in contemporary Kievian Rus', and for the Frankish state at the end of the 8th century.[32]

The emergence of the term 'Sclavinia' was not an isolated phenomenon but was accompanied by a number of others. The Slavic seals also express this

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[27] In Chronicles created in some Belgian monasteries, the terms 'Wenedonia' and 'Wilcia' were used [MGH S, 1: 12, 17], in Murbach group Chronicles: '*Wilcia*', '*Wiltiam*', '*patriam Wilciorum*' [MGH S, 1: 44; Свод 1995: 451].

[28] For other examples of direct consilience between Frankish and Byzantine reforms and practices noticed at the time of Nicephorus I see: [Cosentino 2017: 212–219].

[29] For the politics of Nicephorus I in the themes see: [Charanis 1946: 77, 78, 82; Treadgold 1988: 135–140; Gregory 2005: 203; Haldon 2016: 247–258].

[30] Some authors date the creations of the theme Thessalonica even earlier: after Stauracius expedition [Bulić 2013: 184], in the late 8th c. [Ragia 2011: 96].

[31] If we accept that the author was Sergius Confessor, then this use was between the years 833 and 835 while, unlike Scriptor Incertus, Theophanes speaks of nations ("ethnoses") who approached Krum in 811, as well as of τῶν Σκλαυινῶν ἄρχοντας who drank from the skull of the emperor [Theophanes 1883: 491, 17–22]. In the Life of Ioannikius by Sava it is also said that in 811 the Bulgars "gathered and took as mercenaries the neighbouring nations" (τὰ ὅμορα μισθωσάμενοι ἔθνη) [Mango 1983: 399].

[32] "Pippin and his three brothers ruled together over πασῶν τῶν Φραγγιῶν καὶ Σκλαβινιῶν" [Porphyrogenitus 1983: 9/ $_{9,10}$ (56), 9/ $_{107}$ (62), 28/ $_{19}$, 120].

"intensification" of the phenomenon starting from the end of the 8th century. We have at least 4 such seals from the second half of the 8th century and 9 from the first half of the 9th. Apart from the increased number of the seals, a change in the geographical distribution can be observed: seals before the middle 8th century are concentrated near the theme Hellas or, as an exception, Bagenetia. Now we find new seals from archons of Εβιδιτῶν / Αιβιδιτῶν, Βιχετῶν, Δρουγοβιτῶν [Seibt 1999: 27, 28; Idem 2003: 463–465; Oikonomidès 1998: 112, 114; Живковић 2007: 163–167]. This is paralleled by the appearance of territorial names in narrative sources clearly derived from the names of the former "*Slavic nations*" (Berzitoi—*Berzitia*, Belegezitoi—*Bel(ege)zitia*, Bayunitoi—*Βα(γυ)νιτὶας*, Sagudatoi—*Subdelitia*, Sclavinoi—*Sclavinia* [Theophanes 1883: 447 (13), 473 (34); Porphyrogennetos 2012: 634, 635; Seibt 2003: 460; Живковић 2007: 166, 167]. The time of the most widespread use of Slavic seals is dated approximately in the same period when the term 'Sclavinia' was used for the south and central Balkans, i.e. from the end of the 8th to the middle of the 9th century. The Slavic seals disappeared from the Central Balkans in the middle of the 9th century, simultaneously with the term 'Sclavinia' and appeared again in Dalmatia at the same time the term 'Sclavinia' started to be used again for this region in the second half of the 10th century.[33]

Therefore, the term 'Sclavinias' replaced 'Slavic nations' from the end of the 8th to the middle of the 9th century, underlining clearly the change from independence to (semi)dependence.[34] The information we possess links the appearance of the term 'Sclavinia' to the military expeditions against the Slavs by Stauracius (783), the establishment of the thematic system under Irene and Nicephorus I; the use of this term was clearly connected to the spreading of Byzantine authority and influence.

The era of 'Sclavinias'

The Birth of 'Sclavinias'

The time of the independent 'Slavic nations', unstable and to some extent anarchic formations that controlled the territory in the interior [Gregory 2005: 157; Whittow 2008: 228], was possible in the period when Byzantium was entrenched in the struggle for life or death with Persia and the Caliphate. For Byzantium it was never a problem to defeat some Slavic tribes and to make them formally recognize its power; the difficulties arose with keeping

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[33] For the disappearance of Slavic seals see: [Живковић 2007: 167]. See also the seal dated between 950 and 1050: Λέοντι βασιλικῷ σπαθαροκανδιδάτῳ καὶ ... (ἄρχων?)... Χροβατίας (Dumbarton oaks Seals 1, no. 16.1. [DOAKS]).

