

БЕОГРАДСКИ ИСТОРИЈСКИ ГЛАСНИК

BELGRADE HISTORICAL REVIEW

Vol. V (2014)

Одељење за Историју, Филозофски факултет, Универзитет у Београду

Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade

Београд • Belgrade

2014

UDC: 94:314.151.3-054.72(=163.41)(495.02)"06"
94(495.02)"06"

ID BROJ: 211865356

Изворни научни чланак

РаД примљен: 17. 03. 2014.

РаД прихваћен: 02. 04. 2014.

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SETTLEMENT OF THE SLAVS IN ASIA MINOR DURING THE RULE OF JUSTINIAN II AND THE BISHOPRIC ΤῶΝ ΓΟΡΔΟΣΕΡΒΩΝ*

In the Acts of the Council of Trullo in 691/692 there was mentioned for the first time a bishop τῶν Γορδοσέρβων (*of Gordoserba*), in the province of Bythinia, Asia Minor. The appearance of the episcopal see called *Gordoserba* in Asia Minor at the end of the 7th century has been often explained as a consequence of settlement of some group of the Serbs from the Balkans to Asia Minor, during some of the many resettlements of peoples conducted by Byzantine emperors throughout the 7th century. The paper points to the fact that the bishop τῶν Γορδοσέρβων was mentioned for the first time in the Acts of the Council of Trullo in 691/692, and that there was no mention of him in the Acts of the Sixth Ecumenical council in Constantinople in 680/681. Thus, it might be concluded that the resettlement of the Serbs from the Balkans to Asia Minor occurred between the two councils. As it is well known, emperor Justinian II conquered *many tribes of the Slavs* in the vicinity of Thessalonica in 688/689 and then transferred them to Asia Minor, to the Opsician Theme, which is the territory of the Province of Bythinia. It could be possible that Serbs whose bishop was present at the Council of Trullo in 691/692 were part of that resettlement of the Slavs and that they originated in the region of Thessalonica, where, according to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, Serbs did live in the 7th century.

Keywords: *Serbs, Gordoserba, Council of Trullo, Bythinia, Justinian II, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, Servia upon Bistritsa*

* The paper is part of the project *Tradicija, inovacija i identitet u Vizantijskom svetu – Tradition, innovation and identity in the Byzantine world* (no. 177032), supported by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Serbia

In the Acts of the ecclesiastical council held in 691/692 in the Imperial Palace of Trullo in Constantinople, which is therefore known as the *Council of Trullo*, but also as the *Quinisext Council*,¹ there was recorded, among the names of the participants of the Council, the name of Isidore, the ἀνάξιος ἐπίσκοπος Γορδοσέρβων τῆς Βιθυνῶν ἐπαρχίας (*unworthy bishop of Gordoserba of the Province of the Bithynians*).² The bishopric in question was a new one, mentioned for the first time in the sources. Its very name already suggests a connection to the Serbs,³ so the prevailing opinion is that it was a bishopric of a city of the Serbs settled in Asia Minor from the Balkan Peninsula on occasion of one of the many resettlements of the Balkan Slav population undertaken by Byzantine emperors during the 7th century.⁴

Exact time and circumstances in which the settlement of those Serbs in Asia Minor had taken place could not have been so far determined, and it is primarily due to an oversight. Namely, it is usually assumed that the *bishop τῶν Γορδοσέρβων* was mentioned for the first time already amongst the participants of the Sixth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 680/681. This led to the conclusion that the establishment of the bishopric and the settlement of the Serbs in Asia Minor belonged to the period prior to the year 680, that is, to the time of Constant II (641–668) and Constantine IV (668–685).⁵ Nevertheless, the fact is that in the Acts of the Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680/681 there was no *bishop τῶν Γορδοσέρβων*,⁶ but that he was mentioned for the first time

