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**THE ORIGIN OF  
THE ROYAL FRANKISH ANNALIST'S INFORMATION  
ABOUT THE SERBS IN DALMATIA\***

*Abstract:* The Serbs are mentioned for the first time in an Early Medieval source in the *Annales regni Francorum* in 822. The provenience of this information, from which source the annalist knew it are the key questions examined in this paper.

*Key Words:* Serbs, Dalmatia, *Annales regni Francorum*, Liudewit, Borna.

The section of *Annales regni Francorum* (hereafter: *ARF*) for the early years of the reign of Louis the Pious contains the earliest reference in an early medieval source to the Serbs.<sup>1</sup> The importance of this statement is of crucial significance – it is the earliest mentioning of the Serbian name in the Early Middle Ages. The character of this information is precious because it contains several important pieces of information. The Serbs are mentioned in the context of a description of the last days of a four-year long conflict between the Franks and a rebellious duke of Lower Pannonia, named Liutewid (819 – 822). In 822, Liutewid was finally forced to withdraw from his capitol - Siscia (the modern town of Sisak in Croatia) - and was forced to seek shelter among the Serbs (*Sorabos*). He was accepted as a refugee by one

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<sup>1</sup> For the authorship of the *Annales regni Francorum*, cf. *Carolingian Chronicles: Royal Frankish Annals and Nithard's Histories*, transl. By B. W. Scholz – B. Rogers, Ann Arbor 1972, 5 – 8 (= Scholz-Rogers, *Royal*); R. McKitterick, *Constructing the Past in the Early Middle Ages: The Case of the Royal Frankish Annals*, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 7 (1997) 119 – 121 (= McKitterick, *Case*); Eadem, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity*,

of the Serbian dukes,<sup>2</sup> but Liutewid killed him and took over his city. Having been unable to stay longer among the Serbs, from there he went to Dalmatia (i.e. so-called “Dalmatian Croatia”) where he was killed in 823 on the order of the Croatian duke Liudemisl, the uncle of the late Duke Borna.

### Sources:

#### ARF

##### 1.1 (822, August)

*Exercitus de Italia propter Liudewiticum bellum conficiendum in Pannonia missus est, ad cuius adventum Liudewitus Siscia civitate relicta ad Sorabos, quae natio magnam Dalmatiae partem obtinere dicitur; fugiendo se contulit, et uno ex ducibus eorum, a quo receptus est, per dolum interfecto civitatem eius in suam redegit dicionem. Missis tamen ad exercitum imperatoris legatis suis ad eius praesentiam se velle venire promisit.*<sup>3</sup>

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Cambridge 2008, 39 – 49 (= McKitterick, *Charlemagne*). The 19<sup>th</sup> century historiography, however, ascribed this part of the *ARF* to Einhard; cf. *Einhardi Annales a. 741 – 829*, ed. G. Pertz, MGH SS I, Hannoverae 1826, 124 – 127; *Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741. usque ad a. 829 qui dicitur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi*, rec. F. Kurtze, MGH SRG in usum scholarum 6, Hannoverae 1895, VII (= *ARF*). R. McKitterick suggested that the ‘Revised’ *ARF* covers (sc. *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi*) the period 741 – 801, and the rest of the *ARF*, from 802 to 829 is ‘common continuation’ of both the *ARF* and the ‘Revised’ *ARF*; cf. McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 27; Eadem, *The Illusion of Royal Power in the Carolingian Annals*, *The English Historical Review*, vol. 115, N<sup>o</sup> 115 (2000) 8. See, also, R. Collins, *The ‘Reviser’ Revisited: Another Look at the Alternative Version of the Annales Regni Francorum*, *Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History*, ed. A. C. Murray, Toronto 1998, 201 – 202. For the scholarly discussion about the “parts” of the *ARF* and their authorship, see, McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 33, notes 111 and 112. However, J. N. Adams, *The Vocabulary of the Annales Regni Francorum*, *Glotta* 55 (1977) 258 – 259, made the phyological analysis of the *ARF*, by which was able to recognize three major parts: – 1. 741 – 795; 2. 796 – 807; 3. 808 – 829. According to Adams, the first part was written by someone untouched by the Carolingian revival, while the second and third parts reveal a higher degree of classical learning. Therefore, it is not so important whether Einhard or someone else wrote the last part of the *ARF* (for instance, 820 – 829, which is of interest for this paper); it is far more important that here we meet an educated, prolific author – and such person should be, and also according to the content of his work, at the court; see also, Scholz-Rogers, *Royal*, 6 – 7; S. Airlie, *Narratives of Triumph and Rituals of Submission. Charlemagne’s Mastering of Bavaria*, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1999) 95.

<sup>2</sup> Not: *the only one of their dukes*, as in Scholz-Rogers, *Royal*, 111.

<sup>3</sup> *ARF*, 158.

*An army from Italy was sent in Pannonia to finish the war against Liudewit and, Liudewit abandoned the city of Siscia, at its approach, and sought refuge with the Serbs, a nation that, as they say, rules over the large portion of Dalmatia; whereupon he killed a tricky one of their dukes who received him, and took the city under his rule. He sent his envoys to the imperial army and promised that he himself would appear in front of the emperor.<sup>4</sup>*

## 1.2 (823, May)

*In eodem conventu (sc. in Frankfurt) tempus et locus alterius conventus habendi conductus est, November videlicet mensis et Compendium palatium; peractoque placito et dimissis primoribus, cum imperator iam inde digredi statuisset, adlatum est ei de interitu Liudewiti, quod relictis Sorabis, cum Dalmatiam ad Liudemuhslum avunculum Bornae ducis pervenisset, et aliquantum temporis cum eo moratus fuisset, dolo ipse esset interfectus.<sup>5</sup>*

*At the same assembly, the time and place of the next assembly was decided: the month of November in the palace of Compiègne. When meeting was over and when the emperor dismissed the officials as he had already decided to leave, he was informed of Liudewit's death who, after having left the Serbs, spent some time at Duke Bornas's uncle Liudemisl in Dalmatia who then killed Liudewit through trickery.*

<sup>4</sup> Not: *sent his envoys to the emperor, promising that he was willing to appear before him*, as in Scholz-Rogers, *Royal*, 111.

