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THE EARLIEST CULTS OF SAINTS IN RAGUSA

The peripheral zones where the Constantinopolitan and Roman ecclesiastical influences met often contain evidence of the intermingling of the cults characteristic of both Churches. The cult of St Pancratius, well established in Ragusa (Dubrovnik) during the Early Middle Ages, could be a good example for the studies on ecclesiastical matters in Dalmatia. The question is, when and under which political circumstances the cult of St Pancratius was established in Ragusa. Whether it was caused by unilateral action of Pope or joint policy of Constantinople and Rome.

The earliest testimony of the cult of the saints in Ragusa has been preserved in *De administrando imperio* by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (945–959). In Chapter 29 of this work, entitled *On Dalmatia and the Neighboring Nations*, the Emperor includes short descriptions of the Dalmatian towns Ragusa (Dubrovnik), Diadora (Zadar), Spalato (Split), Tetrangourin (Trogir) and Decatera (Kotor). At the very end of his account of Ragusa the author mentions the body of St Pancratius and says that it lies in the Church of St Stephen, which is in the middle of the city.¹ This passage is the earliest record of the cult of St Pancratius in Ragusa.

The appearance of the cult of a saint or the building of a church dedicated to a particular saint can provide a specific clue for the reconstruction of political developments in the area concerned. Namely, the peripheral zones where the Constantinopolitan and Roman ecclesiastical influences met often contain evidence of the intermingling of the cults characteristic of both Churches.² Dalmatia represented precisely such a fringe zone. Politically, it was under the rule of Constantinople, but in ecclesiastical matters it was influenced by both centres of the Christendom — Rome and Constantinople. The cult of a particular saint can therefore represent an important testimony of how much either Church succeeded in asserting its influence

¹ Constantine Porphyrogenitus *De administrando imperio*, I–II, ed. Gy. Moravcsik — R. J. H. Jenkins, Washington 1967, I, 29.235–236 (= DAI).

² Thus A. Dabinić, *Kada je Dalmacija pala pod jurisdikciju carigradske patrijaršije?*, Rad JAZU 239 (1930) 192–195, distinguished four periods of the reception of particular cults in Dalmatia.

in Dalmatia.³ As the cults of individual saints are period-specific, it is also possible to infer the approximate chronology of these influences. It should be also borne in mind that the Constantinopolitan and the Roman Churches were not always opposed and that their relations depended on the general political circumstances. For example, Constantine Porphyrogenitus's testimony that the Serbs and the Croats received Christianity from Rome, which had sent priests to them at the recommendation of Emperor Heraclius (610–641),⁴ is an instance of the joint church policy of the two great Christian centres.

The use of the cult of the saints as an instrument of Byzantine foreign policy (in this case in Dalmatia) is quite apparent in the translation of the relics of St Anastasia from Constantinople to Zadar in 807.⁵ The transference of the relics of St Tryphon from Byzantium to Decatera in 809 should be interpreted in the same sense.⁶ Since St Tryphon and St Anastasia are Byzantine saints, the promotion of their cults is clearly indicative of the expansion of the Byzantine political and ecclesiastical influence. The case of St Pancratius, on the other hand, is probably a testimony of the efforts of the Holy See to assert its ecclesiastical policy in the Ragusan territory. Still, this does not mean that such a policy was pursued unilaterally and without the consent of the Byzantine government.

The chief elements upon which an analysis of the cult of St Pancratius in Ragusa should be based is the study of its development, as well as the study of the development of the cult of St Stephen the Protomartyr, whose church, according to the testimony of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, was the resting place of the relics of St Pancratius.

The Cult of St Stephen the Protomartyr

The legend of the transference of the relics of St Stephen has been preserved in a late version (*Aurea Legenda*) and it is virtually useless as a historical source. According to the *Golden Legend*, St Stephen's relics were discovered by a clergyman named Lucian in the vicinity of Jerusalem in 417. Later the saint's body was transferred to Constantinople by Juliana, the wife of senator Alexander, and from thence it was removed to Rome in the time of Emperor Theodosius (408–450).⁷

³ The political position of Dalmatia is discussed by *J. Ферлуга*, *Византиска управа у Далмацији*, Београд 1957, *passim*. The ecclesiastical affairs are studied in *T. Живковић*, *Црквена организација у српским земљама*, Београд 2004, 107–130 (= *Живковић*, *Црквена организација*).

