

The Sarnian diocese (*Sarniensis Ecclesia*)*

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Abstract: The Sarnian diocese is known only for its priest Vitalis (*Vitalis presbyter*), the last cosignatory of the acts of the Salonitan Church Synod, on the 15th of July 530 presided over by the Salonitan archbishop Honorius II (528-547). In the document known under the name “Historia Salonitana Maior”, whose oldest manuscript version – from the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*) – is attributed to the cultural circle of the Krbava-Modruš bishop Šimun Kožičić Benja (1509-1536), it was recorded in the above form.

Key words: The Roman Province of Dalmatia, The Sarnian diocese (*Sarniensis Ecclesia*), priest Vitalis (*Vitalis presbyter*), the Diocese of Senia (*Ecclesia Seniensis*), the Diocese of Krk (*Dioecesis Veglensis*)

Introduction

In fact this refers to the Diocese of Senj (*Seniensis Ecclesia*), whose name was written with the diphthong *ae* (*Saeniensis*), which during copying in the Middle Ages had been transformed into the very similar cursive letter combination *ar*. In this manner a new ecclesiastic entity was created – the Sarnian diocese – and Vitalis’ connection to his actual see was terminated. The Sarnian diocese was discussed in passing by several authors, who connected it to the Roman road station of Sarute on the main Salona – Servitium road depicted in the “Tabula Peutingeriana”, or the station of Sarnade on the main Sirmium – Salona road as noted on the “Itinerarium Antonini”. This station, as well as the see of Vitalis’ diocese, was said to be located at Donja Pecka near Mrkonjić Grad in western part of central Bosnia, although no traces were found there of an early Christian sacral structure. Other than Vitalis, no other Sarnian priests or bishops are known. The Diocese of Senia (Senj in the northern part of the eastern Adriatic) existed both before and after the mentioned Salonitan Church Synod.

I. An overview of research to the present

The Diocese of Vitalis is called Sarnian (*Ecclesia Sarniensis*)¹ and once Sarniten (*Ecclesia Sarnitensis*),² in the various manuscripts of the “Historia Salonitana Maior”. Daniele Farlati (1690-1773) considered that this might refer to the Diocese of Sarsenterum (*Sarsenterensis Ecclesia*),³ and both Ignaz Batthyány (1741-1798)⁴ and Ferdo Šišić (1869-1940)⁵ agreed with this. Farlati’s hypothesis is unacceptable because the the Diocese of Sarsenterum⁶ – together with the Diocese of Muccurum (*Ecclesia Muccuritana*)⁷ and the Di-

* Croatian version published in journal *Starohrvatska prosvjeta*, 37 (2010) 247-263. Publishing the article in English language corresponds with the opinion of the Editorial board to present the translation of already published articles in exceptional circumstances.

¹ Farlati 1753, 164; Kukuljević 1875, 197 (accord.: Codex Bibl. Barb. N. 3481. p. 114-116); Alačević 1878, 38; Клайћ 1967, 81; Gunjača 1973, 53; Ivanišević 1994, 160; Dodig / Škegro 2008, 17.

² Rački 1894, 15; Alačević 1878, 38; Клайћ 1967, 81, 221.

³ Farlati 1753, 172: „Fortasse legendum esse *Sarsenterensis ecclesia*, quae quidem ex decreto Concilii Salontani secundi, titulo ac sede Episcopali donata est“.

⁴ Batthyány 1785, 290.

⁵ Šišić 1914, 161; Клайћ 1967, 81, pag. 221.

⁶ Puljić / Škegro 2006, 219-241.

⁷ Škegro 2008, 291-303.