<sup>5</sup> *ARF*, 161. It has been proposed that the *Sorabos* were not related to the Serbs, but rather to the inhabitants of the small city of Srb which is only mentioned in the 14<sup>th</sup> century as being a *župa* in Croatia; cf. N. Klaić, *Izvori za Hrvatsku povijest do 1526. godine*, Zagreb 1972, 18, n. 2; I. Goldstein, *Hrvatski rani srednji vijek*, Zagreb 1995, 169. However, this understanding of *Sorabos* is impossible due to at least two reasons; 1. the *Sorabos* were a *natio*; 2. The *Sorabos* ruled over a large portion of Dalmatia (*quae natio magnam Dalmatiae partem obtinere dicitur*) which the inhabitants of a small city could hardly have done. For the proper understanding of this passage, that the *Sorabos* are in fact the Serbs, see, K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba I*, Beograd 1952, 111; R. Katičić, *Uz početke hrvatskih početaka*, Split 1993, 42, n. 24. There are also the *Sorabi* who lived along the Elba River regularly mentioned in the *Annales regni Francorum*. The *Sorabos* from Dalmatia, however, have nothing to do politically with these *Sorabos* along the Elba River, and their possible common ancestry is not primary objective of this paper. See, *ARF*, 159, where the assembly at Frankfurt (822) was mentioned when the emissaries of the Eastern Slavs arrived, among which were the Serbs (*Sorabos*) from the Elbe River – *In quo conventu omnium orientalium Sclavorum, ide est Abodritorum, Soraborum, Wiltzorum, Beheimorum, Marvanorum, Praedenecentorum, et in Pannonia residentium Abarum legationes cum muneribus ad se directas audivit*. Therefore, the same author made difference between the *Sorabi* from the Elbe River (which belonged to the Eastern Slavs) and those from Dalmatia.

In the *Annales Fuldensis* (The Annals of Fulda), there is a short, abridged story about Liudewit's last days, based on the *ARF*.<sup>6</sup> This shorter account of the same event is a fine example of a medieval author's approach to his sources, and which details such an author would have been ready to exclude. For instance, (see 2.1 below) the author neglected the description of Liudewit's adventures among the Serbs: the mention of the *Dux Serborum* and his murder, as well as Liudewit's occupation of the duke's city.

The abridged text of the *ARF* in the Annals of Fulda:

### 2.1

*Liudewitus, qui superiore anno propter exercitum contra se missum relicta Siscia civitate ad Sorabos, qui magnam Dalmatiae partem obtinere dicuntur, fugiendo se contulit, cum iterum in Dalmatas ad Liudemuhslum avunculum Bornae ducis pervenisset, dolo ipsius interfectus est.*<sup>7</sup>

*Liudewit, against whom an army had been sent the previous year, abandoned the city of Siscia and sought refuge among the Serbs, who, as they say, rule over a large portion of Dalmatia, and from there he left to Dalmatia to Liudemisl, the uncle of Duke Borna, who killed him through trickery.*

There are a number of questions which arise from this text. For instance: 1. Why did Liudewit take refuge among the Serbs? 2. Why was he received by the Serbian duke? 3. Why did he kill the Serbian duke? 4. Why did he leave Croatia, whose former ruler Borna (d.821) was a Frankish vassal and actually fought against Liudewit on the behalf of the Franks? 5. Where did these Serbs live? 6. Were they only one part of the wider Serbian tribe or was this territory a part of Serbia? 7. How many dukes did the Serbs have? 8. What does *civitas* really mean in this context? 9. What are the boundaries of Dalmatia in the annalists' perception? 10. Did Liudewit have previous ties with the Serbs, or was it his first contact with them? 11. When and how did the Serbs take possession of this vast area of Dalmatia? 12. From whom or whence came the information used by the annalist?

<sup>6</sup> For a summary of the scholarly problem of the authorship of the *Annales Fuldensis*, see, *The Annals of Fulda*, ed. T. Reuter, Ninth-century Histories, Vol. II, ed. J. L. Nelson, Manchester 1992, 1 – 11; S. Maclean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire*, Cambridge 2003, 24 – 28; R. McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World*, Cambridge 2004, 33 – 35 (=McKitterick, *History*).

<sup>7</sup> *Annales Fuldenses sive Annales regni Francorum Orientalis*, ed. F. Kurtze, MGH SRG 7, Hannoverae 1891, 22 – 23.

Most of these questions have rarely been considered in modern historiography, but the final question concerning the sources of information about Dalmatia and the Serbs available to the annalist has never been addressed. Without an answer to this final question, the other questions cannot be discussed. The possible documents used by the author or authors of the *ARF* are of vital importance to enable us to assess the reliability of this account.