1 On the Council of Trullo, cf. ODB III, 2126–2127 (A. Papadakis).

2 Mansi, XI, 996 E.

3 Since the name was always recorded in its genitive form „(τῶν) Γορδοσέρβων“ (only once „(τῆς) Γορδοσέρβης“), one cannot say with certainty whether its nominative form was „οἱ Γορδοσέρβοι“ or „τὸ Γορδοσέρβα“. But, bearing in mind that the names of the cities in the Greek language were almost never in the masculine gender, the latter form is more probable. At first glance, one may assume that the first part of the name comes from Proto-Slavonic *gordъ*, modern Serbian *grad* (*city, town*), and that the whole name means *the city of the Serbs*, cf. Loma 1993, 112, 117. Nevertheless, it has been proven that *Gordos* was a name for a „district“ that stretched along the left bank of the river Sangarios, where „τὸ Γορδοσέρβα“ was probably situated, Ramsey 1890, 183, 209–210; Pančenko 1902, 58–59. Thus, the meaning of the name should be *(the place of) the Gordos Serbs*, or *(the place of) the Serbs of Gordos*.

The *bishop τῶν Γορδοσέρβων* was regularly mentioned among the attendants of many church councils as well as in all the episcopal *notitiae* of the Constantinopolitan Church in the subsequent centuries, cf. Mansi, XII, 998 A, 1103 A; XIII, 145 C, 369 C, 392 B; XVII, 377 C; *Notitiae*, no. 1.183, 2.205, 3.255, 4.196, 7.235, 9.133, 10.150, 13.146.

4 Niederle 1906–1910, 279, 399, 434, 463; ISN I, 144 (S. Ćirković). Cf. the following footnote.

5 Pančenko 1902, 58–59; VIINJ I, 227, n. 25 (M. Rajković); Ostrogorsky 1959, 53, n. 20, 63; ISN I, 144 (S. Ćirković); Haldon 1990, 124, n. 98; Maksimović 1996, 159; Podskalski 2010, 53.

6 Cf. Mansi, XI, 640 C – 653 E, 668 D – 681 A, 688 C – 697 A, for the signatures of the participants of the Sixth Ecumenical Council.

in the Acts of the Quinisext Council of 691/692.⁷ And it is this fact that could direct us towards the answer to the question when, from where and in what circumstances a part of the Serbs was resettled from the Balkans to the Asia Minor and how the *Bishopric τῶν Γορδοσέρβων* was established.

According to the data provided by Theophanes, the emperor Justinian II (685–695, 705–711) prepared an attack *against Bulgaria and Sklavenia* in 687/688. The attack was launched the following year, 688/689. The emperor first defeated the Bulgars and then *he penetrated as far as Thessalonica and subjected great multitudes of Slavs*, some of them were conquered by fight, others surrendered voluntarily. He then transferred them to Asia Minor, to the Opsician Theme, after they crossed the Hellespont at Abydos.⁸ Three years later, in 691/692, having heard that the Arabs were in a difficult situation, the emperor Justinian II decided to attack them and break the truce his father Constantine IV had concluded with them in 685.⁹ Therefore, he recruited an army of thirty thousand men among those Slavs he had recently settled in Asia Minor, *armed them and called them „Chosen People”*, put them under the command of a certain Neboulus, and prepared them for the attack on the Arabs. At the head of that army, the emperor marched east to Sebastopolis in Armenia, where he clashed with the Arabs. In the early stages of the battle the emperor was successful, but the Arab commander Mohammad persuaded and bribed the Slav leader Neboulus to join his side with his men. Neboulus then with twenty thousand Slavs abandoned the emperor and joined the Arabs, which caused a total disaster of the Byzantine army. After he returned to the West, the emperor ordered a terrible retribution be done upon the remaining ten thousand of the Slav warriors, having them killed along with their women and children in Leukatē in the Gulf of Nicomedia, in Bithynia.¹⁰ Later on, in 693/694, those Slavs that joined the Arabs during the battle of 691/692, helped them again in their new attack on the Empire.¹¹

