
TRANSILVANICA

On the Problem of the Post-Avar “Ethnogenesis”

The 9th Century Polities of Banat,
Crişana, and Transylvania

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in Comparative-Historical Context (II)

*When comparing
Anonymus’ ethnic discourse
in *Gesta Hungarorum*
and the world of early
medieval gentes, the special
features of the post-Avar
‘ethnogenesis’ should be
taken into consideration.*

The Carpathian Basin in the 9th Century: The Ethno-Political Situation in Contemporary Sources

THE FIRST circumstance to be taken into consideration is that before the 9th century the Carpathian Basin including the territory between the Tisza and the Carpathians was under the control of the Avars.¹ The Avars’ policy toward local sedentary communities seems to be similar in nature to the patterns of political domination of other “steppe empires” that emerged in the Eurasian steppe, between Pannonia and Manchuria, in the Early Middle Ages.² According to some researchers, it was the domination of the Avars

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that prevented both the western and the southern groups of the Slavs, not to speak of those living on the fringes of the Carpathian Basin, from forming political structures of their own before the collapse of the qaganate in the late 8th century.³ If the popular hypothesis on the Avar origin of the Slavic social term “zhupan” is correct, this could be interpreted in the sense that during the period of the Avars’ domination over Slavic-speaking communities some persons called “zhupans” were included into the socio-political structure of the qaganate, constituting its lower level. As it is known from the social history of “steppe empires,” kin groups of the nomads were closely connected with their military organization.⁴ In this regard the Avar origin of the term “zhupan” would point to the application of this principle to Slavic-speaking communities, whose upper strata, that is, the “big-men” or “chiefs” of current anthropological theory, had to become part of the qaganate’s military hierarchy. The situation in the areas of Transylvania controlled by the Avars must have been the same. As was pointed out especially by Alexandru Madgearu, the 8th century spurs found at Șura Mică and Medișoru Mare in the southern regions of Transylvania should be interpreted as attributes of the local military elite of Romanian-Slavic origin, which was a sort of an intermediate link between the local population and the Avars, who, judging by the location of their cemeteries, controlled the salt mines in the Mureș River valley.⁵

In this respect attention should be paid to the fact that numerous group names attested in the so-called *Geographus Bavarus*, the 9th century description of *nationes* situated east of the East Frankish Kingdom, and other contemporary sources, such as various Frankish annals, refer to groups located outside the territory of the Carpathian Basin that was controlled by the Avars until the late 8th century. Besides the name *Sclavi*, which was a generalizing term used in Latin sources for the various Slavic-speaking communities of early medieval Central-Eastern Europe, including the territory of the Carpathian Basin, the only group name referring to the inhabitants of the area of the former qaganate in the 9th century was *Praedenecenti*. This group was mentioned for the first time in the *Annales Regni Francorum* under the year 822, among the “east Slavic peoples” who sent their embassies to the court of Louis the Pious.⁶ The second reference is that of the year 824, when the envoys of the “*Abodriti*, who are usually referred to as *Praedenecenti*,” came to the court of the Frankish emperor to ask for help against the Bulgars. They are reported to live in *Dacia*, adjacent to the Danube, near the borders of Bulgaria,⁷ that is, somewhere in the Middle or Lower Tisza region.⁸ One more record that is sometimes interpreted in historiography as referring to this community is the name *Osterabtrezi* found in the *Geographus Bavarus*, in its second part devoted to the description of *nationes* not bordering the Frankish realm.⁹ This name is thus interpreted as “eastern Obodrits,” while the *Nortabtrezi* mentioned in the first part of the *Geographus Bavarus* are identified with the well-known Polabian Obodrits. Meanwhile, there are also grounds to believe that both designations referred to the Polabian Obodrits, to their western and eastern part respectively.¹⁰

The existence of a vast space, for centuries controlled by the Avars, between the Polabian Obodrits and *Praedenecenti* makes it impossible to explain the presence of identical names of the two groups by “migrations.” For this reason the suggestion of some researchers that the name *Abodriti* used by the Frankish author had a secondary,

bookish, character in relation to that of *Praedenecenti* should be considered as the most appropriate explanation. Although the meaning of the name *Praedenecenti* remains unclear, there is a good reason to believe that it was not derived from a geographical name, thus being generally unusual for Slavic group identification. In historiography the name was usually interpreted as a Latin expression meaning “robbers and killers.” According to other interpretations, the name *Praedenecenti* is derived from a Slavic self-designation of the group. From among different Slavic transcriptions for *Praedenecenti* proposed in historiography, the Slavic expression that means “front men” seems to be the most appropriate.¹¹ If this community truly referred to itself or was called by others in this way, that is, as “robbers” or “front men,” then this could indicate the existence of a group identity that was in no way typical for Slavic “tribes.” It would be very tempting to interpret this unusual identity as the insiders’ or outsiders’ perception of the emergence of a new elite who filled the power vacuum in the territory to the east of the Tisza after the collapse of the Avar qaganate but had not yet formed an ideology for the making of what can be called “true ethnicity.”

The known account of the 10th century Byzantine *Souda Lexicon*, which speaks of the submission of the Avars to the Bulgar Khan Krum (803–814), indicates that shortly after its collapse the eastern part of the former Avar qaganate fell under the control of the Bulgars.¹² This information is corroborated by a much earlier source, the so-called *Scriptor Incertus*, which mentions the presence of the Avars among the troops of Krum during his wars with Byzantium in 811 and 814.¹³ However, there exists a certain skepticism among some scholars on such an early dating of the establishment of the Bulgar control over the territory east of the Middle Danube, caused by the fact that the first diplomatic contacts between the Frankish state and Bulgaria attested by contemporary Frankish sources date to the 820s, that is, to the time of Khan Omurtag.¹⁴ In any case, as follows from the evidence of the *Annales Regni Francorum* on the Bulgars’ pressure on the *Praedenecenti* living somewhere near the Middle or Lower Tisza, a considerable part of the eastern territory of the former Avar qaganate was really under the authority of the Bulgars at least by 824. It is too difficult to infer from the scarce evidence we have how far to the north the area controlled by the Bulgars extended. The *Geographus Bavarus* places the land of the Bulgars (*Vulgarii*) just after that of the Moravians (*Marharii*) and defines the former as a *regio immensa*,¹⁵ which obviously points to the far reaching nature of the Bulgar control over the territory situated south-east of Moravia. The report of the *Annales Fuldenses* for the year 892, which says the East Frankish King Arnulf sent his emissaries to Bulgaria with the request not to sell salt to the Moravians,¹⁶ implies the existence of a Bulgar control over southern Transylvania where salt mines had been known since Roman times.¹⁷

There are also grounds to believe that in the late 9th century, before the arrival of the Magyars, a certain part of the eastern post-Avar area in the Tisza region was controlled by the Moravians, a Slavic-speaking *gens* that succeeded in establishing a powerful polity with its heartland situated north of the Danube in the Morava River valley (in present-day Czech Republic) and western Slovakia. The data of Constantine Porphyrogenitus’ treatise *De administrando imperio* from the mid-10th century, where the so-called “Great Moravia” is placed south of the Magyars and described as the land con-

quered by them,¹⁸ should be considered as the strongest evidence of the political presence of Moravia in the Tisza region before the arrival of the Magyars. As follows from the report of the *Annales Fuldenses* for 884, the Bulgars had devastated the lands of Moravia in the previous year.¹⁹ This record is also interpreted as referring to the Tisza region, which was therefore a part of Moravia in 882. Svatopluk's expansion to the south is also mentioned in late sources. According to Simon of Keza's *Gesta Hungarorum*, Svatopluk, son of Morot, who had come from *Polonia*, subjugated the land called *Bracta* and thus became the ruler of the Bulgars and the *Messiani*.²⁰ The 16th century *Annales Boiorum* of Ioannes Aventinus (Jan Turmair), which is believed to be based on much earlier sources, speak directly of Svatopluk's of Moravia rule in *Dacia*, that is, the territory of the Tisza region.²¹ As a result, there exists a popular view in historiography that the Middle Tisza region was conquered by the Moravians under Svatopluk (870–894), who began to expand the area of Moravian control after the conclusion of the Forchheim treaty with the East Frankish Kingdom (874).²²