[34] Živković calls the period between Stauracius' expedition and the middle of the 9th century "transitional Slavonic independence", still "(semi)dependence" could be a more correct term [Живковић 2007: 167].

the Slavs under control after the army had left their land [Живковић 2007: 157; Sophoulis 2009: 122, 123], making every Byzantine success just a temporary one [Bulić 2013: 184]. Before the 780s the Empire did not have the administrative, ecclesiastical, demographic, or military capacity to successfully maintain control over the Slavs. The Empire had no loyal local population in the interior of the Balkans in the 8th century to rely upon and colonization of population from outside of the Balkan region was required to create themes in Macedonia and Hellas [Treadgold 1988: 19, 73, 137, 149–152; Иванова 1988: 13; Treadgold 1995: 26; Sophoulis 2009: 122, 123 f. 14; Цветковић 2016: 21, 35–36, 38].

The decreasing pressure from the Caliphate after the year 750, its defeat in 781, the peace agreement signed afterwards, and the paralysis of Bulgaria after nine campaigns arranged by Constantine V, gave Byzantium the opportunity to turn its attention to the 'Slavic nations' in the interior of the Balkans and to create a connection with Thessalonica and the theme of Hellas [Auzépy 2008: 256; Shepard 1995: 234; Treadgold 1988: 19, 69, 71–73; Живковић 2007: 162]. Thus, in 783 Stauracius was sent on a campaign "against the Slavic nations, descended to Thessalonica, and Hellas subordinated them and imposed on them all a tribute".[35] Its easy triumph was different from all the previous ones, which were intended only to neutralize and discipline the Slavs; it marked the beginning of a new era in Byzantine—Slav relations [Иванова 1988: 15; Науменко 2008: 186; Sophoulis 2009: 120; Curta 2011: 126; Bulić 2013: 184; Крсмановић 2016: 57].[36]

Despite taking control over many 'Slavic nations' simultaneously in 783, the Empire did not have the capacity to incorporate all of them directly into the themes. The Empire acted as it had been many times in the past: it changed the surrounding Barbarian world by encouraging its organization and coordination according to the interests of the Empire [Geary 2003: 78] simply by adapting the practices that had been already in use [Izdebski 2011: 61, 62]. As a part of this process, some influential Slavic leaders who had been friendly with the Empire were made allies by being given titles and related subsidies.[37]

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[35] ὑπέταξε πάντας καὶ ὑποφόρους ἐποίησε τῇ βασιλείᾳ [Theophanes 1883: 456, ₂₆₋₃₀].

[36] The results of this campaign are sometimes underestimated: [Curta 2006: 109, 110; Fine 2008: 79; Hupchick 2017: 68]. That restoration of Byzantine rule, economical and urban life could be noticed in Thessaly and Thebe after Stauracius' expedition, and 24 new episcopal sees appeared between 787–800 in Thessaly and Beothia [Rosen 2018: 104, 154, 159, 160, 162, 167], and 3 sees in the Peloponnesus [Curta 2006: 109]. It deserves to be underlined that Theophanes used the term 'Slavic nations' in relation with the Balkans just twice: for subjugations of Slavs under Bulgars in 681 and for the target of Stauracius' expedition.

[37] The value of the titles of Slavic archons we find in the seals was between 5 and 18 pounds of gold (360–1296 nomismata) [Porphyrogennetos 2012: 52 (692)], but their annual salary reached a maximum of one pound (72 nomismata) for the protospatharius [TODoB, 3 1991: 1748], a sum that was not particularly great for a principality, but for

The Byzantine support helped them to establish a more stable control over their compatriots, at the same time the need to raise levies or collect and pay tribute to the Empire pushed Slavic communities toward a more complicated level of organization. One of the results of this process was the establishment of regions with relatively clear and stable borders. This kind of organisation would have been difficult to establish during the former period of the gentile fragmentalism, a certain degree of population mobility, and the absence of stable institutions and hereditary authority among the Slavs [Treadgold 1988: 136; Fine 2008: 79].[38] In this way, semi-nomadic communities began to gain a territorial character and 'Sclavinias' came into being.