All of that, with only minor differences, was described also by Nicephorus the Patriarch and George the Monk. Unlike Theophanes, whose narrative is divided by years, those two authors give continuous account.¹² In order not to repeat the whole story, because the accounts of Nicephorus and George the

7 Only Ostrogorsky 1959, 53, n. 20, rightly points to that fact.

8 Theophanes, 364.5–15.

9 Stratos 1974, 57–58; Haldon 1990, 69–72; Treadgold 1997, 330.

10 Theophanes, 365.30–366.23. For the opinions on impact of this imperial measure on the number of the Slav population in Bithynia, cf. VIINJ I, 228, n. 32 (M. Rajković).

11 Theophanes, 367.9–12. On the campaigns of Justinian II in 688–692, cf. Haldon 1990, 72–73; Treadgold 1997, 333–335.

12 Nikephoros, § 38.1–28; Georgius Monachus II, 729.18–731.2.

Monk are generally similar to that of Theophanes, I would only point to those minor differences between them, for they could be of some importance for the issue of this paper. Thus, while Theophanes writes that the emperor Justinian II in 688/689 subjected *great multitudes of Slavs* (πολλὰ πλήθη τῶν Σκλάβων),¹³ Nicephorus the Patriarch points that he subjected *many of the Slav tribes from there* (πολλὰ τῶν ἐκεῖσε Σκλαβηνῶν γένη).¹⁴ George the Monk speaks of *great multitudes of Slavs* (πολλὰ τῶν Σκλάβων πλήθη) at that place,¹⁵ but further on he inserts a sentence which is not to be found neither in the text of Theophanes, nor in that of Nicephorus. Namely, describing how the emperor in 691/692 led against the Arabs thirty thousand Slavs, his „*Chosen People*“, he adds – *or rather unholy* (τὸν περιούσιον ἐκείνον λαόν, μᾶλλον δὲ ἄνόσιον).¹⁶

Thus, in 688/689, just before the *bishop τῶν Γορδοσέρβων of the Province of Bithynia* was first mentioned in the sources in 691/692, the emperor Justinian II transferred from the Balkans to Asia Minor *great multitudes of Slavs*, i. e. *many of the Slav tribes*, that he conquered in his military campaign. Were there among those Slavs perhaps some of the Serbs, who then settled at the place for which the *bishopric τῶν Γορδοσέρβων* was established?

13 Theophanes, 364.13–15.

14 Nikephoros, § 38.7–9.

15 Georgius Monachus II, 729.19–21.

16 Georgius Monachus II, 730.5–6. The phrase περιούσιος λαός should not be translated as *supernumerary army*, as done by the translation of the fragments of Theophanes, patriarch Nicephorus and George the Monk in VIINJ I, 227, 241, 248 (M. Rajković, L. Tomić), and also some earlier attempts at translating had the similar meaning, cf. Ibidem, 227, n. 27. In his translation along the critical edition of the *Short History* of patriarch Nicephorus, C. Mango translated the phrase as „*Peculiar People*“, Nikephoros, p. 93, which is close to the essence of its meaning. The phrase is biblical and it is found in the Old and the New Testament in the same meaning – „*the Chosen People*“, Exodus 19:5, Titus 2:14. In that sense it was used also by some authors at the end of the 7th century, such as an unknown Thessalonician in the second book of the *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*, *Miracula I*, 187.8–9, and in the preface to the *Cannons of the Council of Trullo 691/692*, *Trull.*, *Syntagma II*, 298. On the other hand, George's phrase τὸν περιούσιον ἐκείνον λαόν, μᾶλλον δὲ ἄνόσιον, was translated as „*supernumerary army, mostly unbaptized...*“, in the VIINJ I, 248 (M. Rajković, L. Tomić). But, the word ἄνόσιος should not be translated as *unbaptized*. Its meaning is *unholy, impious*, but in a moral, not formal sense. That is, it designates someone whose deeds are unholy and impious. It was in that very sense that it was used by George the Monk. Knowing that twenty thousand men out of thirty thousand of the Slav „*Chosen People*“ later deserted to the Arabs and betrayed the emperor Justinian II and the Romans, George obviously considered that they, having proved unworthy of that distinguished name, were not the „*Chosen People*“, but „*rather unholy*“. Nevertheless, Anagnōstakēs 2001, 325–346, insisted on etymological translation of the phrase, as „*people rich in land*“, meaning the land given to the new settlers in the Opsician theme by the emperor. But, contrary to the sources, he tended to recognize in those settlers not Slavs, but the „*Sermēsianoī*“ of the *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*, *Miracula I*, 227–234.