However, all this information is too intricate to make it possible to clearly map the area under Moravian rule. "Svatopluk's kingdom" (*regnum Zuentibaldi*) is attested in the entry of the *Annales Fuldenses* for 869,²³ the term being usually interpreted in historiography as referring to the Nitra region in southwestern Slovakia. The post-Avar Nitra polity, conquered by the Moravian ruler Mojmir in the 830s, is thus believed to have kept its status as a special administrative unit within the Moravian "realm."²⁴ Meanwhile, there exists another interpretation which treats Svatopluk's *regnum* as situated south of present-day Slovakia, in the Tisza region. The latter interpretation creates room for the thesis of "two Moravias," that is, a sort of modification of the theory of Imre Boba who many years ago tried to challenge the traditional localization of the Moravian heartland in what is now Czech Moravia.²⁵ The idea was ignored by the majority of scholars because, first of all, of the presence of strong archaeological arguments in favor of the traditional localization. Meanwhile, according to some researchers, who have supported Boba's school of thought, there existed not one, but two polities referred to as Moravia in early medieval sources, one of them situated somewhere in the southern part of the Carpathian Basin, namely in the territory of the former Roman province of *Pannonia Sirmiensis*²⁶ or in the Middle Tisza region.²⁷ The latter localization seems to be less controversial. In this case Svatopluk's *regnum* could be interpreted as a separate post-Avar polity associated with northern Moravia and could be identified with the "Great unbaptized Moravia" of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Moreover, it would be very tempting to use this information for interpreting the data of Anonymus' *Gesta Hungarorum* on the Crişana polity of Morout, the grandfather of Menumorout, because this name can be treated as derived from the Hungarian word "Marót" ("Moravian"),²⁸ and Morout himself can be identified with Svatopluk, as it was long ago suggested in historiography.²⁹ Though all those hypotheses lack positive arguments in the 9th century written evidence, they should not be totally excluded, especially when taking into consideration the unstable political situation in the Tisza region after the collapse of the Avar rule and the bookish origin of the very term "Great unbaptized Moravia" (cf. the term "Great Croatia," used in the same source for designating the polity of Boleslav I with its heartland in the Czech basin, which was also reported to remain

“unbaptized,” and that of “Great Bulgaria” used in Patriarch Nicephorus’ *Breviarium* and Theophanes’ *Chronographia* for designating Kubrat’s 7th century polity in the Pontic steppe zone).

The conclusion that in the 9th century some parts of the large territory between the Tisza and the Carpathians were under the political authority of Bulgar and Moravian rulers, however, does not mean that their control over this area, which was so distant from the places of power of both polities, was so strong as to make it impossible for local elites to arise. It is significant in this respect that Alfred the Great, the king of Wessex (871–899), in his additions to the *Chorographia* of Orosius, when listing the lands of Central Europe, mentioned *Dacia* as lying east of Moravia and reported that the Goths had lived there in the past.³⁰ It is difficult to answer the question whether this *Dacia* was a concrete political unit,³¹ or was only an image from ancient geography absolutely irrelevant to the 9th century ethno-political situation.³² Whatever this definition meant, its actualization in Alfred’s work points to the necessity, which the author of the description obviously faced, of giving an appropriate name to a region which he distinguished clearly from other areas at that time under the control of Bulgaria and Moravia.

A very interesting piece of evidence on the existence of a separate “ethnic” entity located in the eastern territory of the former Avar qaganate can be found in the Petition of Bavarian bishops addressed to Pope John IX, from the year 900. In this document the bishops protested against the establishment of a new ecclesiastical organization in Moravia in 899 because in their view this territory should belong to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the diocese of Passau. The bishops called the Pope’s attention to the fact that his predecessor John VIII, when consecrating Vihing bishop of Nitra in 880, sent him not to the territory of the Passau diocese, but to a certain newly baptized people (*in quandam neophitam gentem*), which had been conquered by Svatopluk of Moravia and then converted from paganism to Christianity.³³ Where could be located the *neophita gens* mentioned in the Petition? Researchers answered this question in different ways. While some of them were prone to identify the *neophita gens* with the Vistulans (*Vuislani* of the *Geographus Bavarus*), whose ruler, as follows from the Pannonian Life of St. Methodius, was subdued by Svatopluk and converted to Christianity, others considered the mysterious people to be the inhabitants of the Tisza region conquered by Svatopluk between 880 and 882. Finally, there exists an interpretation treating the *neophita gens* as the inhabitants of the Nitra region itself or of the adjoining territories of eastern Slovakia.³⁴

The interpretation according to which the *neophita gens* should be identified with the inhabitants of the Nitra region implies an inconsistency between the account of the Petition and the real situation. As is known, the Nitra region became a part of the Moravian polity at least in the 830s under Mojmir I, and not under Svatopluk. The Christianization of the region began long before the rule of Svatopluk, the first church in Nitra being consecrated by Adalram, the archbishop of Salzburg (821–836),³⁵ and Christianization, of course, going on under Moravian rulers Mojmir I and Rostislav. Meanwhile, Dušan Třeštík, who localized the *neophita gens* in the Nitra region, suggested that the bishops’ misunderstanding of the ethno-political situation in Moravia was caused

by the earlier status of Nitra as the centre of a separate principality headed by Svatopluk. The latter thesis is based on a view that is a sort of *communis opinio* in current historiography, whereby it was the territory of the former Nitra polity that was mentioned in the *Annales Fuldenses* under the year 869 as the “kingdom of Svatopluk” (*regnum Zuentibaldi*).³⁶ However, one can suspect the bishops of making such an error only if other solutions proved to be unacceptable. We do not think that it is so. The consecration of Vihing as the bishop of Nitra, the most important Moravian centre situated east of the Morava river valley, does not necessarily indicate that the *neophita gens* should be located somewhere in the vicinity of his residence, as no other centre in the eastern part of Moravia, that is, in what is now Slovakia, could function as the centre of a diocese. At the same time, the identification of the *neophita gens* with the Vistulans, who inhabited an area too distant from Nitra, beyond the Western Carpathians, is less likely than its identification with the inhabitants of the Middle Tisza region or eastern Slovakia.

The designation *quaedam neophita gens* applied by the bishops to the object of the Nitra bishop’s pastoral care may seem rather strange. One would think that a protest against the creation of a new church organization in Moravia demanded from the bishops a thorough argumentation of their position, including a precise definition of the *gens* subject to the jurisdiction of the church of Nitra. The question arises: why did the authors of the Petition not mention the name of the *gens*? Among the few researchers who touched upon the problem of the *neophita gens*, only Dušan Třeštík found it necessary to provide a special commentary on this matter. According to his interpretation, “either the *regnum* of Svatopluk was not a land of any *gens* and the Bavarian bishops, when writing in 900, were wrong, or its name had been forgotten, because after the 830s it was already irrelevant (as a name).”³⁷ Even without regard to the identification of the *neophita gens* with the inhabitants of the Nitra region, which is, in our opinion, rather dubious, the above alternative (either the bishops were wrong and the *gens* did not exist, or the bishops were right, but the name of the *gens* had been forgotten by the late 9th century) seems to be too rigid. It is apparently based on the conviction that the term *gens* should have been necessarily applied to a group having its own group name, that is, to an ethnic community *par excellence*. Meanwhile, in the light of the localization of the *neophita gens* in the Tisza region, the expression used by the Bavarian bishops can be interpreted as their attempt of describing in terms of ethnic discourse the vague ethno-political situation in this area, which differed greatly from other parts of Central Europe.