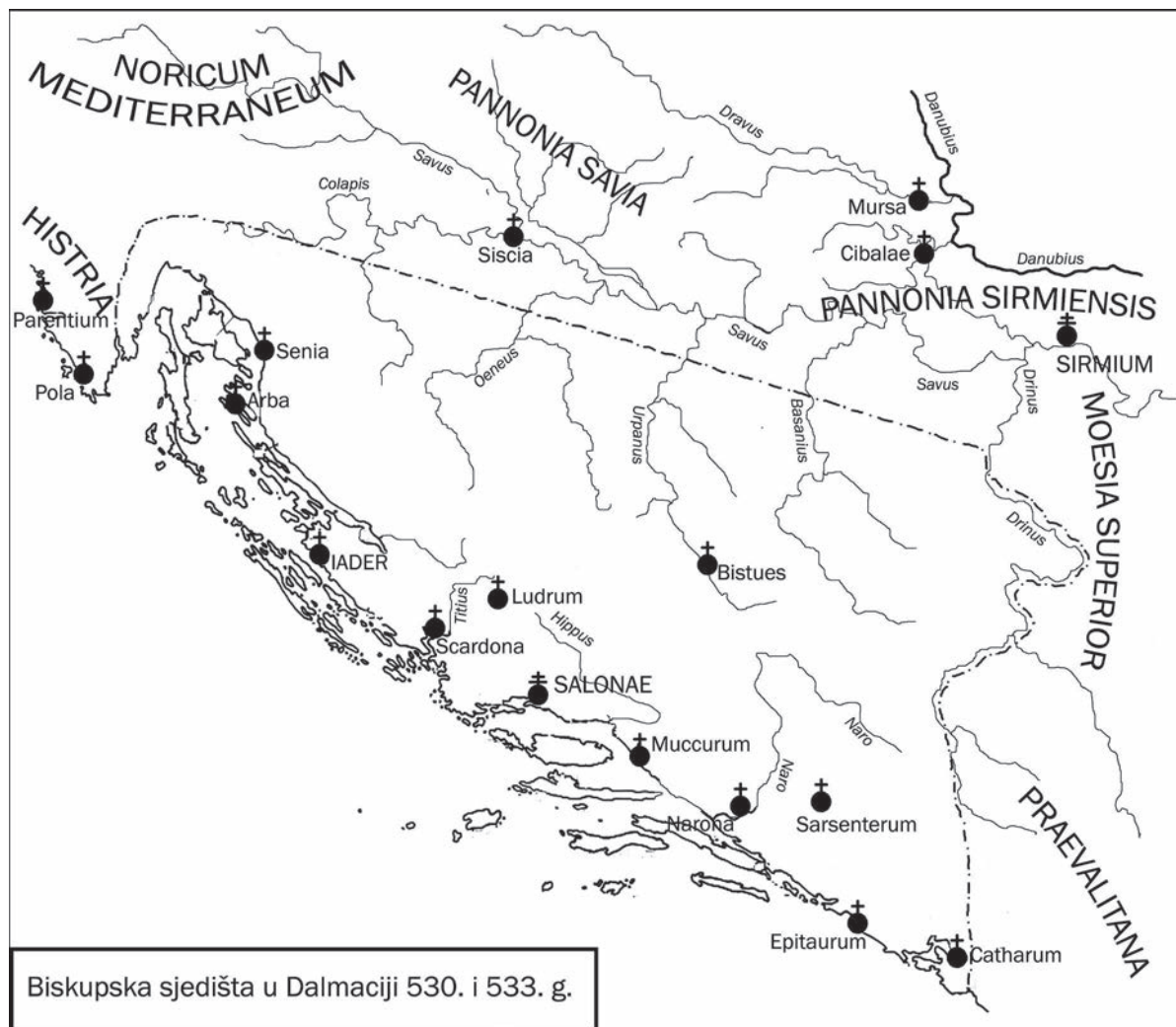


Fig. 1. Early Christian Dioceses in Dalmatia 530 and 533

ocese of Ludrum (*Ecclesia Ludroensis*)⁸ – was founded at the Salonitan Church Synod in 533 AD, while Vitalis’ diocese was mentioned in the acts of the Salonitan Church Synod of 530 AD. The variations in the names of this diocese (*Sarniensis*, *Sarnitensis*) arise from the fact that the acts of these synods, as was noted as far back as by Petar Skok (1881-1956), were recorded in a local (*sermo vulgaris*) and not a learned form of Latin.⁹ Not even the names of the early Christian dioceses in the former Roman Province of Dalmatia were standardized nor can errors be excluded resulting from the transcription of these

acts,¹⁰ which the copiers adapted according to their own opinion.¹¹

In his book of early Christianity in Dalmatia, Donato Fabianich (1808-1890) connected the presbyter Vitalis without any explanation to the then non-extant Diocese of Mostar (“Vitale della Chiesa di Mostar”,¹² “Sedi di Mostar”¹³), and this diocese identified as Sarsentorum (*sic!*).¹⁴ At the Mostar area for no reason locates the center of the Diocese of Sarsenterum (*Ecclesia Sarsenterensis*).¹⁵

¹⁰ Skok 1929, 49.

¹¹ Šišić 1914, 157.

¹² Fabianich 1874, 282.

¹³ Fabianich 1874, 285.

¹⁴ Fabianich 1874, 285, not. 1.