It should be noted first that those Slavs, according to the sources, were settled in the Opsician Theme. The *bishopric τῶν Γορδοσέρβων* was in the Province of Bithynia, which was indeed a part of the Opsician Theme. The argument that the territory of the Province of Bithynia was the core area of the Slav settlement in 688/689 is to be found also in the aforementioned fact that the emperor Justinian II, after twenty thousand men of the Slav “Chosen People” had deserted to the Arabs in 691/692, ordered the slaughter of the remaining ten thousand along with their families in Leukatē, in the Gulf of Nicomedia, near Nicomedia, the capital of Bithynia. Besides that, there is a seal of the emperor Justinian II, dating from the year 694/695, which belonged to the *apohypatēs of the Slav captives of the province of Bithynia*,¹⁷ which points to the same conclusion. Thus, it is clear that the Serbs, settled at the place called τὰ Γορδόσερβα whose *bishop* was subjected to the metropolitan of Nicaea and thus located in the vicinity of that city, which was besides Nicomedia the most important of the cities of Bithynia, could indeed have been a part of the Slavs, that is, one of the Slav tribes, settled in that region by emperor Justinian II in 688/689.

Whence those Slavs settled by the emperor in Bithynia originated? George the Monk speaks of the *Western provinces*, that is, the Balkans in general.¹⁸ Theophanes writes of the subjugation and resettlement of the *great multitudes of Slavs* as a result of the emperor’s penetration as far as Thessalonica.¹⁹ Patriarch Nicephorus is, however, the most precise. According to him, the emperor Justinian penetrated *as far as the city of Thessalonica* and subjugated *many of the Slav tribes from there* (πολλὰ τῶν ἐκεῖσε Σκλαβηνῶν γένη), whom he then transferred to Asia Minor.²⁰ So, *many of the Slav tribes* that the emperor subjugated and transferred to Asia Minor had lived in the area of Thessalonica.

Now, the question arises: Were there any Serbs among the Slav tribes in the vicinity of Thessalonica at that time? As it is well-known, according to the legend of the Serb settlement in the Balkans, recorded in the Chapter 32 of the *De administrando imperio* of the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–959), the Serbs, arriving from their ancestral homeland in the North, initially settled, with the license of the emperor Heraclius (610–641), *in the Theme of Thessalonica, in Serblia, that aquired such a name from that reason*.²¹ Later on, they wished to go back to their homeland and started their way back north. Nevertheless, when they reached the Danube near Belgrade, they changed their mind once again and asked the same emperor Heraclius to give them another

17 Pančenko 1902, 25 sq; Schlumberger 1903, 277; VIINJ I, 245 (M. Rajković, L. Tomić).

18 Georgius Monachus II, 729.19–21.

19 Theophanes, 364.13–15.

20 Nikephoros, § 38.7–11.

21 DAI, § 32.7–12.

land to settle. The emperor then allowed them to settle in the countries known to Porphyrogenitus in his time as *Serblia*, *Paganía*, *country of the Zachloumoi*, *Trebounia* and *the country of the Kanalitai*, which were, according to him, devastated and depopulated by the Avars at the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century.²² Though the Migration of the Serbs to the Balkans in the beginning of the 7th century surely did not occur exactly in the way Porphyrogenitus described it,²³ it is nevertheless certain that after it a part of the Serbs settled in the vicinity of Thessalonica, around the city in the later centuries, and also to this day, known as *Servia upon Bistritsa*.²⁴