⁴ DAI I, 31.32–35; 32.26–29.

⁵ Cf. *G. Manojlović*, *O godini „Prijenosa sv. Anastasije u Zadar“*, *Zemaljski arhiv* 3 (1901) 104–113. The text of the legend of the translation of St Anastasia's relics is in *Documenta historiae chroaticae periodum antiquam illustrantia*, ed. *F. Rački*, *Zagrabiae* 1877, 306–309.

⁶ *Instrumentum corporis nostri gloriosi confalonis sancti Tryphonis*, *Književnost Crne Gore* od XII–XIX vijeka, *Pisci srednjovjekovnog latiniteta*, *prir. D. Sindik — G. Tomović*, *Cetinje* 1996, 18.

⁷ About 1260. *Jacobus de Voragine* compiled the so-called *Golden Legend*, in which he collected numerous hagiographic texts, including an account of the life of St Stephen the Protomartyr and of the discovery and translation/transference of his relics.

The importance of this saint was very great in Byzantium. First of all, St Stephen was the patron saint of the imperial family, and a church dedicated to him was attached to the royal palace.⁸ It is, however, noteworthy that the cult of St Stephen was venerated at a very early date also in Rome and, particularly, in north Africa, where the activity of the renowned church father Augustine contributed much to its popularity and diffusion.⁹ Around the middle of the fifth century there existed a church dedicated to St Stephen in the Via Latina in Rome, and a huge *martyrium* containing, among others relics, the remains of St Stephen, was built by Pope Simplicius (468–483) on the Mons Caelius. The cult spread to the Frankish state as well. The blood of this saint was kept in the church in Bourges, and a handkerchief sanctified by his body was kept in Bordeaux. It was used in the consecration of new churches.¹⁰ St Stephen's relics and churches dedicated to him existed also in Clermont, Marseille, Metz, Tours and elsewhere.¹¹ It can be, therefore, said that the cult of St Stephen the Protomartyr was greatly venerated in the West, both in Rome and in the Frankish state.¹² In other words, it is not easy to associate the emergence of this cult with the ecclesiastical influence of either Rome or Constantinople. Both centres are equally likely to have initiated it.

St Pancratius and His Cult

From the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century the cults of deacon Laurentius, virgin Agnes and Pancratius began to attract special attention of the Holy See, and large basilicas, bigger than any church edifice built after Simplicius's Rotunda dedicated to St Stephen (*Rotunda di Santo Stefano*), were dedicated to them.¹³ The *Gesta Martyrum*, indicative of Rome's wish to discover and found new local cults originated precisely in this period, i.e. in the 6th century.¹⁴ The basis of the new cults was the large aisled basilica dedicated to SS Nereus and Achillius, which had been built as early as 398. It was then that Petronilla, who was either the founder of this church or its founder's daughter, was buried in the catacombs under the basilica. This was also the site of an earlier Christian shrine, located in the so-called catacombs of Domitilla.¹⁵ In the course of the next decades

⁸ See, e.g., *De cerimoniis aulae byzantinae*, ed. *I. Reiske*, Bonnæ 1829, 7.7–10; 129.6–9; 539.17–18; 550.1–12.

⁹ *Augustine*, *De civitate Dei*, XXII, 8.

¹⁰ *A. Thacker*, *The Significance of Place in the Study of the Saints, Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, ed. A. Thacker — R. Sharpe, Oxford 2002, 13 (= *Thacker*, *Saints*).

¹¹ Gregory of Tours, *Glor. mart.* c. 33; *Idem*, *Lib. Hist.* I, 31; II, 6; II, 17; VI, 1; *Idem*, *In gloria confessorum*, c. 72, ed. *B. Krusch*, MGH, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* I/2, Hannover 1969².

¹² The Roman church celebrates the feast of St Stephen on 26th December, and the Orthodox Church on 27th December; cf. *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, ed. *D. H. Farmer*, Oxford — New York 1990, 392.

¹³ *Thacker*, *Saints*, 14.