As is most commonly accepted by scholarly opinion, the latest parts of the *ARF* (i.e. 807 – 820; 821 – 829) were not written by Einhard.<sup>8</sup> However, the primary question is not who wrote it, but rather which material the author himself had relied upon. If one takes a closer look into the *ARF*, especially its later parts (802 – 829) it will become apparent that most of the information comes from official reports<sup>9</sup> which were sent to the emperor (regardless the place in which he was at that moment) and then kept in the Archives – most probably in Aachen.<sup>10</sup> Military expeditions, which occurred on an annual basis during the long and prosperous rule of Charlemagne, most probably were described in the reports of the Frankish *comites* who led the Empire's armies against its various enemies.<sup>11</sup> The possible proof for the existence of written reports could be seen in the abridged, but still detailed description, of the battle between the Saxons and Abodrites from 798: *Caesa sunt ex eis in loco proelii quattuor milia, ceteri, qui fugerunt et evaserunt, quanquam multi et ex illis cecidissent, de pacis condicione tractaverunt* (*ARF*, 104). It is much more

<sup>8</sup> See note 1.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, *ARF*, 131 – 132 (s. a. 810) where the annalist says that the emperor received various news while he was absent from the palace (*diversarum rerum nuntii ad eum deferuntur*): that the Danish fleet which was devastating the shores of Frisia had returned home, that King Godfred of the Danes was killed by someone from his retinue (note the detail about his killer – from his retinue), that Wiltzi captured the *castellum* Hohbeck (note the detail: manned with the East Saxons), that his son Pippin had died (note the detail: on 8 July), and that legations from Constantinople and Cordoba had arrived.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, *ARF*, 139 (s. a. 813) stated that *Irmingarius, comes Emporitanus* (modern Ampurias in Catalonia) confronted the fleet of the Maurs, and *octo naves eroum cepit in quibus quingentos et eo amplius Corsos captivos invenit*. Such kind of details should be only from the written report of this *comes*. Note that it was HE (Irmingarius) who captured the eight ships and found captives, not THEY (sc. Franks). We assume that the annalist retold the original document in which Irmingarius wrote in the first person. Another example is from 826, when Balderic and Gerold, *comites* on the borders of Pannonia, informed emperor at the assembly that they did not notice any movement of the Bulgarian troops against the Franks; cf. *ARF*, 170. The complete analysis of the *ARF* would reveal plenty of such places.

<sup>11</sup> For the significance of the annual assemblies in Francia as a central institution of their government, see, E. J. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict under Louis the German, 817 – 876*, Cornell 2006, 226 – 229. Also, T. Reuter, *Assembly Politics in Western Europe from the Eighth Century to the Twelfth*, Medieval World, ed. P. Linehan – J. L. Nelson, London 2001, 432 – 450.

clear in the ‘Revised’ *ARF*, 105: *Nam in prima congressione quattuor milia eorum cecidisse, narravit legatus regis, Eburis nomine, qui in eodem proelio fuit, et in Abodritorum acie dextrum cornu tenuit.* The Latin phrase, for instance, *Clytarchus tibi narravit*, does not mean that *Clytarchus spoke to you*, but that you read in *Clytarchus*. Exactly the same meaning this Latin phrase sustains in this passage: Eburis wrote about it (lit. Eburis narrated about it).<sup>12</sup>

If one observes the entry under the year 819 of the *ARF*, where Borna’s conflict with Liudewit is described – even the brief analysis will reveal that the annalist relied on Borna’s report. Firstly, Borna marched with the great army (*magnis copiis*);<sup>13</sup> then there is the mention of the Cupa River (hardly known to someone who is not from these parts); then that (the tribe of) Guduscani deserted Borna, and that Borna was saved only because of his praetorians. Secondly, the author knew that Liudewit’s father-in-law, Dragomuž, was killed in the battle, as well as an extraordinary detail that he was fighting on the Borna’s side from the beginning of the rebellion. Thirdly, Borna managed to impose his rule over Guduscani again – obviously, some time (perhaps weeks or months) after the battle. Fourthly, there is a minute report how Liudewit devastated Dalmatia, in December 819, and what kind of strategy Borna applied to save the land. There is also a precise number of casualties inflicted to Liudewit during the (numerous) small-scale attacks by Borna – 300 horses captured and 3, 000 foot soldiers killed.<sup>14</sup> According to the structure of the information, the precise toponyms, numbers of casualties given for the whole campaign, the kind of strategy both sides utilized, – one must conclude that it should be from Borna’s report. Fortunately, the last sentence of the annalist relating to this passage strongly supports that conclusion: *Quae qualiter gesta fuerint, per legatos suos imperatori nuntiare curavit.* We can only assume that Borna’s emissaries did not report to the emperor verbally – since they had to describe the course of at least four months of war (and there are too many details preserved in this report to be remembered) – but delivered the report written by Borna.

Another evidence of the annalist’s systematic approach to the documents, which is plainly discernible, can be gathered from the events

<sup>12</sup> This interesting passage escaped to Scholz-Rogers, *Royal*, 76.

<sup>13</sup> When it comes to the description of an allied army, the latests part of the *ARF* is usually silent on its size; cf. *ARF*, 117 (802, an allied army of Saxons was sent to invade the land of the Saxons across Elbe River: *...et misso Saxonum exercitu*); *ARF*, 128 (809, Thrasco, dux of the Abodrites, invaded the land of Wiltzi, the allies of the Danes: *...collecta poplarium manu et auxilio a Saxonibus accepto...*); *ARF*, 141 (815, the allied troops of Abodrites and Saxons: *...omnes...copiae*); *ARF*, 149 (819, *exercitus Saxonum*). We assume that Borna was the one who wanted to underline his importance by exaggerating the number of his troops.