According to all of what was exposed above, we can conclude that there were also some Serbs, previously settled in *Servia upon Bistritsa*, among the *great multitudes of Slavs*, i. e. *many of the Slav tribes*, transferred from the vicinity of Thessalonica to Bithynia in Asia Minor by the emperor Justinian II in 688/689. They were settled at the place named after them τὰ Γορδόσερβα, and for the place the *bishopric τῶν Γορδοσέρβων* was established within the Metropolis of Nicaea, that was mentioned for the first time in 691/692. If we assume that the Serbs were, if not the only, then certainly predominant population of the newly founded city, because it was named after them, we may conclude that the need for the establishment of the *bishopric τῶν Γορδοσέρβων* points to the fact that the Serbs settled in Asia Minor in 688/689 were Christians in 691/692. Had they been so also in their former home near Thessalonica?²⁵ The bishopric of the city settled by the Serbs in Bithynia was a phenomenon of its own, for there is no information in the sources on similar bishoprics for the places in Asia Minor where other Slav tribes were settled, nor that the Byzantine au-

22 DAI, § 32.16–26. On the migration of the Serbs in general, cf. Živković 2000, 96–118; Živković 2002, 271–314; Živković 2012, 149–162.

23 For the opinion that the migration of the Serbs happened exactly in the way Porphyrogenitus described it, cf. Živković 2002, 285–296.

24 ISN I, 144 (S. Ćirković); Loma 1993, 117. On the presence of the Serbs in *Servia* and its surroundings, cf. Živković 2000, 96, n. 296. The fact that the name of the city of *Servia* was not mentioned in any Latin or Greek source prior to the Slav settlement of the Balkans strongly supports the connection of the city's name to the settlement of the Serbs at the beginning of the 7th century, Živković 2012, 155–156.

25 As it is well-known, in the Chapter 32 of the *De administrando imperio*, Constantine Porphyrogenitus describes how the Serbs were baptized just after their arrival in the Balkans, during the reign of the emperor Heraclius, by the priests that he brought from Rome, DAI, § 32.27–29. Nevertheless, if we follow Porphyrogenitus strictly, the Serbs settled in the region of Thessalonica even before they settled Serbian lands in the Western Balkans, DAI, § 32.7–12. Thus, if the Serbs in the vicinity of Thessalonica had already been Christians before they were transferred to Asia Minor in 688/689, we cannot say whether their Christianity has something to do with the „Heraclian“ conversion of the Serbs, because we don't rely know how and when they settled there.

thorities conducted the policy of conversion of those tribes to Christianity. Besides that, the fact that the emperor Justinian II called the army of thirty thousand Slavs he recruited in 691/692 a “*Chosen People*”, testifies that they were Christians by that time, for the use of that phrase for pagans would be just impossible.²⁶ The question remains why only the Serbs, out of the *many Slav tribes* that were resettled in Asia Minor along with them, got the bishopric for their new settlement in their new homeland, but it should be noted that their case fits perfectly into the overall principles of Byzantine migration politics of the time. As a newly settled Christian population, they were included into the administrative and ecclesiastical organization of the Empire and the place they were settled in got the *city status*, and along with that its own bishop,²⁷ in concordance with the Canon 17 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council (Chalcedon 451), which was repeated and strengthened by the Canon 38 of the same Council of Trullo in 691/692, and which states that *if a city was built, or rebuilt, by the imperial authority, the order of the ecclesiastical matters is to follow the political and public patterns*.²⁸

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26 Cf. n. 16. for the discussion about the meaning of the phrase περιούσιος λαός.