¹⁴ Cf. *C. Leyser*, *The Temptations of Cult: Roman Martyr Piety in the Age of Gregory the Great*, *EME* 9 (2000) 289–307.

¹⁵ *Thacker*, *Saints*, 14–15.

Petronilla, too, came to be regarded as a saint. At first she was thought to be the adopted daughter of St Peter, but, later, when she was included in the *Passio* of SS Nereus and Achillius, she became fully recognized as a saint. Her tomb figured in the pilgrims' itineraries already in the seventh century, and in 757 her remains were translated, together with the relics of some other saints, to the basilica of St Peter.¹⁶ Thus there gradually emerged the cult of a group of saints which included Achillius, Nereus, Domitilla and Petronilla. This cult, which originated and was developed in Rome, was never very popular in Byzantium. Hence the appearance of the relics of these saints in Ragusa before 948/949 indicates that Rome showed an interest in the south-eastern shores of the Adriatic long before Byzantium increased its presence in those parts.

SS Pancratius, Petronilla, Laurentius, Stephen the Protomartyr, Sergius and Bacchus were particularly venerated in Rome, as the *Lives of the Popes* show. Pope Honorius (625–638) rebuilt the basilica of St Pancratius at the second milestone of the *Via Aurelia* and set his relics in silver.¹⁷ Pope Vitalian sent the relics of St Pancratius to King Oswiu of Northumbria, and the cult of this saint spread very rapidly in England.¹⁸ In the time of Pope Hadrian (772–795) the churches of St Pancratius, St Stephen the Protomartyr, and St Petronilla (in Rome) were particularly richly endowed.¹⁹ The interest in St Pancratius and the saints from his circle grew considerably during the pontificate of Hadrian's successor, Pope Leo III (795–816). The Pope presented a number of silver icons and embroidered vestments to the Church of St Pancratius, an ornamented altar to the Church of St Petronilla, and various ceremonial robes to the deaconicons of SS Nereus and Achillius, and of St Stephen the Protomartyr.²⁰

The Sainly Circle of St Pancratius in the Ragusan Tradition

Although Constantine Porphyrogenitus mentions only the relics of St Pancratius, the Ragusan tradition remembers other saints who were also venerated in Ragusa. Thus the earliest Ragusan poet Miletius, who probably flourished in the fourteenth century, says that the relics of SS Nereus, Achilleus,²¹ Domitilla and Petronilla were brought by some refugees from Rome and that they were placed in the Church of St Stephen the Protomartyr.

*Ad decus et laudem Stephani Protomartyris extat
Castellum: templum fundant, et corpora credunt*

¹⁶ Liber Pontificalis, I–III, ed. L. Duchesne, Paris 1955 I, 464.6–11 (= Lib. pontif.). The removals took place during the pontificate of Pope Paul (757–767).

¹⁷ Lib. pontif. I, 324.5–6. The cult of Sergius and Bacchus is of Byzantine origin; cf. BHG II, 238.

¹⁸ Bede Venerabilis Historia Ecclesiastica, III, 29.

¹⁹ Lib. Pontif. I, 504.20–22; 509.11–12.

²⁰ Lib. Pontif. II, 2.8 – 23.19.

²¹ There was also a Byzantine cult of St Achilleus, the bishop of Larissa; cf. Bibliotheca hagiographica Graeca I–III, ed. F. Halkin, Bruxelles 1957, I, 6; III, 6 (= BHG).

*Sanctorum, quorum nomina scripta, subaudis:
Nerei, Achillei, Domitillae, Petronillaeque,
Quae secum furtim tuilerant Roma fugientes.*²²