¹⁵ Mandić 1957, 65-68; Mandić 1959, 71-77; Mandić 1963a, 19-23; Mandić 1963b, 24-31; Basler 1991, 3; Bojanovs-

⁸ Škegro 2007, 9-24.

⁹ Skok 1929, 50.

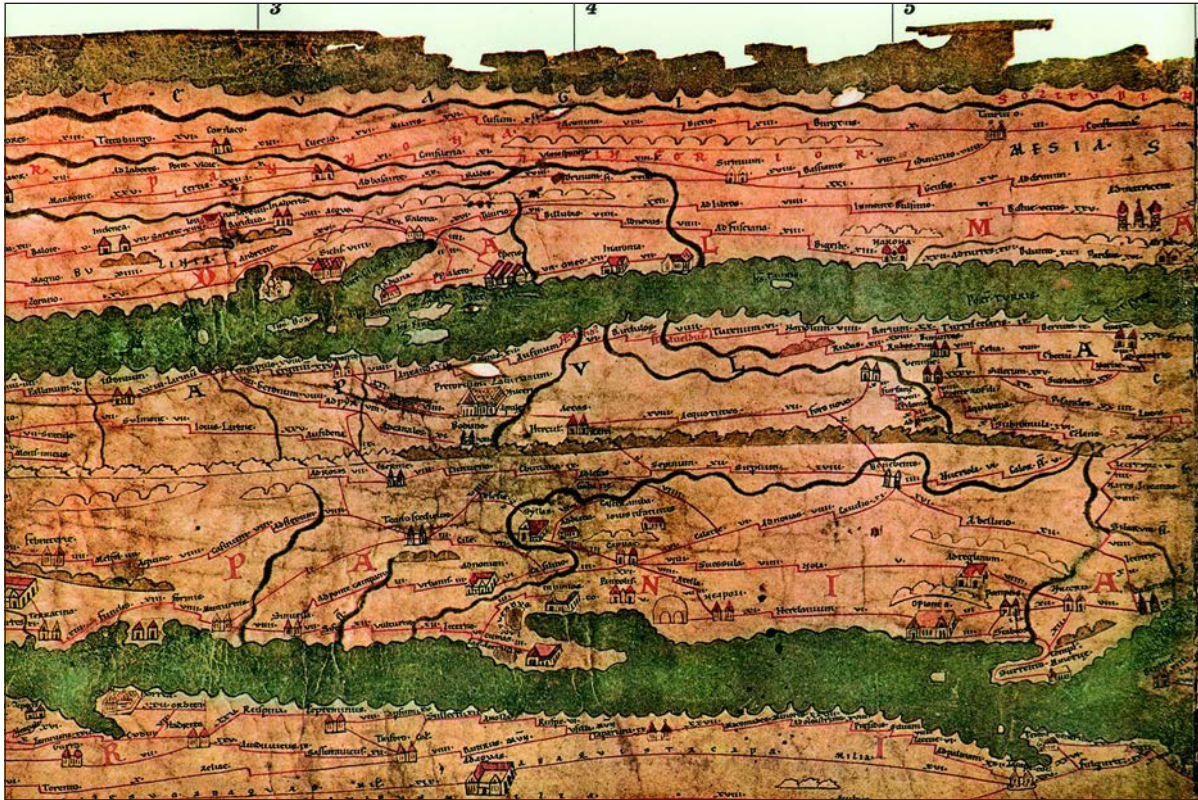


Fig. 2. Roman station Sarute on the main road Salona – Servitium

In his book on pre-Slavic topography in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and neighboring regions Wilhelm Tomaschek (1841-1901)¹⁶ identified the Sarnian diocese as a road station Sarnacle, which – in his opinion – the manuscripts most often recorded as Sarnade, and the Anonymous Geographer of Ravenna as Saniglo. He located it in Donja Pecka, at the source of the Sana River and the hamlet of Vasiljević in western Bosnia, because of his own assumption (“wir vermuten”)¹⁷ that the Sana had been called the Sarna in antiquity.¹⁸ Tomaschek’s identification is not acceptable because no early Christian

religious structures¹⁹ have been found in the cited places, nor does the etymology support this, while the name for the Sana River in antiquity was merely his hypothesis.