27 Haldon 1990, 124.

28 IV Ecum. 17, Syntagma II, 258–259; Trull. 38, Ibidem, 392.

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Предраг Коматина

НАСЕЉАВАЊЕ СЛОВЕНА У МАЛОЈ АЗИЈИ У ВРЕМЕ ВЛАДАВИНЕ ЈУСТИНИЈАНА II И ЕПИСКОПИЈА ΤΩΝ ΓΟΡΔΟΣΕΡΒΩΝ

У актима тзв. *Трулској* или *Пето-шестој сабора*, одржаног у царској палати Труло у Цариграду 691/692. године, помиње се по први пут *επισκοπῆ τῶν Γορδοσερβων* у провинцији *Витинији*, у Никејској митрополији. Име те епископије у науци се углавном повезује са Србима а њена појава објашњава се као последица пресељавања једне групе Срба са Балкана у Малу Азију за време неке од многих подухвата пресељавања становништва које су предузимали византијски цареви током VII века. Ипак, када тачно и одакле су ти Срби били пресељени у Малу Азију није било могуће утврдити. С друге стране, неопходно је истаћи чињеницу да се *επισκοπῆ τῶν Γορδοσερβων* први пут помиње управо у актима Трулског сабора из 691/692. године, док у актима Шестог васељенског сабора у Цариграду 680/681. о њему нема помена. То омогућује претпоставку да је до пресељавања поменутих Срба са Балкана у Малу Азију дошло између сабора из 680/681. и оног из 691/692.

Као што је добро познато, на основу података које доносе Теофан Исповедник, цариградски патријарх Нићифор и Георгије Монах, цар Јустинијан II (685–695, 705–711) покренуо је 687/688. године војну акцију против *Бујарске* и *Склавиније*, која је резултирала царевим победоносним пробојем до Солуна и његовим потчињавањем словенских племена у околини тог града. Покорене Словене цар је затим, 688/689. године, преселио у Малу Азију и населио их у теми Опсикион, а 691/692. године од њих је регрутовао велику војску за свој поход против Арабљана, који се неславно завршио управо захваљујући њиховом дезертирању.

Поставља се питање да ли је међу тим Словенима које је цар 688/689. преселио са Балкана у Малу Азију могло бити и Срба, у чијој је новој домовини затим основана *επισκοπιја τῶν Γορδοσερβων*, која се први пут помиње 691/692. године? Први аргумент у прилог тој тези била би чињеница да је тема Опсикион, у којој су поменути Словени насељени, обухватала, између осталог, и простор Провинције Витиније, у којој се налазила поменута епископија. Други аргумент могао би бити чињеница да су Словени које је цар Јустинијан II тада населио у Малој Азији потицали из околине Солуна. Према познијем писцу, цару Константину VII Порфирогениту (913–959), дошавши из своје северне прапостојбине у време цара Ираклија (610–641), Срби су се најпре населили у Солунској области, где је настао град по њима назван Сервија (на Бистрици/Алијакмону), одакле су се затим вратили на север, да би се коначно настанили у западном делу Балканског полуострва. Иако приповест цара-писца не може бити проверена, у науци се ипак прихвата да је након досељавања Срба са севера, један њихов део наставио да живи у околини Солуна, у подручју Сервије на Бистрици. Стога је сасвим могуће да су и они били захваћени војном акцијом Јустинијана II 687/688. године и мерама пресељавања у Малу Азију наредне године.

Чињеница да је град назван по њима имао свог епископа 691/692. године упућује на закључак да су Срби који су пресељени у Малу Азију тада били хришћани. Такође, употреба назива *Изабрани народ* за војску коју је цар регрутовао 691/692. године из редова словенских племена која је преселио из области Солуна у Малу Азију 688/689. сведочи да је хришћанство било у великој мери присутно код њих. Непосредних података о мерама покрштавања пресељених словенских племена нема, тако да остаје отворено питање да ли су они били хришћани и у старој постојбини на Балкану, или су покрштени тек по преласку у Малу Азију.