It is important that the absence of *gentes* comparable to the so-called Slavic “tribes” attested by the early medieval sources for the Western Balkans, North Central and Eastern Europe was characteristic not only for the Tisza region but also for other parts of the former Avar qaganate. Noteworthy is the way in which the Frankish sources designated a polity that around the year 800 emerged in the Middle Sava region, the southern periphery of the territory of the former Avar qaganate. The local ruler, Liudevit, who resided in *Siscia*, a settlement known since Roman times, was for the first time mentioned as *dux* of Lower Pannonia in the *Annales Regni Francorum* for the year 818, in the passage mentioning the arrival of emissaries from various *nationes* to the Heristal

residence of Louis the Pious.³⁸ In the account of the same event found in the *Vita Hludovici imperatoris* written by the anonymous author known in historiography as Astronomer, Liudevit figured as a governor (*rector*) of Lower Pannonia.³⁹ Thus, in both sources Liudevit was defined as a ruler of a territory, and not of any *gens*. The designation *dux Pannoniae Inferioris* given to Liudevit in the entry of 818 corresponds in its character to definitions used further in the Annals in relation to the Sava polity, in the context of Liudevit's rebellion against the Franks. In the entries of 819 and 820, when mention is made of the fight between Liudevit on one side and the Franks on the other, Liudevit's polity is referred to as "his region" or "his province" (*regio sua, sua provincia, regio eius*), whereas in the description of the same events placed in the *Vita Hludovici imperatoris* the "land of Liudevit" (*Liudeviti terra*) is mentioned.⁴⁰

The way the Frankish authors designated the Sava polity did not change between the 9th century and the time when it completely disappeared from written sources. In the passage of the treatise *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum* (870 or 871) relating to the arrival of the former Nitra ruler Pribina to Ratimir around the year 838, Ratimir's *ducatus*, supposedly identical to the Sava polity, is designated only as the "region of dux Ratimir" (*regio Ratimari ducis*).⁴¹ Braslav, who was at the head of the Sava polity in the late 9th century, is reported in the *Annales Fuldenses* for the year 884 to reign in the "kingdom between the rivers Drava and Sava" (*regnum inter Dravo et Savo flumine*).⁴² For 896 the same source mentions the "kingdom of Braslav" (*regnum Brazlavonis*).⁴³ The pilgrims from the Sava polity, whose names were recorded in the famous Cividale Evangelistarium, were attested as coming "from the land of Braslav" (*de terra Brasclauo*).⁴⁴ Thus, when referring to the political formation situated in the Middle Sava region, all the contemporary sources designated it by its geographical location or by the name of its *dux*.

A similar situation can be found in another post-Avar polity that emerged in the northeastern periphery of the former Avar area, with its centre at Nitra. Although the circumstances of the formation of the Nitra polity remain unclear, archeological data show that the process was connected with the decline of the Avar qaganate around 800. It should be noted that it was a local ruler and not a *gens* that figured in the available sources as the subject of political activity in this region. The treatise *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum* mentions "a certain Pribina" who was exiled by the Moravian prince Mojmir from Nitra, where he had a possession, according to the further description of his baptism.⁴⁵ While telling of all these events, the author of the treatise does not provide any special "ethnic" designation for the inhabitants of the region ruled by Pribina. This circumstance created room for the hypothesis of Pribina's belonging to the Moravian ruling clan, or at least, to the same political structure.⁴⁶ However, there is no need to make groundless constructions because the action of Mojmir against Pribina could have been a simple act of expansion. It is important that none of the sources referring to Moravia mentions the name of an ethnopolitical community that could supposedly correspond to the Nitra region. The mysterious *Merehani* of the *Geographus Bavarus* identified by some researchers with the inhabitants of the Nitra region, who would not be identical in this case to the dwellers of the Morava River valley mentioned in the same source as *Marharii*, is not in any way an exception. Even if the given identi-

fication is true, it reflects only the designation for people subjected to the Moravian rule (Moravians as *Merehani*) but not identical to the initial ethno-political community formed in the Morava River valley (Moravians as *Marhararii*).⁴⁷ Wherever Svatopluk's *regnum* mentioned in the *Annales Fuldenses* was situated, whether it was identical to the former polity of Pribina or not, it is significant that the given "kingdom," which was in any case situated in the territory of the former Avar qaganate, is defined in the source by the name of its ruler, without referring to any ethno-political community.

On the Fringes of the Post-Avar Area: The Case of the Croats

THE NOTION that the Slavic "tribes" differed in nature from Germanic *gentes* is based mainly on the character of Slavic "tribal" names. A great number of Slavic groups living both in the Balkans (*Narentani*, *Zachlumi*, Travunians, *Kanaliti*, Dioclitians), and in northern parts of Central Europe (Obodrits, Bohemians, Moravians, Vistulans, *Morizani*, *Glopeani*, *Sleenzane*, *Lunsizi*, *Dadosesani*, *Milcani*, *Opolini*, *Golensizi*, etc.) based their identities on their belonging to a local geographical environment.⁴⁸ However, there exist a few Slavic "tribes," such as the Croats, Serbs, Dulebs, etc., whose names did not originate in the geographical features of their settlement area and apparently had a non-Slavic origin. It is interesting that it is the name of the Croats (*Chroati*), who formed several stable communities on the outer slopes of the mountains that surrounded the territory of the former Avar qaganate, that differed greatly in its origin from the names of numerous Slavic groups attested in areas more distant from the Carpathian Basin.

The written evidence on the Croats living in different parts of Central Europe in the Early Middle Ages, as well as the existence of great number of toponyms derived from the word "Croat," were usually interpreted by scholars as evidence of an ancient Croat ethnicity which had allegedly existed as a single whole in remote times. Such an approach seemed to conform well to the evidence of the 10th to the 13th centuries narrative sources on the early history of Croatia, according to which the Croats had come to Dalmatia from the territory situated somewhere to the north of the Balkan peninsula. The opinion that the arrival of the Croats was the second wave of Slavic migration to the Balkans became dominant in postwar historiography, the notion of the large Slavic or Slavized "tribe" of the Croats remaining very popular till now. Modern advocates of this thesis date its formation usually to the period of the Slavization of the Iranian-speaking population of Eastern Europe. According to this theory, the Dalmatian Croats were only a part of the initial Croat "tribe" or "tribal union" that disintegrated during the great migrations of the Slavs.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, the fact that the Croats were not mentioned in written sources earlier than the 9th century ones, as well as the objective difficulties connected with any attempt of fitting the information on the Croats' migration to the Balkans to the realities known from the earlier sources, opened the way for another theory of the Croats' "ethogenesis," according to which the Croats were not an ethnic group before the establish-

ment of the Croat polity on the territory of Dalmatia. The theory was for the first time formulated by Otto Kronsteiner, who, on the basis of the territorial distribution of toponyms derived from the word “Croat” in East Alpine region, suggested that the original Croat identity was that of Avar military officials, who controlled the periphery of the qaganate.⁵⁰ This idea, supported by Herwig Wolfram,⁵¹ and then by Neven Budak,⁵² was developed in the works of Walter Pohl, who defined the supposed social stratum of the Croats as having played an important role in ethnogenetic processes on the former fringes of the qaganate that eluded Avar control after the year 626, when the Avar siege of Constantinople failed.⁵³ At the same time Omeljan Pritsak, in accordance with his notion of the internal organization of *Pax Avarica*,⁵⁴ considered the Avar Croats to be an Alanic clan, which, according to him, played an important role within the qaganate due to its commercial and political functions.⁵⁵ Finally, more recently Lujo Margetić attempted to substantiate the hypothesis that the original Croats were a military elite of the Avar qaganate during the so-called Middle Avar period (630–670s.). The researcher supported the old idea that the name “Croat” originated from that of the 7th century “Onogundur” (Onogur) leader Kubrat/Krovat⁵⁶ and followed Henri Grégoire who associated Kubrat’s anti-Avar revolt mentioned in Patriarch Nicephorus’ *Breviarum* with the qaganate’s internal war between the Avars and the Bulgars described by Fredegar.⁵⁷ He was also the first to use in the examination of this problem the results of archaeological investigations indicative of similarities between the material culture of the Middle Avar nomadic elite and some antiquities of the Dnieper region attributed to Kubrat’s “Great Bulgaria,” such as the famous Pereschepina treasure.⁵⁸ The latter circumstance was one of the reasons why Lujo Margetić formulated the hypothesis that under Kubrat/Krovat took place not only the liberation of the Bulgars from the control of the Avars, but also the spread of his political influence upon the core area of the qaganate within the Carpathian Basin which resulted in the rise of the new military elite of the “Hrovats” (Krovat’s men), who succeeded in retaining their position until the 670s, when a new wave of newcomers from the east forced them to the fringes of the Avar qaganate, including Dalmatia.⁵⁹ A new impulse to the idea of the non-ethnic character of the early Croats’ identity was recently given by the application to the problem of the instrumentalist approach to ethnicity. Danijel Dzino, who suggested the idea of treating the early Croat identity as a newly born social or regional identity of the local elite, was also the first who formulated the methodological framework of this approach in reference to the problem of the early Croat ethnicity in Dalmatia. This allowed him to shift the focus of his research from the problem of the “Croats’ origins” to that of “becoming Croats.”⁶⁰