The first steps in this direction had been already made at the end of the 7th century when the Empire took measures to strengthen its position in a few crucial points in the Balkans [Науменко 2008: 184] but with a very limited range [Fine 2008]. Nonetheless, it had some effects: Slavic populations were resettled in the theme Opsikion or kleisoura Strymon under their own archons (as Nebul) [Mango 1990: 38 (13), 92; Науменко 2008: 184, 185]. At the end of the 7th—beginning of the 8th c. two categories of Slavic Byzantine seals appeared for the first time in the south Balkans. Two of them came from 'archontia' with a Byzantine name: archons of Hellas as Petros and Dragasklabou [Seibt 1999: 28; Idem 2003: 460, 461; Науменко 2008: 185, 186][39] inside the new theme Hellas; a few others appeared bearing the names of Slavic "nations" (Belegezitoi) or a territorial name derived from a 'Slavic nation' (Bagenetia [Seibt 2003: 460, 462; Живковић 2007: 16]), obviously, outside of a theme[40].

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some Slavic princes it could have been meaningful. It was greater than the tribute paid after 842 by Milingoi (60 nomismata) and more than the money Travunia and Zahlumia received from Dubrovnik (36 nomismata each [Porphyrogenitus 1983: 32/ ₃₀₋₃₈, 154].

[38] Maybe this is the reason for the big timeline gap in seals of archons of Bagenetia; one from the beginning of the 8th c. and the next in the middle of the 9th. Establishing the relation of the type 'Sclavinia' depended on the existence of a powerful ruler among the Slavs; when such a ruler died and was not replaced by another, such relations with the Empire were no longer possible.

[39] The Christian names of some of the archons could be used as proof that these persons were Romans [Науменко 2008: 186]. Such a conclusion is based on the idea that all inhabitants in Slavic regions were Slavs and that all Slavs were pagans. However, according to a letter from Pope Agathon to the VI Ecumenical Council at the end of the 7th century, many Christians lived among the Slavs (the source uses the term 'majority' [Свод 1995: 212]) so some caution is needed, because it is possible that some of these Christian archons were not Roman at all, but rather local Slavic(ised) people. The existence of two archons of Hellas at the same period, one with a Christian name (Petros) and another with a Slavic one (Δαργασκλαβου), also point in this direction [Seibt 2003: 460, 461; Науменко 2008: 185].

[40] That they were not under a theme in the case of Bagenetia in north Epirus is clear from its distance from the nearest theme (Hellas), and the fact that there are no other seals from archons of 'Bagenetia' in the next century and a half also deserved consideration which suggests that a concrete Slavic ruler was in question, not a creation of a permanent Byzantine administrative unit. In the case of 'Belegezitoi'—it is suggested by non-Christian names of archons as Tihomir and Akamiros [Seibt 2003: 462;

This marks the first appearance of a territorial name derived from an ethnonym in the fashion of later 'Sclavinia'. In these two kinds of seals, we could see the prototype of future 'Sclavoarchontias' and 'Sclavinias'.[41] However, at this early stage, this phenomenon is rather an exception than a rule in the relations between the Empire and the 'Slavic nations' that dominated most of the Balkans.

What was different at the end of the 8th century was the great number of Slavic societies that were subordinated simultaneously. When there were just a couple of 'proto-Sclavinias' such as Bagenetia or Berzitia, there was no need for a generic term for them. The multiplication of the subjects led to a need for creating a generic term such as 'Sclavinia', something not so different but parallel to the appearance of the term 'theme'.

In the process of entering established relations with the Empire, the Slavs in Byzantine eyes simultaneously lost their statute of foreigners and 'nations' but were "granted", at least theoretically, their lands. In Byzantine sources from the previous period, the independent Slavs had had their "places", but never their "lands".[42] The first hint at such "territorialisation" has already been mentioned, *Bagenetia* was established at the beginning of the 8th c. [Seibt 2003: 460], but this process had intensified at the end of the 8th c.: Berzitia (774), Belzitia (799), and, of course, 'Sclavinia'.