<sup>14</sup> *ARF*, 151.

described, for instance, under the year 820. First, the author writes about the political issues of major importance – the decision to dispatch three armies against the rebel, Liudewit, as well as the punishment of the *comes* Bera of Barcelona. These two cases fall both in to the matter of internal policy. Then, the author writes about the course of war against Liudewit during that year. The next issue regards foreign policy – the *foedus* made with *Abulaz regem Hispaniae*. The following issue is related exclusively to the naval matters – the activities of pirates in Italy (Sardinia), Frisia, the mouth of Sena, and finally the coast of Aquitaine. Note the geographical order of the regions – they are mentioned in geographical order counter clockwise.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the author speaks about the pestilence among the people and animals, then the agriculture and the weather problems resulting in very low yield of fruits and vegetables, as well as very bad quality of wine – in each part of the Frankish kingdom (*ut vix ulla pars totius regni Francorum ab hac peste immunis atque intacta possit inveniri*).<sup>16</sup> This was not a regional problem, but an overall picture of the epidemics and agriculture yields for the entire kingdom – and that is why this account should be based on the reports of regional *comites*.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, it appears that all these facts, contracted under the single entry of 820, were written down according to the number of various official reports of military, administrative and diplomatic provenience. Such a systematic approach of the author was possible only if he had at his disposal the material preserved in the Archive of the Palace (Aachen).<sup>18</sup> A person who lived in some ordinary place or monastery, could hardly know what happened not only in the different parts of the kingdom, or even in the far away regions such as Spain or Italy, let alone about the different issues regarding economics,

<sup>15</sup> The annalist provided similar ‘naval’ reports for the years 809, 810, 812, and 813; cf. *ARF*, 128, 130, 137, 139.

<sup>16</sup> *ARF*, 152 – 153.

<sup>17</sup> The same conclusion is valid for the entry for 810 – it should be based on the reports of the regional (provincial) *comites*: *Tanta fuit in ea expeditione boum pestilentia...et non solum ibi, sed etiam per omnes imperatori subiectas provincias illius generis animalium mortalitas inmanissime grassata est*; cf. *ARF*, 132.

<sup>18</sup> Apart from, L. Ranke, *Zur Kritik fränkisch-deutscher Reichsannalisten*, Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Berlin 1854, 415 – 456, who concluded that the *ARF* was composed at the court and *ex silentio* based on the documents, the similar conclusion was recently also advanced by, P. E. Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire*, Lincoln (NB) – London 1994, 86 – 87 (= Dutton, *Politics*). However, Dutton’s conclusion that the author of the *ARF* did not create the entries in well established order, because, “*he ordered disorder*”, is not well grounded. Namely, the “disorder” in the *ARF* could be the consequence of the immense number of documents, which were at the annalist’s disposal. From the hundreds of documents he had to make twenty or thirty lines of the text. It should be a difficult and torturous task even for modern scholar. About the whole range of possible sources see also, McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 26; McKitterick, *History*, 31, 34, 175.

military, finance, agriculture, or ecclesiastical matters.<sup>19</sup> If there are any doubts about the existence of the very rich Archive of the Aachen's palace, there are the words of the annalist who said that if one wants to be informed about the contents of the particular documents he previously mentioned, he can find them (sc. their copies) in the *Archive of the palace* (*in archivo palatii exemplaria illarum habeantur*).<sup>20</sup> Finally, it would have been impossible for the annalist to title Borna differently in 818, 819, and 821, had he not relied upon the documents. In 818 Borna is only *ducis Guduscanorum*, in 819 he is *Borna vero dux Dalmatiae*, and in 821 he is *Borna dux Dalmatiae atque Liburniae*.<sup>21</sup> Note the gradual ascent of his title: *dux* of Guduscani, then *dux* of Dalmatia, and finally *dux* of Dalmatia and Liburnia. The gradual 'improving' of Borna's title should be the consequence of his growing importance for the Franks during their conflict with Liutewid. The annalist was systematic because he used the documents. If the annalist was based on 'memories' or 'gossip' then Borna should be, most probably, only *dux* of Dalmatia and Liburnia – the ultimate title he held at the moment of his death.

The system of gathering official reports (developed by Charlemagne)<sup>22</sup> would have therefore been able to provide the key documents necessary for such a work as the *ARF*. Naturally, the annalist who had written before Charlemagne would have not been able to provide such a detailed account about the most important annual events, as it was Charlemagne who introduced such novelties as regular annual assemblies<sup>23</sup> or minute reports of the officials to the Court.<sup>24</sup> For instance, the *Annales Sancti Amandi*, *Annales*

<sup>19</sup> For the purpose of this paper, which is aimed at analysis contained in the *pars pro toto* approach, it is not necessary to make a profound analysis of the entire *ARF* regarding its sources. However, it is worth to mention the passage from *ARF*, 129 (s. a. 809) where it was stated that the emperor *decided*, after many reports had reached him about the arrogance of the king of the Danes, that he would build a *civitas* across the Elbe River and install a garrison of the Franks in it. This entry was certainly not based on the reports which reached the emperor, but on his *IUSSIO* in which, most probably, the emperor explained his decision to build a *civitas* across the Elbe River having been propelled by the reports he received from that region.

<sup>20</sup> *ARF*, 138 (s. a. 813).

<sup>21</sup> *ARF*, 149, 151, 155.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 150, 215 – 222.

<sup>23</sup> Einhard, in his: *Vita Karoli Magni*, MGH SRG 25, curavit O. Holder-Egger, Hannoverae et Lipsiae 1911, 8.21 – 22, stressed that annual assembly was the institution already in the times of Merovingian dynasty: *...ad publicum populi sui conventum, qui annuatim ob regni utilitatem celebrabatur...*

<sup>24</sup> Cf. B. S. Bachrach, *Charlemagne and the Carolingian General Staff*, *The Journal of Military History* 66 (2002) 318, and note 19. The assemblies of the Franks were held before Charlemagne, but not so regularly; cf. *ARF*, 15 (757); 18 (760); 20 (763). From 763, assemblies were held regularly once per year; cf. *ARF*, 22, 24, 26 (764, 765, 766, 767, 768, etc); about Charlemagne's novelties regarding the assemblies, see, A. Barbero, *Charlemagne: Father of a Continent*, Los Angeles – London 2004, 144 – 146.