When publishing the “History of the bishops of Salona and Split” (*Historia Salonitana*) by Archdeacon Thomas of Split (1200-1268),²⁰ Franjo Rački (1828-1894) connected Vitalis’ diocese to the road station of Sarute, or Sarnite on the main Roman road Salona – Servitium, drawn between the stations Indenea and Lonnaria on the “Tabula Peutingeriana”, or the station of Sarnade noted between the stations of Leusaba and Silvae on the “Itinerarium Antonini”.²¹ Rački did not explain his hypothesis, nor did he identify the location of these road stations, nor the see of Vitalis’ diocese.

ki 1988, 381; Anđelić 1980, 261-262; Anđelić 1999a, 37; Anđelić 1999b, 5.

¹⁶ Tomaschek 1880, pass.

¹⁷ „We suspect“.

¹⁸ Tomaschek 1880, 18: “Aus dem oberen Ende der Ebene von Podražnica gelangen wir über die Lisina-planina und das Südende des Dimitor nach Medna und nach Dolnja-Pečka; hier oder bei Sana-wrelo und Wasiljewići suchen wir Sarnacle, wofür die meisten handschriften Sarnade, der Ravennate Saniglo schreiben. Wir vermuten, dass Sarna der antik-dalmatinische Name des Sanna-Flusses gewesen sei, den wir als ein Participium auf -na, alban. -ne, von dem Stamme sar, ‘fließen, springen, eilen’ auffassen. Der Ort ist bis in das 6. Jahrhundert nachweisbar; an dem Provincial-

concil von Salona im Jahre 530 nahm Theil Vitalis presbyter Sarniensis ecclesiae (Farlati It. p. 163.)”.

¹⁹ Čremošnik 1988, 143, Nr. 10.34.

²⁰ Rački 1894, pass.

²¹ Rački 1894, not. ε: Sarute tab. peut. (segm. VI, 2) vel Sarnite, in via a Servitio (Gradiška) Salonam, inter Indeneam et Lonariam (cf. Sarnade itin. Ant. ed. cit. p. 128 inter Leusabe et Silvae).

In his study on the Diocese of Ludrum, Vjekoslav Klaić (1849-1928) also connected the Sarnian diocese without any explanation to the former Roman road stations of Sarnite, Sarnade, or Sarniclo, and located it in an undefined area “in present-day Bosnia”.²² Obviously following Klaić, Krunoslav Draganović (1903-1983) located the diocese at Sarnade in an undefined Bosnian region in his book “History of the Catholic Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina”.²³

Anton Mayer (1883-1957) considered that Vitalis’ diocese could be connected to Servitium – a Pannonian station and port on the Sava River,²⁴ to which a main road had been built from Salona. He explained this by the fact that places that began with *Ser-* and *Sar-* were located in the region of northwestern Bosnia.²⁵ Mayer, however, did not substantiate his claim with anything else, nor in Bosanska Gradiška – where Servitium is located – has any early Christian structure ever been documented.²⁶

Rajko Bratož, one of the leading experts on early Christianity in the region of Illyricum, noted that the Sarnian diocese (*eccl. Sarniensis*) had not been identified, in fact that the locations were unsure for five early Christian dioceses in the interior section of Dalmatia, including this one.²⁷ This implicated that this diocese, like the four other unidentified early Christian dioceses (Barcensis, Bestoen, Ludrum, and Mactaritan), had been located in the interior of Dalmatia. However, the results of research to the present would indicate a conclusion that only the Diocese of Bestoe (*Ecclesia Bestoensis*) had been located in the far hinterland of the eastern Adriatic Sea (Fig. 1).²⁸

In his book of the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the antiquity, Ivo Bojanovski (1915-1993) considered that *Sarniensis Ecclesia* was a

parish (*parochia*) from the area of the Sarnien municipium (*mun. Sarniensis*), whose presbyter, or senior priest, Vitalis had participated in the Salonitan Synod in AD 530.²⁹ He thought that it was a parish of the Siscian diocese (*sic!*),³⁰ which had a similar status as the Nin diocese in the conclusions of the Split Church Council of 928 AD.³¹ Citing Farlati, Mayer, and Tomaschek,³² Bojanovski also tied it to the road station of Sarnade on the Sirmium – Salona road in “Itinerarium Antonini”,³³ or Sa(r)niglon in the text of the Anonymous Geographer of Ravenna,³⁴ which he hypothesized had become a municipium or *res publica* after AD 212, locating it in Donja Pecka near Mrkonjić Grad in the western part of central Bosnia.³⁵ The opinion of Bojanovski is unacceptable because this Church entity in the acts of the Salonitan Church Synod is not defined as a *parochia* but rather an *ecclesia* – exclusively denoting a diocese.³⁶ Vitalis signed the acts of the above synod as the deputy of his bishop (*primas suae ecclesiae*). The participation of a bishop’s deputy in a metropolitan synod was envisaged in the case of a pressing hindrance to attendance of the diocesan bishop.³⁷ Vitalis legitimately represented his diocese in 530, just as the other dioceses were represented by their bishops. Nor is Bojanovski’s idea acceptable about Vitalis’ “parish” as a component of the Sisak (i.e. Siscian) diocese, as the bishops of the latter had represented their diocese at the Salona Church Synods (530. g.: *Joannes episcopus Siscianae*; 533. g.: *Constantinus episcopus ecclesiae Siscianae*). There is also no proof that the road station Sarnade, to which

