

The Serb Settlement in the Macedonian Town of Srbčičte in the VIIth century and the Ethnological and Sociological Moment in the Report of Constantinus Porphyrogenetes concerning the Advent of Serbs and Croats.¹

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In my essay² *White Serbia* I tried to prove the truthfulness of the report of Constantinus Porphyrogenetes concerning the advent of Serbs and Croats in Illyricum. I demonstrated the absurdity of the interpretation put upon this report by Vatroslav Jagić³ and his successors. I also disputed the Gothic theory of L. Gumpłowicz,⁴ and contended that the Serbs came to the Balkan Peninsula from the country of the Elbian Serbs, i. e., principally from Saxony, and the Croats from the territories of the upper Elbe, upper Oder and upper Vistula. I furthermore contended that the Serbs of Constantinus must have been a small tribe of warlike organisation, and not — as others assert — a multitude which had evacuated its old native land and established itself in the middle of the Balkan Peninsula like a wedge between the Slovenes and the Bulgars, i. e., between the Southern Slavs of Noricum and Thracia.

I tried to prove this with intrinsic arguments of sociological and ethnological nature, such as appear even in the report of Constantinus Porphyrogenetes concerning the settlement of the Serbs upon their arrival in the town of τὰ Σέρβλια (Srbčičte) to the north of Olympus.⁵ A town, or rather, a naturally fortified

¹ Report of the II. International Congress for Byzantinology in Belgrade. April 14 th, 1927.

² N. Županić, *Bela Srbija*. Zagreb 1922.

³ V. Jagić, *Ein Kapitel zur Geschichte der südslavischen Sprachen*. (Archiv für slavische Philologie, Bd. XVII, p. 47—87). Berlin 1895.

⁴ L. Gumpłowicz, *Chorvaci i Serbowie*. Varšava 1902.

⁵ On the middle Haliakmon (Bistrica) in the south Macedonian district of Pieria.

camp, could not hold either a crowd of a million, or even a few hundred thousand, but only a warrior tribe of some tens of thousands.

Prof. Šišić⁶ replies to my explanation and interpretation of Porphyrogenetes' report that my hypothesis is not probable; that in their new home the Serbian and Croatian tribes continued their old patriarchal life under their *Župans* (dukes). The silence of history for two centuries, the 7th and 8th, is the best proof that the Serbs and Croats were not conqueror tribes in the beginning of their history in the Balkan Peninsula, but only parts of a great amorphous Slav mass which for a long time had no idea of laying the foundations of organised states.

The facts reported in the sole information we possess concerning the arrival of Croats and Serbs, viz., the report of Constantinus Porphyrogenetes, do not square with this explanation, and so one is driven back to the monistic view of Vatroslav Jagić concerning the settlement of Southern Slavs in the Balkan Peninsula. But a similar view concerning the advent of Serbs in Illyricum is not borne out by history, whose opinions are founded on definite sources and their explanation by ethnological and sociological laws and experience.

Therefore it is necessary to prove that the interpretation of Constantinus Porphyrogenetes by V. Jagić is wrong, especially as the majority of historians today are under the influence of Jagić's theory.

Constantinus Porphyrogenetes writes⁷ that a body of Serbs under the command of its duke had immigrated from »White Serbia« into the realm of the Emperor Heraclius, who received the newcomers and assigned them as residence a place in the district of Saloniki (*ἐν τῷ θήματι Θεσσαλονικῆς*). This place was from that time forward known as *τὰ Σέρβλια* or S r b č i š t e in the Slav translation of Ioh. Zonaras (14th century).

⁶ F. Šišić, *Povijest Hrvata u vrijeme narodnih vladara*, pag. 263, 264. Zagreb 1925.