It is interesting that Miletius makes no mention of the relics of St Pancratius, although he names precisely the saints whose cult was unified with the cult St Pancratius in the Roman tradition. It may be assumed, therefore, that Constantine Porphyrogenitus abbreviated his source and mentioned only the relics of St Pancratius, leaving out the other saints venerated in Ragusa already in his time. It is possible to surmise the reason for this omission. Porphyrogenitus knew that these saints were specifically associated with the Roman Church, and he mentioned Pancratius only because he felt that this saint's Greek name might be taken as evidence of his Byzantine origin. If that is correct, Porphyrogenitus's act might be interpreted as an indication that he was very wary about the possible political repercussions of what he put down. The same cautiousness seems to underlie Porphyrogenitus's use of the terms 'Ρωμαῖνοι and 'Ρωμαῖτοι in his chapter on Dalmatia, because he wished to make a distinction between the Latin and Greek populations and yet to unite both groups under the political supremacy of Constantinople.²³ Accordingly, his descriptions of the Dalmatian towns seek to associate the former heritage of the Roman Empire with Byzantium (e.g. the passages referring to Diocletian in connection with Spalato or to the etymology of the name of Zadar, *iam erat*, etc.).²⁴ It is quite certain that his selection of the saints venerated in these towns was made with the same objective in mind and that Emperor actually had much fuller information, but that he chose to include only those facts that suited him and the general drift of his work.

Perhaps a century and half after Miletius, a work known as *The Anonymous Annals of Ragusa* was compiled, and Niccolò Ragnina used it as the basis of his *Annals of Ragusa*. The legend of the foundation of Ragusa was in this work complicated by the merging of the Roman and Slavonic traditions, so that its historical core is almost unrecognizable. Nevertheless, the anonymous author writes that the refugees who came from Rome were the descendants of Radoslav, a Slavonic king dethroned long ago, and that they brought with them several relics from Rome: St Petronilla, St Domitilla, two pieces of the Holy Cross, St Sergius, St Nereus, St Achilleus and St Pancratius.²⁵

The story of the translation of these relics to Ragusa, fully formed in the late Middle Ages, is not of great help in the reconstruction of the actual historical deve-

²² Only fragments of Miletius's verses have been preserved in the work of Nicolò Ragnina, which dates from around the middle of the sixteenth century. It is therefore possible that Miletius mentioned St Pancratius as well in some other passage; cf. *Annali di Ragusa del magnifico ms. Nicolò di Ragnina*, ed. S. Nodilo, *Monumenta spectantia Historiam Slavorum Meridionalium, Scriptores I*, Zagrabiae 1883, 174.

²³ The term 'Ρωμαῖνοι is specific only in the chapters dealing with the Slavs in Dalmatia and hinterland; cf. *DAI I*, 29–36.

²⁴ *DAI I*, 29.237–238; 29.272–273.

²⁵ *Annales Ragusini Anonymi*, ed. S. Nodilo, *Monumenta spectantia Historiam Slavorum Meridionalium, Scriptores I*, Zagrabiae 1883, 3–4 (= Anonymi).

lopments. What is important, however, is that this intricate legend seems to contain allusions to various events which took place over a period of several centuries. If that is true, the references of SS Pancratius, Domitilla, Petronilla, Nereus and Achillius belong the earliest stratum of the legend. It would also seem that the very intricacy of the legend indicates that it was not at all known how the relics of these saints reached Ragusa. This conclusion would support the view that the translation had taken place a long time before the compilation of this work, presumably as far back as the early Middle Ages.

There is, however, a sentence in the anonymous author's account of the relics which shows that he made use of earlier records. Namely, after listing the relics which the newcomers have brought from Rome, he says that they are kept *in the Church of St Stephen at the Pustierna today (Santa Petrunjela, Santa Domintjela, Sancto Nereo, Sancto Anchileo e Pangrazi, capo et mano et pedi de sancto Sergi, Bacho, et molte altre Reliquie sancte; peze dua de legno di Christo, qual son hoggi di a Sancto Stefano a la Pusterna)*.²⁶ This remark, however, dates from some period after the tenth century, for the Church of St Stephen mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus was *in the middle of the city*,²⁷ while the Church of St Stephen at the Pustierna was located — if it existed at all at that early date — in a suburb.²⁸ It was only later, probably in the twelfth century, that the precinct of the Pustierna was encompassed by the town walls of Ragusa. Accordingly, the source of the anonymous author dates from the twelfth century at the earliest, and probably from some later period.