The ethnogenetic tradition of the Dalmatian Croats that has reached us via the 30th chapter of Constantine Porphyrogenitus’ treatise *De administrando imperio*⁶¹ can be also interpreted in favor of the opinion that the Croat “tribe” is unlikely to have been formed in the age that preceded the emergence of the Avar polity in Central Europe. Ethnogenetic legends, as is known, have an important ideological function, explaining the origin and ensuring the preservation of ethnic groups.⁶² Characteristic elements of such legends are easily recognized in the story about the migration of the Croats. The analysis of the Croat legend within the context of other narratives of the

genre of *origo gentis*, the most typical feature of which was the presence of the motives of migration and victory over a strong enemy,⁶³ speaks in favor of understanding the initial Croat community as a society formed by a military group. Though the ethnogenesis model of the so-called “Viennese school” has long become widespread in the study of the Early Middle Ages, even now it is hardly applied to the so-called Slavic “tribes,” among which the Croats are usually reckoned. However, this fact did not deter Mladen Ančić, who recently presented his own vision of the subject, treating the initial Croat community as an analogue of early medieval Germanic *gentes* as described by Reinhard Wenskus.⁶⁴

So, in general terms we can imagine the Dalmatian Croat “ethnogenesis” as a gradual transformation of a military group in what can be called a fully fledged *gens*, that is, an ethno-political community. Meanwhile, as we know, early medieval *gentes* were seldom in a stable condition, repeatedly passing through serious transformations, each of which could be named “ethnogenesis.”⁶⁵ If we leave aside all those elements of the Croat ethnogenetic legend from the 30th chapter of *De administrando imperio*, with numerous analogies in other narratives of the genre of *origo gentis*, in our attempt to identify the circumstances in which the *gens Chroatorum* was formed we are left only with the non-Slavic names of the seven legendary Croat chieftains and the stable opposition “Croats vs. Avars.” The latter is especially significant because the Croats’ war with the Avars is placed in the legend at the very beginning of the Croats’ history, just after their migration to Dalmatia from the so-called White Croatia.⁶⁶ The most appropriate interpretation of this opposition that could help us understand the Croat “ethnogenesis” seems to be an assumption that the initial Croat group was an integral element of the Avar polity.⁶⁷ It would appear that a heterogeneous group of warriors that, judging by the names of their chieftains, consisted of Altaic, Iranian, and, possibly, Adyghe elements,⁶⁸ broke off with the qaganate supreme power. That change led to the new anti-Avar “ethnogenesis” in Dalmatia favored by Byzantium. Whatever the character of the initial Croat identity within Avar society, it is necessary to emphasize that the emergence of the ethnic group which will be known in Dalmatia under the name of Croats became possible only with its politicization (“Croats” as the enemies of the Avars), and not in any way earlier. In the long transformation of the group into an ethno-political entity *par excellence* two major phases can be clearly traced, the first of which is determined by the political emancipation of the bearers of the name “Croat” from the qaganate structures, and the second one by their adaptation of an ethnic discourse coming from the Frankish state that allowed them to represent themselves as the *natio Chroatorum*.⁶⁹ The Dalmatian Croats can be thus considered, on the basis of the analysis of their *origo gentis*, as a group of people that gradually developed into an ethnic unit (*gens*) under the leadership of a Christianized military elite opposed first to the supreme power of the Avars and then to that of the Franks.

The initial Croat group identity transformed into a gentile one not only in Dalmatia: some other Croat communities that emerged on the northern fringes of the qaganate gave rise to separate Croat polities that were known to exist in Silesia from the 9th to 10th centuries and in Galicia in the 10th century.⁷⁰ However, such a transformation was not ubiquitous. For instance, in Carinthia the presence of the Croat district (*pagus Croumati*)

was attested in the 10th century, and in Styria there existed a group of Croat settlements, as reflected in the mention of the special “Croat tithes” (*decima ad Chrowat*) in an 11th century document. The boundaries of these two small areas are marked by many toponyms derived from the word “Croat.”⁷¹ From the 8th to the 9th centuries both areas were integral parts of the Carantanian polity, therefore it is logical to suggest that the local Croats, notwithstanding their belonging to the heterogeneous *natio Carantanorum*, preserved the name of the Croats as an indicator of their social status.

The examination of the geographical location of early medieval Croat groups shows that all the important groups—Dalmatian, Alpine (Carantanian), Carpathian (Galician) and Silesian Croats—were located in areas near mountain ranges. It should be also noted that all the areas where the Croat groups were mentioned in early medieval sources were located outside the Carpathian Basin, which was controlled by the Avars. At the same time, it is necessary to admit that the spaces occupied by the Croats were situated not far from the Carpathian Basin, the Silesian Croats being located to the northwest of it, the Carpathian Croats to the northeast, and the Alpine and Dalmatian Croats to the southwest.⁷² In our opinion such a location of the Croat groups can be considered as an argument in favor of the opinion of those researchers who were prone to connect the initial phase of the Croat “ethnogenesis” with the great internal crisis that took place in the Avar qaganate in the 630s. If we assume that the Croats appeared in the areas where they were for the first time attested in early medieval sources as a result of their migration from the Carpathian Basin caused by their conflict with the central authorities of the Avar qaganate, can we consider them to be Kubrat’s supporters leaving the qaganate in the 630s? In any case, it was in the 630s, in the time of the great internal crisis within the *Pax Avarica*, that conditions favorable to the creation of an independent ethno-political entity in Dalmatia arose. In this connection it does not seem accidental that the story of the Croat migration from the 31st chapter of *De administrando imperio*—which is a sort of *Interpretatio Byzantina* of the Croat *origo gentis*, the main events of the Croats’ early history, such as their migration to Dalmatia and conversion—were associated with emperor Heraclius (610–641),⁷³ a contemporary of Kubrat. Thus, there are some grounds to believe that the Croats were one of the first quasi-ethnic groups to emerge within the Slavic-speaking world as result of the politicization of the initial Croat group identity connected with the social structure of the Avar polity.

The Post-Avar “Ethnogenesis”: Concluding Remarks

AS FOLLOWS from the contemporary evidence on the ethno-political situation in the 9th century Carpathian Basin, within the political structures that were formed on ruins of the Avar qaganate around the year 800 there were no ethno-political communities that would be comparable to what was usually meant in early medieval texts by the term *gens*. This could be interpreted as an indication of the fact that in the territory of the former qaganate the formation of new supra-local political structures caused by the rise of post-Avar elites (polito-genesis) outran that of the emer-

gence of new group identities (ethnogenesis). It seems that until the final collapse of their qaganate, the Avars prevented local elites from initiating socio-political changes that would be favorable to the emergence of new group identities. Though the collapse of the qaganate provided favorable conditions for the process of group identification on the basis of belonging to new post-Avar polities, the period between the late 8th and the late 9th century, when the Magyars arrived, seems to be too short for post-Avar elites to have succeeded in making separate *gentes* that would be recognizable to their Frankish neighbors. In this regard the Croat “ethnogenesis” on the fringes of the post-Avar area can be conceptualized as the earliest stage of what can be called *Stammesbildung* on the basis of military elites of the Avar origin. The Avar control over the regions where the Croat communities were situated, if it existed at all after 626, was at any rate much weaker than it was the case inside the Carpathian Basin, thus making it possible for local elites of Avar origin to transform their groups initially connected with the Avar structures of power into separate ethno-political units.