⁷ CONSTANTINUS PORPHYROGENITUS, *De administrando imperio*, cap. 32 *Ἄπο δὲ ἀδελφῶν τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς Σέρβλιας ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς δια δεξαμένων, ὁ εἰς αὐτῶν το τοῦ λαοῦ ἀναλαβόμενος ἡμῶν εἰς Ἡράκλειον τὸν βασιλέα Ῥωμαίων προσέφεγγεν ὃν καὶ προσδεξάμενος ὁ αὐτὸς Ἡράκλειος βασιλεὺς παρέσχε τόπον εἰς κατασκήνωσιν ἐν τῷ θήματι Θεσσαλονικῆς τὰ Σέρβλια, ἃ ἔκτοτε τὴν τοιαύτην προσηγορίαν παρελλήφε.*

It seemed incredible and unreasonable to V. Jagić, that a whole people should have found shelter in a place or even a district of Saloniki. It appears that Jagić is under the impression that the people which occupied the Serbian territory numbered several hundreds of thousands, or a million, or even more. For such a multitude, naturally, neither the district of Saloniki, let alone the little place of Σέρβλια would be large enough. We must suppose that in such a complete immigration whole families would arrive with women and children, with cattle and chattels; and as the district of Saloniki could not hold them, how could it feed an entire people? But if the Serbs were so few in number that they could be accommodated in the district of Saloniki, or even in little Srbčičšte — as it appears from the report of Constantinus Porphyrogenetes — then the Serbs in question were not a multitude, and on no account could they have peopled the interior of the Balkan Peninsula, i. e., the Serbian territory of today. These are the arguments of V. Jagić, in and between the lines of his interpretation.

I, too, am convinced that the district of Srbčičšte could not have held a people of a million or more, such as Jagić assumes. But it is not therefore necessary for us to consider the report of Porphyrogenetes incredible or fictitious. I concede that the numbers of the immigrant Serbs were such that the place of Srbšiče could hold them, and I accept Jagić's point of view that because of their limited number they could not impart an ethnical stamp to the interior of the bulk of the Balkan Peninsula. This very passage concerning the settlement of the district of Saloniki by newcomers from »White Serbia« — the passage regarded by several authorities as the Achilles heel of this chapter of the work »De administrando imperio« — I look upon as the most important, because it explains the whole problem of the advent of the Serbs and Croats in the South. For it points the way from the linguistic, ethnological, and historical points of view to sociology and to theories of the origin of states and nations by foreign occupation and the subjugation of a people.

Let us take the original account as it stands. Then we must admit that only so many Serbs came from »White Serbia« that the place of Srbčičšte (τὰ Σέρβλια) could accommodate them, which

means that they numbered only some tens of thousands. It would appear that even that small number could scarcely find shelter or sufficient food in so restricted a place. One is therefore driven to assume a benevolent attitude on the part of the Byzantine government, in as much as it permitted them to penetrate so far into the interior, even to the shores of Saloniki. It is even probable that they were at first supplied with food. It seems to me that the first Srbište (the Turkish Selfidže) must have been a warrior camp. Byzantium was not actuated by any humane regard for the northern barbarians, but assuredly only by selfish and political considerations. I therefore think it probable that the Serbs and Croats were summoned by the Emperor of Byzantium to help him against the Avars, and that he promised them Illyricum as a reward if they would wrest it from the Avars and acknowledge him as their lawful sovereign. The Croats and Serbs came south, as Porphyrogenetes writes; but most certainly they came as an organised army which had accomplished its task and now claimed its reward. The incident of the settlement of Srbčičšte proves that some sort of military discipline must have held together the newcomers. A warrior tribe of a score or two of thousands at that time represented a powerful army, as e. g. in the case of the Bulgars who numbered about 25,000 and subjugated the Slavs of Northern Thracia. Under the command of Asparuch all the Bulgars found on the little island of Pevke in the Danubian Delta, and later on they established themselves not far from the present village of Aboba in a camp of about 24 sq. km.

Let me interpret the report of Porphyrogenetes in my way and ask what moment in the reign of the Emperor Heraclius could be most easily brought into connection with the advent of Serbs and Croats in the south? In 626 Byzantium was in great danger, because it was besieged by the Avars on the European side and by the Persians from the Asiatic side. Naturally, Byzantine diplomacy sought for help to save the capital and the State, and certainly the Emperor Heraclius would look for help towards the north-west, where at that time lived the great Duke Samo who with his Czechs had defeated his neighbours, both Avars and Franks. In Bohemia (which was also the home of the Croats) and likewise in »White Serbia« there must at that time

have been powerful warrior tribes, and it is intelligible that the Byzantines should try to get them as allies. Constantinople and the rich seaports of the Adriatic and Egean seas also doubtless attracted the Serbs, especially under favourable conditions.