The appearance of the cult of St Pancratius and the building of the Church of St Stephen the Protomartyr in Ragusa should be perhaps viewed within the framework of the papal policy towards Ragusa and, more specifically, of the plans of Pope Zacharias (741–752) to make that town the main missionary centre in southern Dalmatia. The charter which can be taken as the basis for this interpretation is a later forgery, but it does contain elements which preserve the historical core of the original document.²⁹ On the other hand, the papal policy towards Ragusa in 743 could be taken as an additional argument in support of the thesis that the separation of Illyricum from the papal throne took place between 752 and 757, and not as early as 728/729.³⁰ In this case, Rome and Byzantium still pursued a concurrent policy in

²⁶ Anonymi, 3.

²⁷ This oldest church of St Stephen in Ragusa could be the same mentioned by Philippus de Diversis in 1440; cf. Philippi de Diversis de Quartigianis, ed. V. Brunelli, Programma dell' I. R. Ginnasio superiore in Zara 24 (1880) 34, *Habetur et aliud templum S. Stephani Prothomartyris valde devotum, ubi servantur Sanctorum Petronillae filiae S. Petri, et Domitillae corpora, et aliorum Sanctorum copia grandis Reliquiarum argento inaurato ornata*.

²⁸ For the location of Porphyrogenitus's Church of St Stephen in Ragusa see T. Živković, *Legenda o Pavlimiru Belu*, IČ 50 (2004) 21.

²⁹ *Diplomatički zbornik kraljevine Hrvatske, Dalmacije i Slavonije I*, ured. M. Kostrenčić, Zagreb 1967, N° 1. For a more detailed discussion of this charter see Živković, *Crkvena organizacija*, 140–145.

³⁰ Theophanes records that the separation of Illyricum took place in 728/729, during the pontificate of Gregory II (715–731), cf. Theophanis Chronographia I–II, ed. C. de Boor, Lipsiae 1883, I, 408.23–25.

743, and the translation of the relics from Rome was the result of a synchronous action of the Empire and the Holy See designed to further the missionary and political work in the Serbian principalities in the hinterland of southern Dalmatia.³¹

Although the political relations between Byzantium and Rome were very strained in the time of Emperor Leo III (717–741) and Pope Gregory II and Pope Gregory III, primarily as a result of the Emperor's iconoclastic policy,³² the charter issued to Ragusa by Pope Zacharias in 743 shows that there was nevertheless a certain rapprochement between Rome and Constantinople at that time. In view of the fact that Constantine V (741–775), who succeeded Leo III, continued to pursue the iconoclastic policy, while Pope Gregory III remained on the same position as before, the possibilities for cooperation in religious matters were very limited. An opportunity presented itself after June 742, when Artabazd, the *comes* of Opsikia, defeated the legitimate emperor and took over the rule in Byzantium.³³ Artabazd held on to the throne of Byzantium until 2 November 743, when Constantine V recaptured the capital and regained the imperial rule.³⁴ Thus the usurping Artabazd sat on the Byzantine throne sixteen months, during which time he seems to have sought to curry favour of the Pope of Rome. Apparently he was successful, since the cult of icons was re-established and since we find Pope Zacharias referring, in two letters addressed to coepiscopus Bonifatius, to Artabazd and his son Nikephoros as rulers whom he recognized as the legitimate emperors in Constantinople (*Data X. Kalendas Iulias, imperante domno piissimo augusto Artavasdo a Deo coronato magno imperatore anno III, post consulatum eius anno III, sed et Niciphoro magno imperatore anno III, indictione duodecima*).³⁵ Since Artabazd had good relations with Pope Zacharias, the charter granted to Ragusa can be interpreted only in this context — as the price which the Emperor of Byzantium paid for the recognition of his imperial rule by Rome. Thus Pope Zacharias exploited the internal discords in Byzantium in his efforts to extend the ecclesiastical influence of Rome in southern Dalmatia, or, more precisely, in Ragusa. It was probably then that the relics of the saints remembered in the Ragusan tradition — SS Nereus, Achillius, Petronilla, Domitilla and Pancratius — were transferred to Ragusa.

This interpretation of the events of 743 can also explain the reference to the refugees from Rome, whom the Ragusan tradition always associates with the translation of the relics of SS Nereus, Achillius, Petronilla, Domitilla and Pancratius to Ragusa. Namely, after the victory of the iconoclastic party in Constantinople in 730,

³¹ Cf. C. Mango — R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, Oxford 1997, 566, n. 5, where it is pointed out that Pope Gregory II and Pope Gregory III remained in good relations with Byzantium. A later separation of Illyricum — i.e. during the pontificate of Stephen II (752–757) was suggested already by V. Grumel, *L'annexion de l'Illyricum oriental, de la Sicilie et de la Calabre au patriarcate de Constantinople*, *Recherches de science religieuse* 40 (1952) 191–200.