²² Клайћ 1912, 314.

²³ Draganović 1934, 4.

²⁴ Bojanovski 1988a, 381.

²⁵ Mayer 1957, 295.

²⁶ Paškvalin 1988, 47.

²⁷ Bratož 1986, 378, Not. 80: “Neidentificirani sta eccl. Mactaritana (Mostar?) in eccl. Sarniensis”, 390: *Sarniensis Ecclesia* Anonymus 530 *Concilium Salonitanum I* (N. Klaić, *Historia Salonitana maior*, Beograd 1967, str. 85); Klaić, 1987, str. 183, bilj. 74: “Problematisch ist noch die Lokalisierung von 5 im Landesinneren gelegenen Bistümern, (Barcensis ecc., Besto, Ludrum, eccl. Sarniensis, eccl. Mactaritana...”: Bratož 2009, 228, nr. 96: *Sarniensis ecclesia* (530).

²⁸ Škegro 2005, 369–389.

²⁹ Bojanovski 1980, 121-122, 123; Bojanovski 1988a, 251-252.

³⁰ Bojanovski 1988a, 286.

³¹ Bojanovski 1988a, 13: *Nonensis vero ecclesia non episcopum antiquitus sed archipraesbyterum habuisse cognoscitur*.

³² Bojanovski 1988, 286 and not. 10. (D. Farlati, 111. sacr., 164. from AD 530. A. Mayer, *Die Sprache*, 295, cf. 293, 294. W. Tomaschek 1880, 54).

³³ Itin. Ant. 269, 3, pag. 128: *Sarnade*.

³⁴ Rav. IV 19, 5, pag. 217: *Saniglon*.

³⁵ Bojanovski 1980, 121-122; Bojanovski 1988, 381: *SARNADE, mansio, via Salona-Servitium (Dalm.): Sarnade* Itin. Ant. 269, 3; *Sa(r)niglon* Rav. IV 19 (?): *Sarniensis* (+Sarni/t/ensis) *ecclesia*, or *presbyter* Fralati, Illyr.(?) sacr. 2, 164 (a. 530). Most often locates in Pecka near Mrkonjić-Grad, probably municipality after AD 212, or *res publica*.

³⁶ Skok 1929, 48.

³⁷ Dodig / Škegro 2008, 20: *Quod si quem forte non desideriosa voluntas sed inevitanda necessitas detinuerit, per primates suae ecclesiae se praesentet*.

Bojanovski connected Vitalis' "parish", became a municipal settlement – the fundamental prerequisite for any place to become an episcopal center.

Pascale Chevalier also commented on the Sarnian diocese in his catalogue of early Christian architecture in Dalmatia, but he had nothing to note other than the mention of a bishop in AD 530 (*l'évêque de l'eccl. Sarniensis*) and that the diocese was not identified (*l'eccl. Sarniensis non identifiée*).³⁸ However, the acts of the synod in question – to which this statement refers – do not mention a bishop, but a priest (*presbyter*).

In his book on the ecclesiastical organization in Serbian lands in the Middle Ages, Tibor Živković (1966-2013) noted that the "bishop of Sarnia" had attended the Salonitan Church Synod in AD 530,³⁹ although in fact a presbyter had participated as the deputy of the bishop (*primas*).