An invasion by Serbs and Croats in the rear of the Avars — as I connect it with the siege of Constantinople — may well have caused a revolt of the Slavs employed by the Avars at this siege, and the Byzantine capital and State were saved from the enemy. The Croats occupied the western part of Illyricum, and the Serbs its interior. The Serbian occupation, it appears, left certain traces. Many names south of Olympus, — i. e., in Greece proper —, which are Serbian, prove that Serbs once lived in the district of Saloniki. Because there are more Serbian names for villages to be found in the small Greek territory than in the wide space between the Šarplanina and Olympus, we may assume that in the 7th century Greece accommodated scattered settlers from Sribišće, since the Serbs on their arrival from the north were afforded opportunity of settling in the south in neighbouring Greece. Later on, when the Serbs were already settled in the network of the rivers Tara, Lim, Drina, and Ibar, it is difficult to imagine that they would have sought out the distant Greek peninsula.

From the political and psychological point of view we must believe that these Serbs and Croats felt themselves legally and morally superior, not only to the Avars and Vlachs, but also to the »Slavs« liberated from the Avars. The Serbs and Croats must have occupied higher social positions in the administration and the army. They became a privileged class in the state. This fact appears also from their social institutions in the Middle Ages, which are in some respects the outcome and echo of the great event reported by Constantinus Porphyrogenetes.

The two small warrior tribes of Croats and Serbs, numbering only few scores of thousands, obviously could not populate the great territories of Illyricum and give them an ethnical stamp. They were merged in the Slav mass, predecessors of the Southern Slavs of today, which had overrun the bulk of the Balkan Peninsula some time previously from the Adriatic to the Euxine. Only the Croatian and Serbian names remained dominant in two states where the arrival of two warrior tribes constituted two points of crystallisation, two state-building ideas.

The Croats and Serbs, settled among the Slav mass, disappeared linguistically. From this ethnical, historical, and sociological process developed the Serbs and Croats of today, which are of one language and blood. With their dialects they form the link between the Bulgars in the east and the Slovenes in the west. And in spite of all appearance to the contrary, the report of Constantinus Porphyrogenetes concerning the advent of Serbs and Croats in the south remains intact as a veracious document, — which is what I have set myself to prove.

This is the only possible explanation of Constantinus Porphyrogenetes. And moreover by it the language and unity of the Southern Slavs between the Adriatic and the Euxine remains intact.

The manner of the Serb settlement in the camp τὰ Σέρβλια in South Macedonia enables us to consider the Serbs as being few in number and therefore as conquerors of the bulk of Southern Slavs, as well as of the remnants of Romans, Illyrians and Avars on the soil of Illyricum. As I already held this sociological opinion upon the historical view of the arrival of the Serbs and Croats in the South, I did not want to borrow it from another; because the argument is, in fact, that which I have just given; and because nobody else has so far adduced any historical facts or arguments to prove the theory of the origin of Serb people by conquest of a great mass of people by a small number of conquerors.

The practical foundation of states and nations by such conquest was known already some centuries before the publication of Gumpłowicz' theory, as proved the arrival of the Franks in Gallia, the arrival of the Scandinavians Russians among Sarmatian Slavs, and the subjugation of the Southern Slavs in Thracia by the Bulgars.

I have thought it necessary to make this remark, on account of my esteemed friends Mr. Ludmil Hauptmann⁸ and Mr. F. Šišić,⁹ professors at the University of Zagreb.

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⁸ L. Hauptmann, Dolazak Hrvata. Zbornik Kralja Tomislava, (Posebna djela Jugoslovenske Akademije znanosti i umjetnosti, XVII, pag. 87, not. 9: »Uz njega (t. j. Gumpłowicza) pristaje s istim razlozima sada Župančić N.: Bela Srbija.)

⁹ F. Šišić, op. cit. pag. 263.

Naselitev Srbov v makedonskem mestu Srbičištu v VII. stoletju ter etnološki in sociološki moment v izvestju Konstantina Porfirogenita o prihodu Srbov in Hrvatov.