The reason for the creation of 'Sclavinias' and 'Sclavoarchontias' would be the weakness of Balkan themes. From the beginning it was obvious that the new themes were vulnerable and needed protection, hence the Empire tended to ensure Slavic cooperation for this purpose. Autonomous 'Sclavoarchontia' were created inside the theme [Науменко 2008: 186] in territories where Byz-

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Theophanes 1883: 473, 34] and lack of signs of Byzantine presence in the Thessaly and Thebe before the end of the 8th century [Rosen 2018: 154, 247]. For the location of 'Bagenetia' and the interpretation of the status of its archon: [Curta 2006: 103; Коматина 2016: 87–91].

[41] It parallels in some way the historiographic interpretation of the first themes and kleisouras in the Balkans during the reign of Justinian II as antecedents of future themes and kleisouras at the end of the 8th c. (for these interpretations in historiography see: [Цветковић 2016: 30–33])

[42] Usually "τοπος" was used [Miracula 1979: 209 (28), 211 (8), 217 (21, 22)]. Bishop Cyprian, captured by Slavs, was taken "to their places" (τοὺς ἰδίος τόπους)[Miracula 1979: 237 (11)]. Even in the treaty of 815/816 we still can find the term 'their places' for Slavs [Бешевлиев 1981: 104]. The Slavs had 'their places' of living, but they did not form recognizable and fixed geographical units in the consciousness and terminology of the Thessalonians. In Miracula many geographic determinants were used to describe where the Slavs lived, but two generations after the Slavs had become their neighbours Thessalonians still did not orient themselves geographically according to the names of the tribes, but rather vice versa: they determined where the tribes were located according to other geographical markers. See for example, "the area of Thebe and Dimitriada to the nation of the Belegezitoi" [Miracula 1979: 214, (11, 12)], "Barbarians ... from the river Strymon" [Ibid.: 215, 13]; "whole Slavic nation ... from Rinhina and from Strymon" [Ibid.: 209, 10, 11]; "Σκλαβίνων ἔθνη... from Strymon and Rinhina" [Ibid.: 211, 15]; "Σκλαβίνων ἔθνει into northern (regions)" [Ibid.: 213, 11, 12].

antium could impose a more direct control. In the regions where there was no possibility to directly subjugate some 'Slavic nation', as later in Dalmatia, the Empire tended to create stable relations with neighbouring Slavic leaders to ensure that they would not attack the theme and would even protect it as allies. This purpose of 'Sclavinia' is obvious in the case of Dalmatia, but it seems to be similar in the creation circumstances of the theme of Hellas and the appearance of seals of archons of Belegezitoi and Vihitoi in its neighbourhood. In some situations, the purpose of protecting the Empire's strategic interest rather than the need of strengthening the themes could be the reason for creating 'Sclavinia'-type relations, as that was probably the case with Bagenetia, Berzitia, and Serbia.

In this way two parallel paths of Slavs' incorporation into the Byzantine administrative system were established: first, 'Sclavinia' as a transitional stage between 'Slavic nation' and 'Sclavoarchontia'; and second, 'Sclavoarchontia' as a transitional stage between 'Sclavinia' and the complete romanisation of the Slavs [Науменко 2008: 188]. Depending on a specific situation the 'Sclavinia' stage could be skipped or the 'Sclavoarchontia' stage avoided, for example in the case when some 'Sclavinia' could evolve into an independent state.

Of course, establishing this system on a territory that can be compared to today's Greece in size needed time; this process had met serious resistance from the Bulgar khanate [Sophoulis 2009: 120, 125] which began a war against the Empire in 789, defeating Thracian's strategos on the Strymon [Theophanes 1883: 463 (28)–464 (2)]. The war continued until 797 and provided an opportunity for some 'Slavic nations', like the Strymonites, to temporary regain their independence [Живковић 2007: 164; Hupchick 2017: 62–64]. In March 797 the Slavs on the northern shore of the Aegean were called "the neighbouring nation" by Theodor Studite [Patrologia1860: 917–918 (C)] which is the last use of the term "nation" for the Slavs in Macedonia. The end of the war with the Bulgars in 797 led to the subordination of the "τῶν Σκλάβων εἰς τὸν Στρυμόνα" [Schreiner 1975: 49 (16)]. This seems to be the last possible year to date the writing of the History of Nicephorus, since in this text neither 'Sclavinia' nor similar terms were used, as well as the term 'Slavic nations'. As a matter of fact, the first and the only name of a Slavic archon connected with the Empire appears in Chronography under 799 (Akamiros). That year the expansionary period in the politics of Irene had ended replaced by a passive one [Treadgold 1988: 114, 124, 136].