*Alamannici*, *Annales Guelferbytani*, or *Annales Nazariani* had a completely different approach, as their authors usually made the choice of a single, highly important event, which is solemn testimony to what was considered as being the most important event in a single year.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, their choice of the “event of the year” depended on the author’s own personal interests. For instance, while the author of the *Annales Alamannici* for 715 simply wrote: *pugna Franchorum; et mors Dagoberti regis iunioris*,<sup>26</sup> the author of the *Annales Sancti Amandi* was more explicit: *quando Saxones vastaverunt terram Chatuariorum*.<sup>27</sup> While the *Annales Alamannici* considered the most important event for 722 to be: *magna fertilitas*, the *Annales Sancti Amandi* and *Annales Tiliani* left this entry blank.<sup>28</sup> The drastic change, regarding the *ARF*, came from *circa* 773, when the annual entries became very rich and were dedicated to major political events of internal and foreign policy (respectively).<sup>29</sup>

Some other entries from the *ARF* are of equal interest for such research. Through examining certain information, one is able to understand from which kind of source such particular information had originated. For instance, when Liudewit’s (*dux Pannoniae Inferioris*) name and title appears in the *ARF* for the first time (818), it was when his legates appeared in Aachen, complaining to the emperor about the misdeeds (*crudelity* and *extravagance*) of Cadolach, *comes and prefectus marcae Foroiuliensis*.<sup>30</sup> The narrative about the first, failed campaign against Liudewit was most probably based on the reports of the *comites* who had led that army, submitted in July of 819 at the assembly in Ingelheim.<sup>31</sup> On the same occasion, Liudewit also sent his emissaries to the emperor: *quasi pacem pretendo ad imeratorem misit*.<sup>32</sup> The following assembly was held in Aachen in January 820, and a decision was made that three armies were to be sent against Liudewit. Among the emissaries were those of Borna, and then Borna himself, who offered his

<sup>25</sup> This is most frequently the death of a prominent person – a king, his son, a close relative, or a bishop – *mors Hildeberti* (711), *mors Herberti* (712), *mors Pippini* (714), *pugnavit Carolus contra...* (717), etc; cf. *Annales Sancti Amandi*, *Annales Guelferbytani*, *Annales Nazariani*, MGH SS I, ed. G. H. Pertz, Hannoverae 1826, 6, 24.

<sup>26</sup> *Annales Alamannici*, 24.

<sup>27</sup> *Annales Sancti Amandi*, 6.

<sup>28</sup> *Annales Sancti Amandi*, *Annales Tiliani*, 6.

<sup>29</sup> *ARF*, 34 – 38.

<sup>30</sup> *ARF*, 149.

<sup>31</sup> *ARF*, 150. The *ARF* does not provide a single clue that this information was collected from the official reports of the *comites* who led that army – but we have to bear in mind that this was a failed campaign, and the author of the *ARF* usually does not dedicate too much attention, if at all, to the failed military campaigns of the Franks; cf. Collins, ‘Reviser’, 209, n. 68.

<sup>32</sup> *ARF*, 150.

opinion on what should be done.<sup>33</sup> The next assembly was held in Aachen in February of 821,<sup>34</sup> and another in Thionville in October of the same year.<sup>35</sup> The sentence: *Interea Borna, dux Dalmatiae atque Liburniae, defunctus est, et petente populo atque imperatore consentiente nepos illius nomine Ladasclavus, successor ei constitutus est* – must have been written according to information obtained at the assembly held in October of 821.<sup>36</sup> This would mean that Borna died between January and October 821. On the same occasion, the Frankish *comites* who had been involved in the war against Liudewit in Pannonia appeared at the assembly, whereupon the emperor should learn about the course of the war.<sup>37</sup> Then, an assembly was held in Attiniaci (mod. Attigny) in the August of 822, when the army of Italy was sent against Liudewit.<sup>38</sup> At neither the next general assembly in the winter of the same year at Frankfurt,<sup>39</sup> nor at the assembly at Frankfurt in May 823 was anything said about Liudewit or the war waged against him.<sup>40</sup> However, at the end of this entry (May, 823) when the decision was made that the following assembly was to be held in Compiègne in November of the same year, the emperor learned (*adlatum est ei* – it was announced to him, it was made known to him) about the Liudewit's death and generally about his adventures after he had left the Serbs and had sought shelter in Dalmatia at the court of *Liudemuhslum, avanculum Bornae*.<sup>41</sup> The expression: *adlatum est ei* strongly suggests that it was not Liudemisl himself who had informed the Emperor, but rather that he learned this from a letter.

It is very likely that the core of the narrative for each year entry in the *ARF* (or at least for the later parts, 802 – 829) was constructed from documents related to a specific assembly.<sup>42</sup> It is plainly discernible when two assemblies were held in the same year – and the annalist always distinguished which event belonged to which assembly.<sup>43</sup> The regular annual assemblies

<sup>33</sup> *ARF*, 152.

<sup>34</sup> *ARF*, 154.

<sup>35</sup> *ARF*, 156.

<sup>36</sup> *ARF*, 155.

<sup>37</sup> *ARF*, 156: *Adfuerunt et comites in eodem conventu iam de Pannonia regressi, qui depopulata desertorum et Liudewito adhaerentium universa regione, cum nullus eis copiam pugnandi fecisset, domum regressi sunt.*

<sup>38</sup> *ARF*, 158.

<sup>39</sup> *ARF*, 159.

<sup>40</sup> *ARF*, 160.

<sup>41</sup> *ARF*, 161.

<sup>42</sup> The main sources of the author of the *ARF* most probably include: the reports of the *comites* and imperial orders (*iussio*), charters or *capitula*. For a similar point of view, see, Dutton, *Politics*, 86 – 87.