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Car Konstantin VII. Porfirogenit piše v svojem delu »De administrando imperio«, da balkanski Srbi izhajajo od »Belih Srbov«, ki so živeli v deželi Bojki, v sosedstvu »Bele Hrvatiije« in Francije (Nemčije). Če za boljšo orientacijo domovine Belih Srbov dodamo še Konstantinovo poročilo o geografski legi Bele Hrvatske, da je namreč ležala na severni strani Madjarskega in na vzhodni strani frankovske zemlje a severozapadno od Bavarskega, potem pač ne more biti dvoma, da je Konstantin imel na misli polabske Srbe, kojih ostanki se nahajajo še danes v Lužici na Saksonskem. Potemtakem bi morali današnji južno-slovenski Srbi izhajati iz severno zapadne slovanske jezikovne skupine, ki se prilično razlikuje od vzhodne (ruske) in južnoslovanske (Slovenci, Hrvati, Srbi, Bolgari). Opirajoč se na ta logični zaključek je Vatroslav Jagić napisal znamenito razpravo »Ein Kapitel zur Geschichte der südslavischen Sprachen« (1895), v katerem sumi iz več razlogov o verodostojnosti in istinitosti poročila Konstantina Porfirogenita o prihodu Hrvatov in Srbov na jug.

Jagić in njegovi učenci pobijajo resničnost Porfirogenitovega spisa v prvem redu iz jezikovnih razlogov, meneč, da bi naselitev Srbov in Hrvatov v Iliriku, t. j. v sredini Balkanskega polotoka raztrgala jedinstvo Jugoslovenov in etnološko v podobi klina ločila Bolgare od Slovencev, t. j. Jugoslovene Tracije od onih Norika. Jagić je namreč v zgoraj navedeni razpravi sijajno utemeljil in dokazal jezikovno jedinstvo južnih Slovenov izmed Črnega morja in Soče. Južni Sloveni tvorijo homogeno skupino dialektov, v kateri posamezni govori in narečja prehajajo organsko druga v drugo in so vezani med seboj kakor členi verige. Če pa bi bili za časa bizantinskega carja Heraklija (610 do 641) Hrvati in Srbi res prišli iz porečja Labe v Ilirik, kakor pripoveduje v škrlatu rojeni Konstantin VII., potem bi ljudstvo ob Moravi, Drini, Bosni, Neretvi govorilo danes približno tako, kakor se govori v Lužici na Saškem. Ker pa ni temu tako,

smatrati je Konstantinove trditve za izmišljotino in iskati izvor Srbov vse drugje nego med Labo in Salo. Tako meni Jagić.

Kot nadaljno podkrepljenje za dokaz neverjetnosti izvestja Konstantina Porfirogenita navaja V. Jagić neko drugo trditev iz istega cesarjevega izvestja, da je namreč bizantinski vladar Heraklej odkazal Srbom po njihovem prihodu na jug za bivanje mesto (distrikt) τὰ Σέρβλια (Srbčičšte, v slovenskem prevodu Zonarasa iz XIV. stol.), ki leži severno od Olimpa, v Pieriji. Tu so tudi ostali gotov kratek čas. Pri tej priliki se vpraša z začudenjem V. Jagić, kako bi mogel kar cel narod najti prostora za prebivanje in življenje v obsegu malega distrikta ali celo samo mesteca Srbčičšta?! Smatrajoč to za neprirodno in absurdno, V. Jagić misli, da vprav ta točka izvestja jasno dokazuje ničnost vesti Konstantina Porfirogenita o prihodu Srbov na jug.

Predavatelj N. Zupanić pa je zopet drugega mnenja trdeč, da je vprav to mesto izvestja (naselitev v Srbici) v škrlatu rojenega carja, katero smatra V. Jagić za ahilovo peto celotnega pripovedovanja — najvažnejše in najmerodajnejše za dokaz verodostojnosti izvestja o načinu selitve Srbov na jug. To mesto opozarja namreč zgodovinarja pri tolmačenju izvora ne samo na lingvistično-etnološki moment, ampak ga odvajja tudi na sociološko stališče smotrenja in razmišljanja. Če je bilo namreč za Srbe pri njihovem prihodu na Balkanski polotok dovolj mesta v obsegu distrikta ali celo samo mesta Srbčičšta, potem pač niso mogli šteti stotisoče ali celo milijon ljudi, kakor si pogojno predstavlja V. Jagić, ampak samo nekaj deset tisoč ev. In ker ni nobenega vzroka dvomiti o istinitosti navedbe o naseljenju v Srbčičštu, jo jemlje predavatelj za izhodišče pri tolmačenju celega izvestja Konstantina Porfirogenita.