'Sclavinias' in the first half of the 9th century

There is no reason to believe that Byzantium saw in the 'Sclavinias' a permanent solution to the problem with the Slavs in the Balkans. They were barely created when Nicephorus I took measures to make them an integral part of

the themes. The first step was an attempt at colonization in 807, which again caused a war with the Bulgars. Nor did the second and far larger colonization into 'Sclavinias' in 810 succeed in fulfilling this aim.[43]

The series of Byzantine defeats that followed (in Strymon (809), Serdika (809), Bulgaria (811), and Versinikia (813)) led to the desertion of colonists from Strymon and to the signing of a 30-year treaty between Byzantium and Bulgaria in 816 which in reality eliminated the success of Nicephorus I and partly those of Irene in the north-eastern Thrace, the Serdika region, and in Macedonia [Treadgold 1988: 149, 157, 159, 182, 190, 218; Sophoulis 2009: 126, 127]. In this treaty, we find the following categories: "Slavs under the emperor" and "other Slavs who are not subordinate to the emperor, in the area offshore". The treaty stipulated that the position of Slavs *under the emperor* should be restored according to the situation "before the war", i.e. before the first colonization of 807.[44] For *independent Slavs along the sea* (probably the Aegean Sea) it declared that they had to be returned to their villages [Беше-влиев 1981: 154, 158–160; Shepard 1995: 236; Живковић 2007: 170; Полы-вянный 2016: 12; Hupchick 2017: 113–114; Curta 2019: 92, 93]. The "Slavs under the emperor" were most likely *Sclavinias* whom Nicephorus I tried to convert into 'Sclavoarchontias' through colonisation, but their positions had to be restored. Accordingly, the term "independent Slavs" seems to suggest that these Slavs had been actually subjugated in the meantime and resettled, but now they were to regain their independence and their lands again.

This agreement with Bulgaria probably ruined or reduced the themes Thessalonica and Strymon (creating a dilemma in modern historic discourse concerning the time of their appearance), guaranteed the *status quo* in the coming decades, and extended the life of 'Sclavinias'.[45] Byzantium had to limit its ambitions and subsequently, its control over 'Sclavinias' remained fragile in the 820s and 830s [Shepard 1995: 237, 238]. During this period not only did 'Sclavinias' take part in the civil war of Toma the Slav, but there is also evidence as well of the pirate activity of the Slavs on the Strymon [Dvornik 1926a: 54 (23–25); Sophoulis 2009: 127, f. 27]. Some restrictions for Romans (and especially monks) to visit those territories without the permission of the iconoclast emperors are also suggested [Lemerle 1945: 115, f. 4; Рајковић 1955: 255, f. 7].

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[43] For the colonization measures of Nicephorus I in 807 and 810 and their consequences see: [Treadgold 1988: 149–164].

[44] The war was already underway in 807 when Nicephorus I was on a campaign in Thrace against the Bulgars [Theophanes 1883: 482 (25, 26) ; Hupchick 2017: 73].

[45] A retreat seems to have been made in Thessaly too. Between 787–800, 17 episcopal sees appeared in Thessaly but 7 of them permanently disappeared at the beginning of the 9th c. and in a council of 869 five bishops from newly created sees attended [Rosen 2018: 167]. In addition, in 799 Belegezitoi had their powerful dux Akamiros.

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From 'Nations' to 'Archontias' (II)
Terms 'Sclavinia' and 'Sclavoarchontia' and Incorporation of Balkan Slavs in Byzantium

The End of 'Sclavinias'

The subjugation of 'Sclavinias' into themes had a different chronology for every region in the Balkans. After Thrace, it seems that it first happened to the Slavs in Peloponnesus subjugated in the time of Nicephorus I between the years 805 and 808. Still, the process was not finished in all places: Ezeritai and Milingoi started to pay regular taxes after the crushing of the Slavic uprising there in 842.