³² Cf. Г. Осипрогорски, *Историја Византије*, Београд 1969, 172.

³³ Theoph. I, 414.16–21.

³⁴ Theoph. I, 420.10–12.

³⁵ MGH, *Merowingici et Karolini aevi I*, *Epistolarum tomus III*, ed. W. Gundlach, Berolini 1892, 314.28–30; 316.13–15.

many iconophiles probably sought refuge in the distant provinces or even further, in Rome itself.³⁶ It is therefore quite possible that some of these eminent iconophiles brought the papal charter and the saints' relics — a hypothesis which provides an easy explanation of the reference to the refugees in the Ragusan legend of the translation of the relics of the Roman saints, for, according to that legend, it was from Illyricum that these refugees went to Rome, and from Rome they came to Ragusa.

Тибор Живковић

О НАЈСТАРИЈИМ СВЕТАЧКИМ КУЛТОВИМА У ДУБРОВНИКУ

Мошти светог Панкратија у Дубровнику први пут су поменуте у делу Константина Порфирогенита *De administrando imperio* у оквиру 29. поглавља и излагања о почецима Дубровника. Будући да је овај податак тачно датиран у 948/949. годину, поставља се питање када су мошти светог Панкратија пренете у Дубровник. Друго питање које је веома важно, под којим политичким околностима је дошло до овог преноса. Анализа култа св. Панкратија показала је да је у питању светац чији је култ превасходно повезан са Римом, где је поштован уз св. Ахилеја, Нереа, Домицилу и Петронилу. Овај круг светаца који је повезан са св. Панкратијем, показује јасно да је у питању култ који је настао и развијан у Риму током VI–VIII века. С друге стране Далмација је у политичком смислу била повезана са Византијом, па се поставља питање под којим политичким околностима је могло да се догоди да се црквена политика Рима подудари са политиком Цариграда — односно, у којем историјском тренутку су се интереси Рима и Цариграда подударили. Наиме, није очекивано да Рим води самосталну црквену политику на територијама које су под црквеном и световном влашћу Цариграда — без претходне сагласности цариградске владе.

Изгледа да се може поуздано утврдити да су мошти св. Панкратија пренете у Дубровник 742/743. године. Тада је на цариградском престолу седео узурпатор Артавазд, који је од папе био признат за легитимног цара и који је покушао да промени црквену политику Царства, од иконокластичке ка иконофилској. С једне стране, узурпатор је добио признање царске власти од папе, а заузврат је папа добио могућност ширења црквеног утицаја у Далмацији. Управо из тог времена је и најстарија папска повеља дубровачкој цркви, о којој у науци постоје различита мишљења. У питању је фалсификат, али је он по свој прили-

³⁶ About eighty years later Emperor Michael II of Byzantium (820–829) complained in a letter sent to the Frankish Emperor Louis the Pious in 824 that the iconophiles in Rome seek to overthrow the Constantinopolitan government and the iconoclasts; cf. *J. D. Mansi, Sacrorum conciliorum, nova et amplissima collectio*, Graz 1960, XIV, 419–420.

ци настао на основу једног ваљаног папског документа. Тако би пренос моштију св. Панкратија из Рима у Дубровник био сведочанство о сарадњи Рима и Цариграда на пољу црквене политике према Далмацији у једном бурном и кратком раздобљу као последица кризе у Византији, када је узурпатор Артавазд, збацивши Константина V, покушао да промени црквену политику у корист иконофилске странке у Цариграду. Почеци култа св. Панкратија у Дубровнику могу бити додатна потврда да је папска повеља дубровачкој цркви из 743. године заиста постојала. Друго, резултати до којих се дошло, указују на то да и дубровачке легенде, које помињу избеглице из Илирика које су из Рима донеле мошти св. Панкратија, најпре могу да буду протерани иконофили који су се у време Артавазда вратили у Византију.