II. Sarniensis Ecclesia is the same as Seniensis Ecclesia

The see of the diocese represented by presbyter Vitalis at the Salonitan Church Synod in AD 530 should not be sought at the road station of Sarute on the main Salona – Servitium road (Fig. 2), nor the road station of Sarnade on the Sirmium – Salona road, located at Donja Pecka near Mrkonjić Grad (Fig. 3). It is not merely that no proof exists that these road stations ever achieved municipal, i.e. urban status – the basic precondition for any place to be the see of a diocese – but also there are no traces of any early Christian sacral structures there. For the same reasons, Vitalis' diocese also cannot be connected to Servitium – a road station and port on the Sava River. Not even the etymology would support this. The see of this diocese should be sought in an urban settlement whose name is close to that applied to Vitalis' bishopric, where the existence of early Christian religious structures is known, and to which several early Christian districts would have gravitated. All of this would correspond to the current Croatian coastal town of Senj, below the Velebit Mountains on the eastern part of the northern Adriatic (*Senia*, Σένια).

³⁸ Chevalier 1995b, 10, 23.

³⁹ Живковић 2004, 42.

Senia (Σένια)

Senia was once the most important trading and port settlement of northern Dalmatia in the area between Iader to the southeast and Pola to the northwest. The main coastal road passed through it: Aquileia – Salona – Narona – Epitaurum – Epidamnos – Constantinopolis, having reached it during the reign of Octavianus Augustus. The hinterland beyond the Velebit had access to the Adriatic Sea through a pass to this place, including Pannonia Savia, with a major road also built to its center in Siscia (Fig. 4). This cosmopolitan settlement, where Latin and Greek were spoken, existed from the last centuries BC and became a center of Oriental and Greco-Roman cults. Some authors consider that it acquired colonial status (*colonia Seniensis*) around BC 33,⁴⁰ while according to others it is not clear whether it was a *colonia* or a *municipium*, as Pliny the Elder (23-79) classified it as an *oppidum*,⁴¹ and others think that it was a *municipium* because it was located in an imperial province,⁴² or alternatively because it had insufficient agricultural land for the settlement of Roman citizens.⁴³ Senia surpassed the Kvarner Bay centers of Arba (Rab), Curicum (Krk), and Apsorus (Osor) strategically, economically, culturally, and in terms of religion and transport. During the early imperial period, there were even Palestinian Jews (*Iudaei*) in this place.⁴⁴ A significant trading settlement was in the 5th and 6th centuries,⁴⁵ and it continued to exist during the Middle Ages.⁴⁶

Opposite Senia is the island of Krk (Κουρικήτα, *Curricus*), where numerous early Christian sacral structures have been registered,⁴⁷ bearing witness to early Christian communities requiring the care of a bishop. The choice of Senia as a diocesan center greatly facilitated the spread of

⁴⁰ Alföldy / Mócsy 1965, 76.

⁴¹ Pliny III, 21, 140, p. 104; Wilkes 1969, 200.

⁴² Vittinghoff 1977, 18-19.

⁴³ Zaninović 1988, 11-12; Starac 2000, 85.

⁴⁴ CIL III 10055.

⁴⁵ Patsch 1900, 95-96; Senia, *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Alterumswissenschaft, Neue Bearbeitung, Zweite Reihe [R-Z], Zweiter Band*, Stuttgart 1923, col. 1460-1461; Alföldy / Mócsy 1965, 76 and not. 59; Glavičić 1993, 79-104; Starac, 1999, 71-88; Starac 2000, 84-85; Bartulović 2007, 265-274.

⁴⁶ Goldstein 1992, 52.

⁴⁷ Šiljeg 2008, 84-87; Regan / Nadilo 2009a, 1075-1087; Regan / Nadilo 2009b, 1175-1185.