In South-eastern Macedonia, alongside the road from Thessalonica to Constantinople, it happened between the years 836 and 837. Then the second decade of the 30-year treaty between Byzantium and Bulgaria expired, leading to a certain strain in their relations. One Bulgarian army was sent against the Smolianoi near Philippi and another one seems to have been dispatched to Thessalonica.[46] At the same time, we find a Byzantine army in Eastern Macedonia led by the Caesar Alexis Moselle who built the city of Caesaropolis there [Lemerle 1945: 152; Treadgold 1988: 292]. That was also the year of the "not small" uprising of the *exarchon* of 'Sclavinia' bordering Thessalonica. And it was not the only 'Sclavinia' around Thessalonica at this time.[47] Without engaging in the complicated question about the interpretation of these events, for us the end is important: Byzantium imposed direct control over Via Egnatia between the Mesta River and Thessalonica, Bulgaria accepted it and the treaty was extended. After that, some 'Sclavoarchontias' appeared in Strymon and Thessalonica. Saint Methodius from Thessalonica was appointed as the archon of the Slavic archontia. This was probably also the case with the Armenian Βάρδα βασιλικῷ σπαθαρίῳ καὶ ἄρχοντι Στρομόνος, whose seal dates before the middle of the 9th century.[48] Between 856–867[49] we find that a delegation of the *Slavs from Thessalonica archontia* visited the emperor [Porphyrogennetos 2012: 635, ₃].

In Western Macedonia, this subjugation seems to happen later. The signs of restoration of the Byzantine rule in Western Macedonia appeared later than in the Thessalonica region at the time of Basil I [Rosen 2018: 208, 215, 242, 247; Curta 2019: 310]. The seal of the archon of Druguvitoi dates to the middle of the 9th c. Maybe another 'Sclavinia' survived there a little longer: the χώρᾳ τῇ Σουβδελιτία is mentioned also between 856 and 867 [Porphyrogennetos

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[46] The inscriptions from Philippi speak about a Bulgarian military led by Kauhan Isbull sent against the Smolianoi [Бешевлиев 1981: 127, 133]. On the other hand, Leo Grammaticos mentions under 836 that "Michael the Bulgarian went to Thessalonica" [Leonis Grammatici 1842: 232, 1, 2]. Perhaps *Michael* was changed by *Malamiros*?

[47] The word ἐκείνης points that there were other 'Sclavinias' [Литаврин 1984: 197].

[48] [Seibt 1999: 31]; DO Seals 1, no. 37.1, https://www.doaks.org/resources/seals/byzantine-seals/BZS.1955.1.714. According to Lemerle [1945: 128, f. 1], it was 'Slavic archontia'.

[49] For dating see: [Ферјанчић 1959: 76, f. 284].

2012: 634 $_{11-13}$]. But, at the same time, the usage of the term χώρα linked it with the terminology of Kaminiates who described the former Slavic nations and 'Sclavinias' in the theme Thessalonica at the beginning of the 10th c. such as 'Druguvitoi' and 'Sagudatoi' as χώρῳ.[50]

The reasons for this different speed of subjugation and incorporation of the Slavs into the Byzantine state was most likely geopolitical: Peloponnesus was in danger of Arabian attacks and Byzantium needed to strengthen its position there earlier. The subjugation of the space between the theme Macedonia and the city of Thessalonica was delayed because of the Bulgarian opposition, and this of Western Macedonia, on the contrary, had to be accelerated exactly because of the Bulgarian expansion in the Central Balkans in the middle of the 9th c.

The date when the process of converting 'Sclavinias' into 'Sclavoarchontias' has finished for most of the Balkans could be specified based on Leo VI who linked it to the time of Basil I and the Christianisation of the Slavs. He is not alone in this: John Kaminiates also underlined the connection between the baptism of the Slavs and the end of the "old hostilities" between them and the Romans [Leo VI 2010: C. 11, 95 (470, $_{457-460}$); Caminiatae 1973: 10 (45, 57–65)]. Dioceses with Slavic names are noticed for the first time among the bishops who attended the Constantinople Council in 879: Petros of Druguvitia, Gregory of Zitunia, Damyan of Ezero, Stephan of Bagenetia, and Paul of Strymon. In the episcopal lists after this council, we find also the dioceses Velikia and Smolen.[51] At least some of those names (Druguvitia, Bagenetia, Smolen, Strymon) are known as names of former Slavic 'nations', or 'Sclavinias'. It means that the end of 'Sclavinias' could have happened between the years 867 and 879. Of course, we have to be cautious with Leo's pretension to glorify his father: it is obvious that in some places the process has started earlier under Michael III, Theophilos, and even Nicephorus I, and there may have been some kind of a transitional process that had just finished under Basil I.[52]

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[50] In one of the documents from 897 near Thessalonica χωρίον τῶν Δραγουβούτων [Наследова 1959: 219 (f. 6)] was mentioned. For the meaning of the word χωρίον—a place outside the city: [Sophocles 1900: 1177]. We find degradation from a dependent / allied unit to a settlement (*vilas nostrorum*) also in the case of Obodritoi in Enhardi "Fuldenses Annales" [MGH S, 1: 359 (31–33), 360 (2,3)].