One cannot but admit that the polities of Menumorout, Glad, and Gelou, as described in Anonymus’ *Gesta Hungarorum*, are very similar in their principal characteristics to those attested for the 9th century post-Avar area by contemporary sources. Besides their main common feature, the absence of *gentes* that could correspond to those political formations, each of them is characterized by the heterogeneous composition of its population and the presence of strong rulers who were not associated with any gentile structures, thus being the main (if not the only) actors within their polities on the post-Avar political scene (Liudevit, Pribina, Braslav, Svatopluk at the head of his *regnum*). Do all those similarities between the polities described by Anonymus and those attested for the post-Avar area by the 9th century sources testify to the credibility of the *Gesta Hungarorum* as a source on the early medieval Carpathian Basin, or are we facing a mere coincidence that should be explained by the narrative strategies used by Anonymus in his presentation of early medieval power and ethnicity? The question, of course, needs further investigation and we hope that in the light of the 9th century evidence presented above, when discussing the possible discrepancy between Anonymus’ ethnic discourse and the world of early medieval *gentes*, the special features of the post-Avar “ethnogenesis” will be also taken into consideration.

□

Abbreviations

- AF* *Annales Fuldenses*, rec. Fridericus Kurze, Hannoverae, 1891.
ARF *Annales Regni Francorum et Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi*, rec. Fridericus Kurze, Hannoverae, 1895.
DAI Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, Greek text ed. by Gyula Moravcsik; Engl. transl. by R. J. H. Jenkins, Washington, 1967.
Documenta *Documenta historiae chroaticae periodum antiquam illustrantia*, collegit, digessit, explicuit Dr Franjo Rački (Monumenta spectantia historiam slavorum meridionalium, vol. VII), Zagrabiae, 1877.

- MMFH *Magnae Moraviae fontes historici*, vol. I, *Annales et chronicae*, Brunae, 1966; vol. II: *Textus biographici, hagiographici, liturgici*, Brunae, 1969; vol. III, *Diplomata, epistolae, textus historici varii*, Brunae, 1969; vol. IV, *Leges, textus iuridici, supplementa*, Brunae, 1971.
- SRH *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum tempore ducum regumque stirpis Arpadianae gestarum*, ed. Emericus Szentpétery, vol. I, Budapestini, 1937.

Notes

1. For a synthesis of the data on the presence of the Avars in Romania, see Ioan Stanciu, "Populațiile migratoare pe teritoriul Daciei: Avarii," in *Istoria românilor*, vol. 2 (*Daco-romani, romanici, alogeni*) (Bucharest, 2001), 717–725. For Avar archaeological finds in what is now northwestern Romania, with an extensive bibliography on the subject, see id., "Teritoriul nord-vestic al României și Khaganatul avar," *Acta Musei Porolissensis* (Zalău) 23/1 (2000): 403–451.
2. The Avars may have inherited the main features of their political organization from the powerful Rouran polity that existed in present-day Mongolia and the adjoining areas from the early 4th to the mid-6th century. The collapse of the Rouran qaganate under the attacks of the Turks coincides in time with the appearance of the Avars on the fringes of Europe. This allowed some researchers to consider the Avars to be the (political) descendants of the Rourans. If the reading of the famous Buyla inscription from the treasure of Sânnicolau Mare (Nagy-Szentmiklós) proposed by Eugen Helinski, who succeeded in reading it in Tungusic, is correct, this would be an argument in favor of some far-east connections of the Avars that could be best explained by migrations from the Rouran empire. See Eugen A. Helinski, "On Probable Tungus-Manchurian Origin of the Buyla Inscription from Nagy-Szentmiklós," *Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia* 5 (2000): 268–277. For different views on the origin of the Avars see Walter Pohl, *Die Awaren: Eine Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa, 567–822 n. Chr.* (Munich, 1988), 31–37. For the history of the Rourans see the collected information of contemporary Chinese sources translated into Russian by Vsevolod S. Taskin, *Materialy po istorii drevnikh kochevykh narodov grupy dumbu* (The materials on the history of ancient peoples of the Dong-hu group) (Moscow, 1984), 267–295.
3. According to Walter Pohl it was the collapse of the Avar qaganate that made possible the emergence of separate Slavic ethnicities in the Western Balkans, such as the Croats, Serbs, etc. See Walter Pohl, "Das Awarenreich und die 'kroatischen' Ethnogenesen," in *Die Bayern und ihre Nachbarn*, eds. Herwig Wolfram and Andreas Schwarz, vol. 1 (Vienna, 1985), 293–298. There are also some grounds to believe that the decline of the Avar power around the year 800 was one of the main factors for the appearance of competing chiefdoms among Slavic-speaking communities in what is now Poland. See Przemysław Urbańczyk, *Trudne początki Polski* (Wrocław, 2008), 48–52.
4. See, for instance, Nikolai N. Kradin, "Struktura vlasti v kochevykh imperiyakh" (The structure of power in nomadic empires), in *Kochevaya al'ternativa sotsial'noi evolutsii* (The nomadic alternative of social evolution), eds. Nikolai N. Kradin and Dmitry M. Bondarenko (Moscow, 2002), 87.
5. Alexandru Madgearu, "Pinteni datați în secolele VIII–IX, descoperiți în jumătatea de sud a Transilvaniei," *Mousaios* (Buzău) 4 (1994): 155–157; id., "Salt Trade and Warfare: The Rise of the Romanian-Slavic Military Organization in Early Medieval Transylvania," in *East Central and Eastern Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta (Ann Arbor, 2005), 104.
6. "In quo conventu omnium orientalium Sclavorum, id est Abodritorum, Soraborum, Wilzororum, Bebeimorum, Mavranorum, Praedenecentorum, et in Pannonia residentium Abarum legationes cum muneribus ad se directas audivit" (ARF, 159).

7. “. . . legatos Abodritorum, qui vulgo Praedenecenti vocantur et contermini Bulgaris Daciam Danubio adiacentem incolunt . . .” (ARF, 165–166).
8. According to the well-established view, this Dacia should be identified with the area of the early Roman province of Dacia constituted in the time of emperor Trajan. This identification is based mainly on the well-known passage from the *Life of Charlemagne* written by Einhard, which, while listing the lands conquered by the Frankish emperor, mentions Dacia on the opposite bank of the Middle Danube: “. . . post quam utramque Pannoniam, et adpositam in altera Danubii ripa Daciam, Istriam quoque et Liburniam atque Dalmaciam . . .” *Einhardi Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. Georgius Heinricus Pertz, 2nd edition (Hannoverae, 1845), 15. See, for instance, Madgearu, “Geneza și evoluția voievodatului bănățean din secolul al X-lea,” 195–196, with reference to the most important Romanian works on the subject. Most recently Predrag Komatina attempted to substantiate the old idea of identifying the Dacia of Frankish sources with the late Roman province of *Dacia Ripensis* that was situated south of the Danube. See Predrag Komatina, “The Slavs of the Mid-Danube Basin and the Bulgarian Expansion in the First Half of the 9th Century,” *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 47 (2010): 70–73. This interpretation, based on the negation of consistency of Einhard’s list of the conquered lands, implies the considerable revision of the extent of the Bulgar expansion under Krum, problematic in the light of the information of the *Geographus Bavarus* (see below).
9. *MMFH*, III: 288.
10. See in details Hynek Bulín, “Podunajští ‘Abodriti’: Příspěvek k dějinám podunajských Slovanů v 9. století,” *Slovanské historické studie* (Prague) (1960): 32–39.
11. Other variants such as “the Lower Tisza inhabitants,” “the Danube region inhabitants,” etc., are less convincing linguistically than the aforementioned Latin etymology. For various opinions on the origin of the name *Praedenecenti* see: Bulín, “Podunajští ‘Abodriti,’” 23–25; Imre Boba, “Abodriti qui vulgo Praedenecenti vocantur or Marvani Praedenecenti,” *Palaeobulgarica* 8, 2 (1984): 29–37.
12. *Suidae Lexicon Graece et Latine*, recensuit et annotatione critica instruxit Godofredus Bernhardy, vol. 1 (Halle, 1853), col. 1017–1018.
13. Ivan Dujčev, “La chronique byzantine de l’an 811,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 1 (1965): 212; “Scriptor Incertus de Leone Bardae Armenii filio,” in *Leo Grammaticus, Chronographia*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, 1842), 347. For a recent analysis of the accounts see Komatina, 63–66.
14. See, for example, Vasil Gyuzelev, *Srednovkovnata Bălgaria v svetlinata na novi izvori* (Medieval Bulgaria in the light of new sources) (Sofia, 1981), 71.
15. *MMFH*, III: 287.
16. “Missos etiam suos inde ad Bulgaros et regem eorum Laodimir ad renovandam pristinam pacem cum muneribus mense Septembrio transmisit et, ne coemptio salis inde Maravanis daretur, exposcit” (AF, 121–122; *MMFH*, I: 119).
17. For different views on the extent and character of the Bulgars’ control in Transylvania see recent overviews of the archaeological evidence in Alexandru Madgearu, “Transylvania and the Bulgarian Expansion in the 9th and 10th Centuries,” *Acta Musei Napocensis* (Cluj-Napoca) 39–40 (2002–2003): 42–44, 50–56; Uwe Fiedler, “Bulgars in the Lower Danube Region: A Survey of the Archaeological Evidence and of the State of Current Research,” in *The Other Europe in the Middle Ages: Avars, Bulgars, Khazars, and Cumans*, ed. Florin Curta with the assistance of Roman Kovalev (Leiden–Boston, 2008), 159–162; Victor Spinei, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads North of the Danube Delta from the Tenth to the Mid-Thirteenth Century* (Leiden–Boston, 2009), 56–61.
18. *DAI*, 52
19. *MMFH*, I: 114.