<sup>43</sup> For instance, *ARF*, 154, 156 (February of 821, October of 821); *ARF*, 169 – 171 (June of 826, October of 826); *ARF*, 173 (*Imperator autem duobus conventibus habitis, uno apud Niumagam*

wer held twice a year – sometimes only once – at the place where the emperor had ordered them to be held, e. g. Aachen, Ingelheim, Frankfurt, Compiègne, Regensburg, Cologne, etc. The author of the *ARF* often mentions *iussio* – the imperial order – when something was to be done,<sup>44</sup> as well as an abbreviated account about the consequences of the given *iussio*. In this manner the author writes about the events from the perspective of the following assembly, after the news and outcome of the emperor's previous orders had become known. This would mean that the author of the *ARF* had the most reliable documents at his disposal: first grade testimonies about the external and internal politics of the empire. Therefore, the information that Liudewit fled Siscia before the Frankish armies must have been written based on reports which had reached the assembly held in Frankfurt in the winter of 822. This is exactly why the annalist is silent on Liudewit (winter of 822), since he had used the information from this assembly to write about the outcome of the Frankish military campaign from the August of 822. Only in May of 823 did the annalist learn the rest of the story about Liudewit. Therefore, Liudewit's adventure started after August of 822, and his final hours took place in April/May of the 823. In other words, he had already left Siscia in September of 822, and after having spent several months with the Serbs, he escaped to Dalmatia (Croatia) to meet his death not long before the assembly held in May of 823. This all means that the adventures of Liudewit lasted for approximately nine months (September of 822 – May of 823). This retrospectively and summarily approach of the annalist to some specific event, when a prominent person was involved – can be found in the entry for the year 821 (assembly at Aachen in February of 821) related to Fortunat, the patriarch of Grado. The annalist firstly provided a brief account about Fortunat and his role as the supporter of Liudewit (he was accused a front of the emperor that he, together with certain priest Tiberius by name, provided craftsmen to Liudewit to build the palace and fortresses in his realm), then how he escaped to Grado, from where he left to John, the Byzantine prefect (sc. the *strategos* of Dalmatia) in Iadera, who sent him to Constantinople.<sup>45</sup> Such an extensive report on Fortunat (and obviously abridged a lot) resembles some kind of intelligence gathering (note the disperssion of the territories mentioned: Grado, Pannonia, Iadera, Constantinople), and should be based on the written documents.<sup>46</sup>

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*propter falsas Hohrici filii Godefridi regis Danorum pollicitationes, quibus se illo ad imperatoris praesentiam venturum promiserat, altero apud Compendium, in quo et annualia dona suscepit et his, qui ad marcam Hispanicam mittendi erant...).*

<sup>44</sup> For instance, *ARF*, 119, 124, 129, 130, 138, 141, etc.

<sup>45</sup> *ARF*, 155 – 156.

<sup>46</sup> This episode opens extremely important question about the Byzantine involment into Liudewit's rebellion, as well as, about the variety of sources used by the annalist.

The information that the army from Italy was sent in August of 822 against Liudewit, followed by the immediate report of how Liudewit, after hearing that the army from Italy was coming to Pannonia left Siscia and sought shelter with the Serbs, cannot belong to the same timeline as that previous. This information about Liutewid must have been from the following winter's (December's) assembly held in Frankfurt. This is why nothing about the outcome of this offensive could be found in the description of the events which took place between these two assemblies (August – December) – since Liudewit's adventures had already been described retrospectively under the entry related to the August of 822. In fact, the Franks warred against Liudewit in Pannonia from August to October/November of 822, and the emperor could therefore have learned about Liudewit's destiny from the *comites* who led this army in the December of 822. However, they would have known that Liudewit sent his emissaries to them and that he had personally not waited for the outcome of the negotiations, but rather fled to the Serbs – the *natio* who ruled over a large portion of Dalmatia. This is something which they would have been able to hear from the inhabitants of Siscia when they entered the city. Yet, it is hard to explain how they would have known that Liudewit had found shelter and hospitality among the Serbs, and that he, *per dolum*, executed that Serbian dux who had accepted him, and took over his *civitas*. In May 823 at the assembly held in Frankfurt, the emperor would presumably have learnt about the further development that Liudewit – having left the Serbs – found hospitality in Dalmatia at the court of Liudemisl, – *avanculus Bornae* – who after some time had Liudewit killed – *per dolum*. This *ad hoc* report received at the very end of the assembly (probably through a letter) may mean that the murder of Liudewit had occurred around that time, most probably in April 823. Therefore, it appears that the second part of the entry related to Liudewit from 1.1 (describing his adventures among the Serbs) had also belonged to the information received in the May of 823. The author of the *ARF*, as he wrote the Annals from some chronological distance and due to his own course of narrative, was able to use various documents and present information gathered.

The first part of the report from December of 822 only contained the information that Liudewit had sent emissaries and that he had escaped to the Serbs, as well as that the Serbs were the *natio* who ruled over a larger part of Dalmatia. The following information: *et uno ex ducibus eorum a quo receptus est per dolum interfecto, civitatem eius in suam redegit dicionem* belonged to the same informant from May 823, since it described the events - *post festum* - when Liudewit had no longer been among the Serbs. The last sentence of 1.1: *Missis tamen ad exercitum imperatoris legatis suis, ad eius praesentiam*

*se velle venire promisit* - also belonged to a report from the winter of 822. The specific phrase: *quae natio magnam Dalmatiae partem obtinere dicitur* - may be evidence that this statement had not been directly provided from the natives of Dalmatia, but through someone who was not so certain of who the Serbs were and over which territories they ruled exactly. This can be taken from one specific word – *dicitur* – as *they say*. It is well known that Charlemagne developed an efficient system of gathering intelligence about foreign nations. In a document named the *De ordine Palatii* (which was composed by the Abbot Adalhard (d. 826) in the late eighth or early years of the ninth century, and is today preserved in Hincmar's work, which was itself composed in 882) the need of gathering intelligence on the *gentes* beyond the frontiers of the Frankish *regnum* – i. e. those which not yet been conquered - is underlined: *Extra vero, si aliqua gens subdita rebellare vel rebellata subdere, si necdum tacta insidias regni moliri, vel tale aliquid oriri voluisset. In his vero omnibus, quaecunque cuilibet periculo imminerent, illud praecipue quaerebatur cujus rei occasione talia vel talia orierentur.*<sup>47</sup>