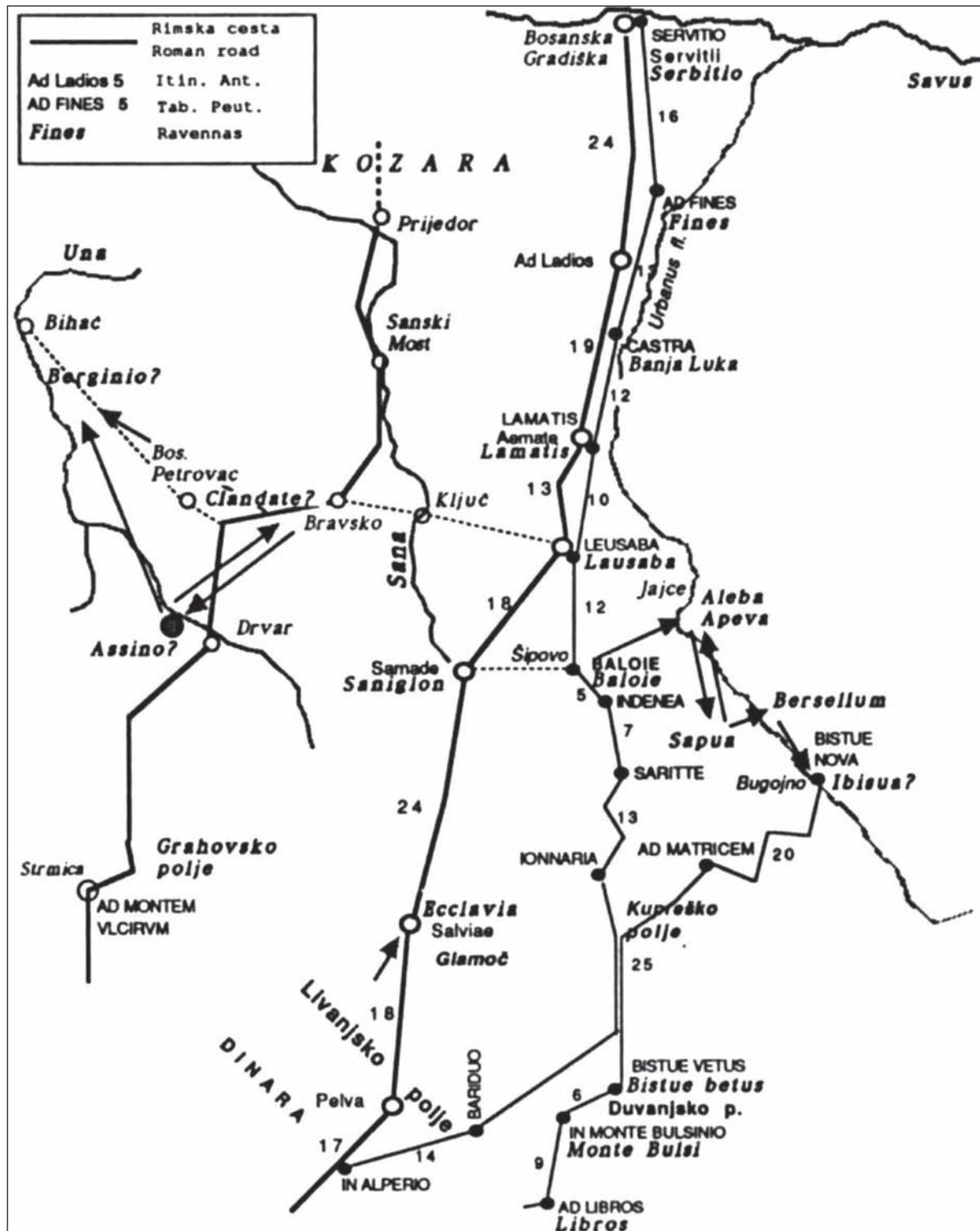


Fig. 3. Roman stations Sarnade and Servitium (acc. Slobodan Čače)

Christianity in the northern Kvarner Bay, while the southern and Cres-Lošinj sections were under the jurisdiction of the Arba (Rab) bishop. Senia, which in the northern Adriatic had a sim-

ilar role to that of Iader in southern Liburnia,⁴⁸ gained additional importance as the see of a diocese.

⁴⁸ Margetić 1988, 2.

The letter of Pope Innocent I to bishop Laurentius

Numerous experts consider that Senia was a diocesan center.⁴⁹ It might have still had a bishop during the 4th century⁵⁰ or at the beginning of the 5th century.⁵¹ The basis for this is a letter from Pope Innocent I (402-417) sent to bishop Laurentius denouncing the supporters of the former bishop of Sirmium, Photinus (345-351). The supporters of Photinus (*haeretici Photini*), through their propagation of the anti-Trinity heresy – condemned in 351 at the First Sirmium Synod and in 381 at the Synod in Aquileia – were endangering Laurentius' diocese (*in territorio dilectionis tuae*)⁵² due to their numbers (*nusquam tam multi, quam apud vos*).

Proving that Senia had been a diocesan center, Ivan Črnčić (1830-1897) drew attention to the similarities between the title of Laurentius' diocese (*Seniensis*) in the letter from Pope Innocent I and the term for the people of Senia (*Senienses*) on an early imperial inscription from Senj.⁵³ He

⁴⁹ Farlati 1769, 115-116; Sladović 1856, 93-94; Migne 1845, 607, not. e; Črnčić 1867, 31-33; *Opći šematizam* 1975, 424; Cambi 1976, 240, 270 not. 14; Cambi, 2002, 209, and not. 923; Glavičić 1993, 98; Chevalier 1995a, 39; Chevalier 1995b, 22, 23; Bogović 1997, 291-328; Nekić 1997, 32-34; Starac 1999, 85; Bogović / Nekić 2010, 8, 21, 53.