20. "Surrexit tandem Zvataplug filius Morot, princeps quidam in Polonia, qui Bracta subiugando Bulgaris Messianisquimperabat, incipiens similiter in Pannonia post Hunnorum exterminium dom-inari": Simon of Kéza, *The Deeds of the Hungarians*, edited and translated by László Veszprémy and Frank Schaer with a study by Jenő Szűcs (Budapest, 1999), 74. The meaning of the name *Bracta* used by Simon of Keza is unclear.
21. "Iidem tum Ugri, Venedos quoque qui Daciam incolentes Moraviae regulo Suatebogo parebant, magis ruina, quam strage adficiunt: universam Daciam subigunt. . ." (*MMFH*, I: 367).
22. See, for example, Lubomir E. Havlík, "Územní rozsah Velkomoravské říše v době posled-ních let vlády krále Svatopluka (Světoperľka) (K problematice vzájemných vztahů stře-doevropských Slovanů v 9. století)," *Slovanské Studie* 3, 16 (1960): 62–63; Peter Ratkoš, "The Territorial Development of Great Moravia (Fiction and Reality)," *Studia Historica Slovaca* 16 (1988): 145–149; Madgearu, "Transylvania and the Bulgarian Expansion in the 9th and 10th Centuries," 49–50.
23. While describing the great Frankish campaign against Rostislav of Moravia in 869, the report mentions Carloman's invasion of Svatopluk's land: "*Nec minus Carlmannus regnum Zuentibaldi nepotis Rastizi igne et gladio depopulabatur*" (*MMFH*, I: 101). The kingdom is also men-tioned further on in the report of Svatopluk to Carloman in 870: "*Zuentibald nepos Rastizi propriis utilitatibus consulens se Carlmanno una cum regno, quod tenebat, tradidit*" (*ibid.*, 102). As a separate ruler Svatopluk figures also in the address of Pope Hadrian II's bull "*Gloria in excelsis Deo*" cited in the 8th chapter of the Pannonian Life of St. Methodius (*MMFH*, II: 147–148). The 10th century chronicle of Regino of Prüm, when reporting of Louis the German's wars with the Slavs, mentions the campaign against the Moravian "kingdoms" in the plural (*Marahensium regna*) (*MMFH*, I: 136), that are interpreted as the kingdom of Rostislav and that of Svatopluk. See the commentary in *MMFH*, I: 101.
24. See, for instance, the commentary in *MMFH*, I: 101. The argumentation in favor of the identification of Svatopluk's kingdom with the Nitra polity is summarized in Jan Steinhübel, "Pôvod a najstaršie dejiny Nitrianskeho kniežatstva," in *Historický časopis* 46, 3 (1998): 410–411, according to whom it was in Nitra that, after the imprisonment of Svatopluk by the Franks in 870, Slavomir was enthroned by the local people. The main argument for the identification is, of course, the consecration of Vihing as bishop of Nitra in 880.
25. Imre Boba, *Moravia's History Reconsidered: A Reinterpretation of Medieval Sources* (The Hague, 1971); *id.*, "The Episcopacy of St. Methodius," *Die slawischen Sprachen* 8 (1985): 21–33; *id.*, "Wo war die 'Megale Moravia'?", *Die slawischen Sprachen* 8 (1985): 5–19; *id.*, "Saint Methodius and the Archiepiscopal See of Sirmium in Slavonia: Documents, Hagiographic Literature and Medieval Croat Tradition," in *Počeci kršćanskog i društvenog života u Hrvata od VII. do kraja IX. stoljeća: Drugi međunarodni simpozij o crkvenoj povijesti u Hrvata. Split, 30. studenog–5. prosinca 1985* (Split, 1990), 314–318. For the overview of the discussion on the supposed "southern Great Moravia" see István Petrovics, "Imre Boba i pitanje Velike Moravske," *Scrinia Slavonica* 8 (2008): 563–575; Florin Curta, "The History and Archaeology of Great Moravia: An Introduction," *Early Medieval Europe* 17, 3 (2009): 238–247.
26. It was the localization of Moravia's political and ecclesiastical centre in *Sirmium* (Sremska Mitrovica in present-day Serbia), that was the main point of Imre Boba's theory. This local-ization was supported by Charles R. Bowlus, who elaborated on Boba's thesis on the basis of the consideration of the Carolingian frontier system in the Carpathian Basin. See Charles R. Bowlus, "Imre Boba's Reconsiderations of Moravia's History and Arnulf of Carinthia's *Ostpolitik*," *Speculum* 62 (1987): 552–574; *id.*, *Franks, Moravians and Hungarians: The Struggle for the Middle Danube, 788–907* (Philadelphia, 1995). For the idea of the existence of two Moravias, one of which, known to Constantinus Porphyrogenitus as "Great Moravia," was situated in *Pannonia Sirmiensis*, see Péter Püspöki Nagy, "Nagymorávia fekvéséről," *Valóság*