If the brief note on the Serbs in 1.1 is observed, it is then possible that the origin of this information falls into such a category of intelligence; namely, about the *natio* that lived beyond the frontiers of the *regnum* and that was most probably considered as being the next opponent to the Franks. Therefore, this information could be gathered by a Frank who made an enquiry on the spot; presumably in Siscia from the natives (Slavs). Accordingly, the first part of fragment 1.1 would contain evidence that the Franks made an enquiry about the *natio* which Liudewit had fled to in front of the advancing Frankish armies.

Another problem is the precise meaning of the Latin text. It has usually been understood that the Serbs occupied a large portion of Dalmatia.<sup>48</sup> However, this is not the exact meaning: *ad Sorabos, quae natio magnam Dalmatiae partem obtinere dicitur, fugiendo se contulit, et uno ex ducibus eorum a quo receptus est per dolum interfecto, civitatem eius in suam redegit dicionem*. The key word here is *obtinere*, which means *to hold, to possess*, and consequently to rule. However, if someone ruled over a region, it would not necessarily mean that the same *natio* lived there. This is exactly the case with the Franks and the central parts of Gaul immediately after 486, when this region was annexed by the Franks and was ruled by them, even though the Franks do not appear to have settled there in large numbers, if at all (with the

<sup>47</sup> Hincmar *De ordine Palatii*, ed. M. Pros, Paris 1885, ch. XXXVI. About *De ordine Palatii*, see, J. L. Nelson, *Aachen as a Place of Power*, Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages, ed. M. de Jong – F. Theuvs, Leiden 2001, 227 – 231; McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 142 – 148.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. J. V. A. Fine, *When Ethnicity Did Not Matter in the Balkans*, Ann Arbor 2006, 35.

exception of the military elite), and was instead inhabited by the Romanized Gauls. Therefore, the exact meaning is that the political power that ruled over a large part of (the former Roman province of) Dalmatia was actually in the hands of the Serbs. However, this was only secondhand information that had been gathered from the Slavs of Lower Pannonia by a Frankish official who was there. The fact that the Serbs had provided shelter for the Frankish rebel Liudewit should be sufficient for the Franks to make an enquiry about this possible enemy.

The information contained in 1.2 is far more interesting. Here, it is stated that the emperor was informed (it was made known to him: *adlatum est ei*) that Liudewit had been killed by Dux Liudemisl. This specific phrase leads to the conclusion that this information was passed on to the emperor through a letter. This is exactly the same phrase used in the *ARF* under the year 821 when the emperor was informed that Emperor Leo (813 – 820) had been killed in Constantinople: *Adlatum est et de morte Leonis Constantinopolitani imperatoris, quod conspiratione quorundam optimatum suorum et praecipue Michahelis comitis domesticorum in ipso palatio sit interemptus*.<sup>49</sup> This does not necessarily mean that he personally read it, but could have been read to him by an official of the Court. The content of section 1.2 further on unveils who would have been able to know about all the details on the Liudewit adventures after he had left Siscia. The author of the letter, or report, knew that Liudewit had escaped to Liudemisl and that he was received there, but was soon killed by his host. Additionally, the same person knew much about the adventures of Liudewit (preserved in 1.1): that he had been received in a friendly manner among the Serbs, that after some time he killed the Serbian dux, and took his city, but very soon fled to Liudemisl in Croatia. The only person who would have been able to know all of these details would have been Liudemisl himself, as only Liudewit would have been able to talk about his Odyssey. Consequently, the main source upon which the Annalist wrote about the Serbs and Liudewit had come from Liudewit himself. His murderer (Liudemisl) was probably the person who had passed this information on to the emperor. It was the Croat dux who had decided to eliminate the rebel Liudewit and to confirm his loyalty to the Franks.<sup>50</sup> In any case, the most

<sup>49</sup> *ARF*, 155. The same phrase is used under the year 815, when Louis the Pious learned about the conspiracy against the pope Leo III (795 – 816) – *Sed antequam illuc veniret, id est cum adhuc domi esset, adlatum est ei, quosdam de primoribus Romanorum...*; cf. *ARF*, 142.

<sup>50</sup> It is important to note that *Ladasclavus nepos Bornae* was installed as the ruler of Dalmatia (Croats) in 821, and that Bornae's uncle – Liudemisl – was already in power in 823. This may mean that his position as the dux was not that strong, and that he wished to underline his loyalty to the Franks by killing Liudewit. Namely, Bornae had no male heir, and he was succeeded by his *nepos*, i.e. the son of his sister. He probably died without any offspring too. This is then how

probable author of the document in which the adventures of Liudewit are described was the dux of Croatia himself, Liudemisl. Through this letter, the rumor was confirmed from 1.1 that Liudewit had escaped to the Serbs, since in 1.2 it was stated that he had left the Serbs and came to Dalmatia (Croatia). While most of section 1.1 is an intelligence report which had been gathered by a Frankish official who was in Siscia (and 1.2 as well as) the sentence in the middle of the 1.1 (*et uno ex ducibus eorum a quo receptus est per dolum interfecto, civitatem eius in suam redegit dicionem.*) is a report of the Croat duke based on Liudewit's telling.