[51] [Darrouzes 1981: Notitia 7, $_{299, 568, 569, 618, 619}$, Notitia 9, $_{185, 439, 440, 464, 492}$, Notitia 10, $_{218, 518, 519, 566, 580, 582}$; Йончев 1964: 117; Тъпкова-Заимова 1961: 158–161, 165; Иванова 1988: 23; Живковић 2007: 167, 253]. See also: [Dvornik 1926b: 91].

[52] The hypothesis that some sort of a transitional phase between 'Sclavinias' and 'Sclavoarchontias' may have existed in the time of Michael III could be supported by the fact that Saint Methodius was appointed as Slavic archon not by the strategos, but by the Emperor; also the Slavs from *Subdelitia* and from *Thessalonica archontia* between 856 and 867 contacted the emperor directly, not through the archon or strategos.

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The rebellion of Slavs from Subdelitia shows that between the years 856 and 867 Slavic archons were no longer the leaders of the Slavic uprisings, and their place was taken by the Slavs from the corresponding regions exactly as in the descriptions of the uprisings by Milingoi and Ezeritai. More importantly, those uprisings differ fundamentally from the earlier ones in Macedonia (up to 836) and the Peloponnesus (up to 842) and look more like a protest: the Slavs from the *region of Subdelitia* "ran in the forests" and then again approached the emperor.[53] Those on the Peloponnesus at the time of Roman Lakapenos made *apostasy* by simply stopping submitting or as it was carefully described: "their reluctant obedience, or more properly, their disobedience to the imperial commands" [Porphyrogenitus 1983: $50/_{35-40,}$ 234], but without attacking the Empire. It is pretty different from the *apostasy* made in Peloponnesus earlier when the Slavs "plundered and enslaved, and pillaged, and burnt and stole" [Porphyrogenitus 1983: $29/_{6-9,\,26-32,}$ 232]. The conflict was already of a different level and nature: the rebellions of the Slavs consisted in the fact that they ceased to fulfil their obligations, not in breaking the peace and starting a war with the Empire. There is a fundamental difference between them and a "king" of a "Slavic nation", such as Perboundos, who in the late 7th century was at "peace" with the Empire while planning to start "a war".

At the beginning of the 10th century, according to John Kaminiates, in the themes of Thessalonica and Strymon, the Slavs were "entrusted" to some archons (ἄρχοντας and Σκλαβήνων ἡγούμενοι) and were subordinates of strategos under whose command they fought to defend the city as συμμάχων Σκλαβήνων. [Caminiatae 1973, 6, $_{80,}$ 20, $_{74}$−21, $_{2,}$ 41, $_{50,\,62}$ (8, 20, 21, 38)]. Their position is related to the already mentioned position of Ezeritai and Milingoi in Peloponnesus after the suppression of their uprising in 842.

After transforming to 'Sclavoarchontias', archons no longer had to be Slavs, nor was their position hereditary anymore. Since the middle of the century, no "Slavic" seals have been found in the South and Central Balkans. The puzzle of their disappearance in this context can be explained by the fact that the indigenous dynasties in 'Sclavinias' have lost their position and were replaced by Byzantine officials when the former 'Sclavinias' were transformed to *archontias* in the themes [Науменко 2008, 187, 188].[54] Entering into themes marked the end of the "era of Sclavinias" [Ostrogorsky 1963: 3, 5, 6].

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[53] First example: "Σκλάβους τούς ἀτακτήσαντας ἐν χώρᾳ τῇ Σουβδελιτίᾳ and gone up into the mountains and later sought refuge with the autocrator and mighty imperial power", and another example was: ἕτεροι Σκλάβοι Θεσσαλονίκης ἀρχοντίας [Porphyrogennetos 2012: 37, 634, 635].