- 11 (1978): 60–82. See also, with a slight different localization of the southern Moravia, Ferenc Makk, “Turkia egész szállásterülete,” *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis: Acta Historica* 117 (2003): 3–14.
27. See Toru Senga, “La situation géographique de la Grande Moravie et les Hongrois conquérants,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* (new ser.) 30 (1982): 533–540; id., “Morávia bukása és honfoglaló magyarok,” *Századok* 117 (1983): 307–345. Toru Senga’s localization of the “kingdom” of Svatopluk between the Danube and the Tisza was criticized by Dušan Třeštík as based on M. Vach’s erroneous interpretation of the passage from *Traditio Peretundae* of the Freising bishopric, in which Carloman’s campaign is mentioned. See Dušan Třeštík, *Vznik Velké Moravy. Moravané, Čechové a střední Evropa v letech 791–871* (Prague, 2001), 287–288, n. 29. Nevertheless, the idea that Svatopluk’s rule extended over the Middle Tisza region even before the year 870, though not corroborated by positive arguments, can not be totally excluded. One of recent modifications of Boba’s thesis, that of Martin Eggers, presupposes that the southern Moravian polity was situated between the rivers Tisza and Danube in what is now Banat, with the center at Cenadu Vechi. See Martin Eggers, *Das “Großmährische Reich” Realität oder Fiction? Eine Neuinterpretation der Quellen zur Geschichte des mittleren Donaupraumes im 9. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1995). The most controversial point of Eggers’s conception is his interpretation of what is traditionally considered the core Moravian principality in Czech Moravia as a polity of Avar origin that was allegedly annexed to the Tisza “Great Moravia” in 890. For the critics of Eggers’ localization of Moravia see, for example, Dušan Třeštík, “Martin Eggers, Das ‘Großmährische Reich’ Realität oder Fiktion? Eine Neuinterpretation der Quellen zur Geschichte des mittleren Donaupraumes im 9. Jahrhundert,” in *Český časopis historický* 94 (1996): 86–93, who rightly pointed to the absence of archaeological data in favor of the existence of the 9th century political centre in Cenadu Vechi. See also Madgearu, “Transylvania and the Bulgarian Expansion in the 9th and 10th Centuries,” 47–50; Jiří Macháček, “Disputes over Great Moravia: Chieftdom or State? The Morava or the Tisza River?,” *Early Medieval Europe* 17, 3 (2009): 261–264.
28. See György Györffy, “Die Erinnerung an das großmährische Fürstentum in der mittelalterlichen Überlieferung Ungarns,” *Acta Archaeologica* 17 (1965): 41–45; Pop, 115; Martin Eggers, “Beiträge zur Stammesbildung und Landnahme der Ungarn. Teil II: Die ungarische Landnahme,” *Ungarn-Jahrbuch* 25 (2000/2001): 11.
29. See Dezső Pais’s commentary for the text of *Gesta Hungarorum* in *SRH*, 49. The identification of Morout and his grandson Menemorout with the Moravian princes or governors supposedly installed by the Moravians for controlling the Middle Tisza region is quite popular in historiography. For different variants of such identifications see Havlík, “Územní rozsah Velkomoravské říše,” 65–66; Peter Ratkoš, “Anonymove Gesta Hungarorum a ich pramenná hodnota,” *Historický časopis* 31 (1983): 825–870; id., “Pramene o staromadžarských bojových akciách a zániku mojmírovskej Veľkej Moravy,” *Slavia* 55 (1986): 140–149; Imre Boba, “Moravia, Bulgaria, Messiani and Sclavi in Medieval Hungarian Sources,” *Macedonian Studies* 7 (1990): 3–20.
30. *MMFH*, III: 28–34.
31. See Peter Ratkoš, “K otázke hranice Veľkej Moravy a Bulharska,” *Historický časopis* 3, 2 (1955): 206–218; Madgearu, “Transylvania and the Bulgarian Expansion in the 9th and 10th Centuries,” 56; id., *The Romanians in the Anonymous Gesta Hungarorum*, 140–141.
32. See, for instance, Henryk Łowmiański, *Początki Polski. Z dziejów słowian w I tysiącleciu n. e.* (Warsaw, 1970), vol. 4: 329.
33. “*Antecessor vester Zuentibaldo duce impetrante Vuichingum consecravit episcopum et nequaquam in illum antiquum Pataviensem episcopatum eum transmisit, sed in quandam neophitam gentem, quam ipse dux bello domuit et ex paganis christianos esse patravit*” (*MMFH*, III: 235).

34. For a survey of the various opinions on this matter see Ján Steinhübel, “Štyri veľkomoravské biskupstvá,” *Slovanské štúdie* 1 (1994): 24–27; Třeštík, *Vznik Velké Moravy*, 278–279.
35. Steinhübel, “Pôvod a najstaršie dejiny Nitrianskeho kniežatstva,” 395–400; Třeštík, *Vznik Velké Moravy*, 113–125.
36. Třeštík, *Vznik Velké Moravy*, 115–116.
37. *Ibid.*, 131–132.
38. *ARF*, 149.
39. *Documenta*, 320.
40. *Documenta*, 321–324.
41. *MMFH*, III: 312. For the identification of Ratimir’s *regio* with the Sava polity, well-established in Croatian historiography, see most recently, Hrvoje Gračanin, *Južna Panonija u kasnoj antici i ranom srednjovjekovlju (od konca 4. do konca 11. stoljeća)* (Zagreb, 2011), 175–177. Another localization was suggested by Muhamed Hadžijahić, who interpreted the account of *Conversio* whereby Pribina crossed the river Sava in order to meet the Bavarian praefectus Ratbod in the sense that the polity of Ratimir was situated south of the Sava, namely, on the territory of northern Bosnia. See Muhamed Hadžijahić, “Pitanje vjerodostojnosti sabora na Duvanjskom polju,” in *Godišnjak Centra za balkanološka ispitivanja* (Sarajevo) 8, 6 (1970): 201–261; *id.*, “Das Regnum Sclavorum als historische Quelle und als territoriale Substrat,” *Südost-Forschungen* 42 (1983): 11–60; *id.*, *Povijest Bosne u IX i X stoljeću* (Sarajevo, 2004), 173–175. In any case, the issue concerns the polity that emerged in the territory formerly controlled by the Avars.
42. *AF*, 176.
43. *AF*, 190.
44. *MMFH*, III: 331.
45. *MMFH*, III: 310–312.
46. For details see Třeštík, *Vznik Velké Moravy*, 107–135.
47. *Ibid.*, 157.
48. For the Slavic group identities in the Western Balkans see most recently Neven Budak, “Identities in Early Medieval Dalmatia (Seventh–Eleventh Century),” in *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs: Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe*, 223–241. For the Slavic group names of the *Geographus Bavarus* referring to the territories of the present-day Czech Republic and Poland see, for instance, Jerzy Nalepa, “O nowszym ujęciu problematyki plemion słowiańskich u ‘Geografa Bawarskiego’: Uwagi krytyczne,” *Slavia Occidentalis* 60 (2003): 9–63.
49. For the idea of a Croat “tribe” of Iranian origin see most recently Alexander Maiorov, *Velikaya Horvatiya: etnogenez i rann’aya istoriya slav’an Prikarpat’skogo regiona* (Greater Croatia: the ethnogenesis and early history of the Slavs of the Carpathian region) (St. Petersburg, 2006).
50. Otto Kronsteiner, “Gab es unter den Alpendslaven eine kroatische ethnische Gruppe?,” *Wiener Slavistisches Jahrbuch* 24 (1978): 137–157.
51. Herwig Wolfram, *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum: Das Weissbuch der Salzburger Kirche über die erfolgreiche Mission in Karantanien und Pannonien* (Vienna–Cologne, 1979), 9.
52. Neven Budak, “Die südslawischen Ethnogenesis an der östlichen Adriaküste im frühen Mittelalter,” in *Typen der Ethnogenesis unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern*, vol. 1, eds. Herwig Wolfram and Walter Pohl (Vienna, 1990), 129–136; *id.*, *Prva stoljeća Hrvatske* (Zagreb, 1994), 11–12, 67–69.
53. Walter Pohl, “Das Awarenreich und die ‘kroatischen’ Ethnogenesisen,” in *Die Bayern und ihre Nachbarn*, 1: 293–298; *id.*, *Die Awaren: Ein Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa, 567–822 n. Chr.*, 261–268; *id.*, “Osnove hrvatske etnogeneze: Avari i Slaveni,” in *Etnogeneza Hrvata*, ed. N. Budak (Zagreb, 1995), 86–96.