From these possibilities we can conclude the following: 1. The Serbs came into possession of the lands to the south of Lower Pannonia and to the east/southeast of Croatia; however, when and how it happened cannot be extracted from this information; 2. The earliest mention of the Serbs preserved in the *ARF* had come from two independent sources – the inhabitants of Siscia and from the Croat dux. This information is confirmed by an independent source; namely, the *De administrando imperio* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who wrote in ca. 949 that Croatia and Serbia shared a common border at two different places - to the south (southeast) and to the east (Tzentina River) of Croatia;<sup>51</sup> 3. Dalmatia, as it is used to describe land possessed by the Serbs and is used to describe land possessed by the Dalmatian (Croat) duke, has the meaning of Dalmatia in Roman sense; 4. The fact that the Serbs ruled over the northwest/western parts of Dalmatia does not mean that they had yet lived there; 5. The Serbs had an administrative and military organization entrusted to their *duces* (*župans*), as it is stated in the *DAI* as well;<sup>52</sup> 6. There was some type of *civitas* in Serbia (most probably, *gradina* type walled places) which served as military and administrative centers. 7. The mention of the Serbian name could be a testimony to the otherwise unknown process of ethnogenesis which had already been taking shape in the early ninth century in the territories ruled by the Serbs, at least from the point of view as to which *natio* was the actual leading military elite there; 8. By employing the same term, Dalmatia, to the lands under the rule of Croat duke, as well as to the land where Serbs ruled, the annalist probably reflects aspirations of the Franks towards the whole territory of the former Roman province of Dalmatia; and

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Liudemisl, the brother of Borna's mother, came into power. There could have been another branch of the ruling family of the Croats eager to take power (the father of Borna's *nepos*?) and it could have made the political situation in Croatia very fragile. This could be the possible reason why Liudemisl killed Liudewit, so that he would have been able to secure his position among his relatives as the *dux* through the support of the Franks.

<sup>51</sup> *Constantine Porphyrogenitus De administrando imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik – R. J. H. Jenkins, Washington D. C. 1967, c. 30.116 – 118 (= *DAI I*).

<sup>52</sup> *DAI I*, c. 29.66 – 68 (the Southern Slavs in general); 32.119 – 121 (the Serbs).

9. The fact that Liudewit escaped to the Serbs and was warmly accepted by them may mean that he had previously had some contacts with the Serbs.<sup>53</sup>

Generally speaking, the Royal Frankish annalist's information about the Serbs, as the earliest record about their presence in Dalmatia (i. e. Roman Dalmatia) originates from superior and reliable sources: the Slavs of Lower Pannonia and the Croat dux (Croats).

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. *ARF*, 150 (819): *Quas cum imperator non reciperet aliasque ei per suos legatos proponeret, permanendum sibi* (sc. Liudewit) *in anchoata perfidia velut optimum iudicans missis circumquaque legatis vicinas iuxta se gentes ad bellum sollicitare curavit*. Therefore, the emissaries of Liudewit could have been sent to the Serbs, as well.

Тибор Живковић

## **О ПОРЕКЛУ НАЈСТАРИЈЕ ВЕСТИ О СРБИМА У АНАЛИМА ФРАНАЧКОГ КРАЉЕВСТВА**

Резиме

Најранији помен српског имена у раном средњем веку остао је забележен у Аналима франачког краљевства (*Annales regni Francorum*), 822. и 823. године. Том приликом, одметнути франачки кнез Доње Паноније, Људевит, повукао се, пред франачком војском, из Сиска код Срба, народа, за који кажу да влада великим делом Далмације. Пошто је неко време провео код извесног српског кнеза, Људевит је домаћина лукавством погубио, преузео његов град, али је после извесног времена одлучио да се склони у Далмацију (односно у тзв. Далматинску Хрватску), код кнеза Људемисла. Тамо је, проведши неко време, био убијен, такође лукавством, од свога домаћина. Анализа вести из франачких анала непотпуна је уколико није познато на основу којих докумената, тј. извора, анонимни писац ослања своје излагање. У овом раду покушали смо да објаснимо ток инфорамција – ко их је прикупио, на који начин, због чега, и како су допрле до Ахена, односно до аутора франачких анала. Чини се да целокупан извештај о Људевитовој Одисеји, од Сиска, преко Срба, до двора хрватског кнеза, потиче из два основна извора. Један је, онај краћи у којем се помиње бекство Људевитово испред франачке војске код Срба, настао је на основу извештаја франачког војног заповедника који је ушао у Људевитову престоницу, Сисак. Информатори Францима морали би бити управо Словени из Паноније, тј. Сиска, који су имали представу који народ влада у њима суседној области. Други, већи део исказа, у којем се разазнају бројне појединости о Људевитовом кретању после 822. године, требало би да је настао на основу писма које је Људемисл, убица Људевитов, послао цару, обавештавајући га како је одметник ликвидан. Другим речима, оно што је забележено о Људевитвом догодовштинама пошто је напустио Сисак, речи су самог Људевита, јер је о томе он очигледно причао Људемислу за време свога боравка у Хрватској. Само тако је Људемисл могао да зна о догађајима који су могли да буду познати искључиво Људевиту. Укупна оцена вести о Србима поменутих у франачким аналима 822. и 823. године, стога, припада прворазредним сведочанствима заснованим на два основна документа: 1. Извештају франачког војног

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заповедника који је освојио Сисак; 2. Извештају/писму хрватског кнеза Људемисла о последњим месецима Људевитовог одметништва. У питању је, дакле, првразредно сведочанство, које историографија може да користи као поуздану основу за испитивање читавног низа питања – простор под влашћу Срба, систем војне субординације код Срба, политичких веза између различитих словенских племена на јужнословенском простору, као и о процесу етногенезе у раном средњем веку.

*Кључне речи:* Срби, Далмација, Франачки анали, Људевит, Борна