Dejstvo, da je Srbčičšte moglo sprejeti srbske prišlece iz Polabja označuje njihovo maloštevilnost in navaja na misel, da si je treba v pridošlih Srbih predstavljati gotov vojaški organiziran zbor od nekoliko deset tisoč ljudi, ki je mogel Bizantincem koristno poslužiti v bojih proti Obrom, a ne mnogoštevilno neorganizirano narodno maso, ki bi bila brez interesa za Bizanc in carja Herakleja. Zato misli predavatelj, da si je treba predstavljati Srbčičšte več ali manj kot utrjeno taborišče in to tem prej, ker se to mesto tudi v poznejšem srednjem veku spominja kot trdnjava ob srednjem toku Bistrice (Haliak-

mona). Lep primer za tak slučaj in za tako razlaganje K. P. nam nudi naselitev turških Bolgarov, ki so si, četudi maloštevilni (20.000 do 25.000) podčinili Jugoslovene Trakije. Bolgari so se naselili pred osvojenjem Trakije na malem otoku Pevke v dunavski delti in pozneje v utrjenem taborišču Abobi blizu Šumena, ki je merilo vsega 23 km^2 .

Srbi pa niso ostali dolgo v južni Makedoniji, ampak so se napotili proti severu v staro domačijo kakor so to storili Heruli sto let poprej, ko so se vrnili iz južne Ogrske v Skandinavijo. Ali prestopivši Dunav pri Belem gradu so si Srbi stvar premislili, se vrnili ter zavzeli Ilirik, kjer so še danes. Razumljivo je, da ta maloštevilna vojaška družina ni mogla dati Iliriku osnovno prebivalstvo, če bi bil ta slučajno prazen, a isto tako ni mogla asimilirati že zatečenih Jugoslovenov in jim vtisniti etnični pečat polabskega Slovenstva. To potrjuje ravno Jagićev dokaz, da so namreč današnji Jugosloveni izmed Adrije in Ponta organska jezikovna celota, ki ni prekinjena v sredini tam, kjer stanujejo vprav Srbi in Hrvati.

Kakšno vlogo so torej igrali polabski Srbi pri Jugoslovenih Ilirika? Samo socijalno in politično, a etnološko v najmanjši meri. Ilirik je bil namreč v prvih dveh desetletjih VII. stoletja v masi naseljen od onih Jugoslovenov, ki so že od VI. stoletja čakali na Dunavu in dolnji Savi na ugoden čas, da prodro preko te vodne meje bizantinske države in zasedejo Balkanski polotok. Ali nosilec hrvatskega in srbskega imena — misli predavatelj — ni še bilo med temi Jugosloveni (*Σκλαβηνοι*). O nosilcih teh dveh etničnih imen nam pripoveduje vprav Konstantin Porfirogenit, da so prišli iz Bele Hrvatske in Bele Srbije, t. j. iz Polabja in porečja gornje Odre. Oni so pomagali Bizantincem premagati Obre (Avare) in so po zmagi zavzeli Ilirik kot gospodujoči gornji sloj, ustvarivši gotovo državno organizacijo pod svojimi imeni. Etnično in jezikovno pa so hrvatski in srbski osvojitelji le prav malega pomena in so v glavnem propadli, sprejemši jezik osnovnega jugoslovenskega prebivalstva.

Samo na tak način more imeti prav v škrlatu rojeni carski zgodovinar, a da pri tem ostane neokrnjeno jedinstvo jezika Slovenov med Pontom in Adrijo. Iz navedenih razlogov je pač razvidno, da so ugovori V. Jagića in F. Šišića neopravičeni in jih je smatrati za brezpredmetne.

Ni nas navedla studija L. Gumplowicza o Hrvatih in Srbih (Varšava 1902) na gornje tolmačenje Konstantina Porfirogenita, kakor misli L. Hauptmann, ampak nas je navedlo na misel tolmačenja postanka srbskega naroda potom osvajanja jugoslovenske mase po razmeroma maloštevilni vojaško organizirani trumi polabskih Srbov — ravno pripovedovanje Konstantina Porfirogenita o naselitvi prišlecev v Srbčičštu. Niti L. Gumplowicz niti kdo drugi ni spoznal vrednosti tega prevažnega mesta za razlago celokupnega izvestja o prihodu Srbov na jug.