54. See, for instance, Omeljan Pritsak, "The Slavs and the Avars," in *Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo*, vol. 30, *Gli Slavi occidentali e meridionali nell'alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1983), 353–435.
55. Omeljan Pritsak, "Kroatien und Kroaten während des neunten Jahrhunderts: Das Entstehen einer christlichen Nation," in *Počeci kršćanskog i društvenog života u Hrvata od VII. do kraja IX. stoljeća: Drugi međunarodni simpozij o crkvenoj povijesti u Hrvata. Split, 30. studenog – 5. prosinca 1985* (Split, 1990), 23–39.
56. For the history of the hypothesis formulated for the first time by S. Timon in the 18th century see Ferdo Šišić, *Povijest Hrvata u vrijeme narodnih vladara*, 2nd edition (Zagreb, 1990), 236, bilj. 1; Ivan Mužić, *Hrvati i autohtonost na tlu rimske provincije Dalmacije*, 7th ed. (Split, 2001), 425.
57. As noted by Henri Grégoire, there exists a similarity between two accounts about the Croats' migration to Dalmatia from the 30th and 31st chapters of Constantine Porphyrogenitus' treatise *De administrando imperio* and the story of Kubrat's anti-Avar revolt from Patriarch Nicephorus' *Breviarum*, including the probable identity between the name of the legendary Croat leader *Hrovatos* (and, hence, of the group name of the Croats) mentioned in the 31st chapter of *De administrando imperio* and that of the chief of the Bulgars called *Krovatos* in Theophanes's *Chronographia*, usually identified with the *Kuvratos* of Patriarch Nicephorus. See Henri Grégoire, "L'Origine et le nom des Croats et des Serbes," *Byzantion* 17 (1944–1945): 88–118. Several decades ago Istvan Bóna made an attempt of linking the conflict between the Avars and Bulgars in the Avar qaganate, described by Fredegar, with the anti-Avar revolt of Kubrat described by Patriarch Nicephorus. See Istvan Bóna, "Das erste Auftreten der Bulgaren im Karpatenbecken," *Studia Turco-Hungarica* (Budapest) 5 (1981): 104–107.
58. In his arguments, Lujo Margetić used Gyula László's theory of the so-called "double" qaganate that gave a hypothetical explanation for similarities in 7th century elite material culture between the Middle Danube and the Dnieper region. See Gyula László, "Études archéologiques sur l'histoire de la société des Avars," *Acta Hungarica* (Budapest) 34 (1955): 284.
59. Lujo Margetić, "Neka pitanja etnogeneze Hrvata," *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest* (Zagreb) 28 (1995): 38–56.
60. Danijel Dzino, *Becoming Slav, Becoming Croat: Identity Transformations in Post-Roman and Early Medieval Dalmatia* (Leiden–Boston, 2010).
61. *DAI*, 142–145. For the passages based on the Croat tradition within the 30th chapter see in details Ljudmil Hauptmann, "Dolazak Hrvata," in *Zbornik kralja Tomislava*, 96–101; Bogo Grafenauer, "Prilog kritici izvještaja Konstantina Porfirogeneta o doseljenju Hrvata," *Historijski zbornik* 5, 1–2 (1952): 15–32; Lujo Margetić, "Konstantin Porfirogenet i vrijeme dolaska Hrvata," *Zbornik Historijskog zavoda JAZU* (Zagreb) 8 (1977): 11–31; Mladen Ančić, "Zamišljanje tradicije: vrijeme i okolnosti postanka 30. glave djela *De administrando imperio*," *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest* (Zagreb) 42 (2010): 143–147.
62. See, for instance, Lech Leciejewicz, "Legendy etnogenetyczne w świecie słowiańskim," *Slavia Antiqua* 32 (1989/1990): 142; Dušan Třeštík, "Slav'anskiye etnogeneticheskiye legendy i ikh ideologicheskaya funktsiya" (Slavic ethnogenetic legends and their ideological function)," *Studia Balcanica* (Sofia) 20 (1991): 35; Herwig Wolfram, "Einleitung oder Überlegungen zur *Origo Gentis*," in *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern*, 1: 30–31; Lotte Hedeager, "Migration Period Europe: The Formation of a Political Mentality," in *Rituals of Power: From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, eds. F. Thews and J. L. Nelson (The Transformation of the Roman World, vol. 8) (Leiden–Boston–Cologne, 2000), 18–24.
63. Wolfram, "Einleitung oder Überlegungen zur *Origo Gentis*," 30–31.
64. Mladen Ančić, "U osvit novog doba. Karolinško carstvo i njegov jugoistočni obod," in *Hrvati i Karolinzi*, vol. 1, *Rasprave i vrela* (Split, 2000), 77. In this respect it should be

stressed that the view whereby the first Croats, who appeared in Dalmatia, were but a group of warriors was present in historiography for more than hundred years. The authors of the first half of the 20th century who considered the Croats to be a small military contingent, and not in any way a “tribe” —at least, in the sense of the word used by their opponents—insisted on the non-Slavic origin of the newcomers. For the interpretation of the initial Croat community as a military contingent of Gothic origin see Ludwig Gumplowicz, “Politička povijest Srba i Hrvata,” in *Hrvati i Goti*, ed. Robert Tafra (Split, 1996), 183–192 (the article was published for the first time in 1903); Jože Rus, *Kralji dinastije Svevladičev—najstarejši skupni vladarji Hrvatov in Srbov 454–614* (Ljubljana, 1931); Kerubin Šegvić, *Gotsko podrijetlo Hrvata i kako nastade Hrvatska*, trans. and ed. Vlado Nuić (Split, 1997) (first published in German in 1935). More recently the thesis of the Gothic origins was revisited by Ivan Mužić, *Hrvati i autohtonost na tlu rimske provincije Dalmacije*, 7th edition (Split, 2001). According to Niko Županić, the Croats were a group of warriors from the Caucasus region coming first to Central Europe and then to the Balkans. See Niko Županić, “Prvobitni Hrvati,” in *Zbornik kralja Tomislava* (Zagreb, 1925), 291–296; id., “Harimati. Studija k problemu prvobitnih Hrvatov,” *Etnolog* (Ljubljana) 1 (1926/1927): 131–138; id., “Prvi nosilci etničnih imen Srb, Hrvat, Čeh in Ant,” *Etnolog* 2 (1928): 74–79.

65. See, for instance, in reference to the Lombards: Jorg Jarnut, “Die langobardische ethnogenese,” in *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern*, 1: 97–102.
66. *DAI*, 142/143.
67. See Denis Alimov, “‘Pereselenie’ i ‘kreschenie’: k probleme formirovaniya horvatskoi etnichnosti v Dalmatsii,” *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana* 2 (4) (2008): 104–107.
68. On the etymology of the names of the legendary Croat chieftains see J. J. Mikkola, “Avarica,” *Archiv für slavische Philologie* (Berlin) 41 (1927): 158–159, who succeeded in finding Altaic forms for the majority of the names. However, for the name “Croat” (Hrvat) itself the Iranian etymology is now considered to be the most plausible, the question of its correlation to the name of the Onogur leader Kubrat/Krovat being disputed. The name “Kosendzis” was probably connected with the Kassogs, an early medieval group of the Adyge (Circassian) people. See Ljudmil Hauptmann, “Kroaten, Goten, und Sarmaten,” *Germanoslavica* 3 (1935): 347–353; id., “Seoba Hrvata i Srba,” *Jugoslavenski istorijski časopis* 3 (1937): 59–61.
69. See Dzino, 175–210.
70. See recent monographs on these two northern Croat groups: Jaroslav Bakala, *Bili Chorvati v proměnách raněstředověké Evropy: laborator netřetřítého enigmatu* (Opava, 2004).
71. On those groups see in details Bogo Grafenauer, “Hrvati u Karantaniji,” *Historijski zbornik* 11–12 (1958–1959): 207–231; Peter Štih, “Novi pokušaji rješavanja problematike Hrvata u Karantaniji,” in *Etnogeneza Hrvata*, 122–139.
72. See Denis Alimov, “Horvati i gori: k voprosu o kharaktere horvatskoi identichnosti v Avarskom kaganate” (The Croats and mountains: On the question of the character of the Croat identity within the Avar qaganate), *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana* 2 (8) (2010): 135–160.
73. *DAI*, 146–149.

Abstract

On the Problem of the Post-Avar “Ethnogenesis”: The 9th Century Polities of Banat, Crişana, and Transylvania in Comparative-Historical Context

The paper examines the 9th century ethno-political situation in the territory of the former Avar qaganate, that is, within the Carpathian Basin, in terms of the early medieval “ethnogenesis” interpreted as the making of ethno-political units (*gentes*). As a result, the so-called post-Avar “ethnogenesis” is conceptualized as a process whose main feature is the absence of fully fledged ethnic groups that could correspond to the polities that emerged on the ruins of the Avar qaganate and would be comparable to what was usually meant by the term *gens* in early medieval Latin sources. According to the author, this feature could be interpreted as the indication that on the territory of the former qaganate the formation of new political structures caused by the rise of post-Avar elites (polito-genesis) outran the emergence of new group identities (ethnogenesis). Another conclusion states that the polities of Menumorout, Glad, and Gelou, as described in Anonymus’ *Gesta Hungarorum*, are very similar in their principal characteristics to those attested for the 9th century post-Avar area by contemporary sources.

Keywords

Avar qaganate, ethnogenesis, *gens*, Menumorout, Glad, Gelou