[54] Živković explains this by the withering away of the Slavic dynasties with which, and not with the tribes, the contracts were concluded by the Empire [Живковић 2007: 167, 168]. However, the extinction of all Slavic dynasties at approximately the same time does not look like something that could have happened naturally.

In the past Byzantium had to deal with domestic Slavic archons because the Slavs "did not want to obey another person meekly but … only themselves" and they preferred "the archon of their own tribe than to serve and submit themselves to the laws of the Romans" [Leo VI 2010: 470, $_{444-446}$. C. 18, 93,]. The Byzantine thematic organization needed to be intensified and more firmly established,[55] so that it could move to the next stage, i.e., including 'Sclavinias'' territories and replacement of the domestic archon with the Byzantine one, expressed by the same emperor with the words: "liberated them from slavery to their own rulers and subjected them to rulers according to the Romaic model" [Leo VI 2010: 470, $_{456}$. C. 18 & 95]. A clear parallel with what the Bulgars did to the Slavic tribes subjugated by them in 827: "Bulgari quoque Sclavos in Pannonia sedentes … et expulses eorum ducibus, Bulgaricos super eos rectores constituerunt" [Einhardi Annales 1826, MGH S, 1: 216 (32–34); Fine 2008: 107].

The "liberation" of the Slavs from their archons and the following replacement in those positions with officials appointed by Constantinople or Pliska marks the end of the semi-dependent units known as 'Sclavinias'. The Slavs were able to preserve some autonomy while the two main powers in the Balkans were in conflict, but not when they have reached an agreement on the division of the disputed territories. The example with the uprising of the Slavs and their two princes captured by Liutprand's father in 927 [Liudprand 2007: 111] confirms this conclusion. This happened at the time of the Bulgarian–Byzantine war which provided one last opportunity for some Slavic groups in Macedonia and the Peloponnesus to liberate themselves.

Reducing the size of the themes in the late 10th century led former 'Sclavinias' and the subsequent 'Slavic archontias' within the themes to now appear as separate themes (Like *Druguvitia* and *Smolen* [Живковић 2007: 254], or *Bagenetia* [Коматина 2016: 87; Науменко 2008: 188, 189]). This shows us that at least a part of the 'Sclavinias' was preserved and incorporated into the Byzantine system as whole units. Others continued as 'Sclavoarchontias'. The majority was fully assimilated.

The transformation of 'Sclavinias' into 'Sclavoarchontias' and later the Romanization of the majority of 'Sclavoarchontias' is also reflected in the terminology used in the sources. The entering of Slavic tribes into themes led to referring to them simply as "Slavs" from certain Byzantine administrative districts rather than by their tribal name (cf. Kaminiates, Leo VI), and certainly not as "Romans".[56] The Romanization of the Slavs in the 10th and the 11th

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[55] For the time and manner of establishing the thematic organization, see: [Haldon 1999: 43, 44].

[56] Just these Slavs that have kept some level of independence in their status or their actions are identified by their name. It is clearly noticeable in Constantine Porphyrogenitus who labelled all Slavs in Peloponnesus that had kept their loyalty to the Byzantium after 808 as "Slavs of the theme of Peloponnesus" [Porphyrogenitus 1983, 50/$_6$, 232] and only rebellious ones are labelled by their names: Milingoi and Ezeritai.

centuries is reflected by the rapid disappearance of the very term Slavs from the Byzantine sources.[57]

The evolution from independent 'Slavic nations' through the dependent 'Sclavinias' outside of the themes and (or) autonomous 'Sclavoarchontias' inside the themes to *Byzantine administrative units* seems clear enough.

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[57] [Mühle 2016: 13, 14]. It is a clear parallel with what had happened in Byzantine referenced in the previous source. After Slavs had lost their autonomy in Bulgaria in the first half of the 9th century, Byzantine authors from the middle of the century onward have stopped using the term Slavs for Bulgaria and erased the ethnonym *Slavs* from Theophanes narrative about Slavs in Bulgaria even while they have kept the same term for information about Byzantium [Georgii Monachi 1904: 728 (15)–729 (1–16), 732 (13‿18), 775 (11); Leonis Grammatici 1842: 159–161, 163, 168, 186 (11, 12), 191 (19, 20), 194 (4‿7), 204 (25), 286 (14, 15)].

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