⁵⁰ Cambi 2002, 209, and not. 923.

⁵¹ Sladović 1856, 93-94; Črnčić 1867, 31-33; *Opći šematizam* 1975, 424; Cambi 1976, 240, 270 not. 14; Cambi 2002, 209, and not. 923; Bratož 1986, 390; Bratož 1987, 194; Glavičić 1993, 98; Bogović 1997, 291-328; Nekić 1997, 32-34; Starac 1999, 85; Bogović / Nekić 2010, 8.

⁵² Farlati 1769, 115-116; *Patrologia Latina*, 20, col. 607-608, epist. XLI: *Innocentius Laurentio episcopo Seniensi. Diu mirati sumus, dilectionis tuae litteris lectis, haereticos Photini venena sectantes in territorio dilectionis tuae non solum esse, sed et publice sibi conventicula in aliquorum possessionibus praeparare; cum de toto pene orbe nusquam tam multi, quam apud vos, delegerint habitare. Quorum doctrinae nefariae auctor Marcus, dudum de Urbe pulsus, temeritatis tantae ductus est audacia, ut primum sibi inter eos vindicaret locum. Sed ne ulterius debacchandi habeant facultatem, et animas simplicium ac rusticorum secum in gehennam, cui destinati sunt, trahant, actum est adversus eos a defensoribus Ecclesiae nostrae, quo eos possint expellere: ut qui Christum Deum ex Patris substantia ante saecula negant genitum, hi cum Judaeis, qui ejus deitatem negaverunt, et nunc usque negant, participium habeant damnationis. Tuum est, frater charissime, quae praecepta sunt, non segnius agere: ne plebem tibi creditam dissimulatione deperdas, et incipias Deo de perditis reddere rationem.*

⁵³ CIL III 3017: *L(ucio) Valerio / Agathopo / aug(ustali) huic ord(inis) / Seniensium / ornament(um) decur(ioni) / primo decrevit / Valeria Montana / coniugi opt(imo) / l(oco) d(ato) d(ecurionum) d(ecreto).*

also emphasized that supporters of Photinus were not present either in Signia in Latium nor in Siena in Etruria – Italian places with names similar to Senia on the east Adriatic coast. He also noted that the title of bishop Maximinus (*Maximinus Seniensis*) – a participant at the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon (AD 451) – was completely identical to the title of bishop Laurentius. Maximinus, along with another six Illyrian bishops, was noted in one codex of Ecclesiastic law (*Codex canonum ab Hadriano I Carolo regi donatus*)⁵⁴ in 774 given by Pope Adrian I (772-795) to the Frankish ruler Charlemagne (768-814).⁵⁵

In terms of the letter of Pope Innocent I being in connection with Senia, Jacques Zeiller (1878-1962) contested it, as he considered this to be the only proof that this place had been a diocesan center.⁵⁶ Zeiller, however, did not know about the traces of early Christian religious structures uncovered by archaeological excavations at the site where the cathedral of St. Mary was later built in Senj,⁵⁷ and particularly those on the “island face of Senia” – *insel Krk*,⁵⁸ nor about John – “the first among the bishops of Senia” from 743 AD.⁵⁹ Very clearly („Le doute subsiste néanmoins, car on peut toujours opposer la suscription *Seniensi* à ces arguments, qui ne sont point apodictiques“),⁶⁰ he considered Laurentius to have been the bishop of Sirmium, as in some

⁵⁴ Hartzheim 1759, 182: *Provin(ciae) Illyrii VII. Anastasius Thessalonicensis per Quintillum Episcopum Heraclensem. Sozon Philippensis, Maximinus Seniensis, Anopatus Thasutanus, Dardanius Barlaa, Nicolaus Strobiensis, Eusebius Deberotanus (Deverotanus).*

⁵⁵ Črnčić 1867, 32-33.

⁵⁶ Zeiller 1918, 145-146; Zeler 2005, 154-155, 534.

⁵⁷ Glavičić 1982, 73-77; Glavičić 1993, 95, 97-98; Starac 1999, 71-88.

⁵⁸ Starac 1999, 85.

⁵⁹ Kraljić 1971, 287-288: *Segniensis Episcopatus fundatione antiquissimum esse, vel ipsa Joannis, in hac seria primi, autoritas innuit. Temporum artem frequens illic saeviens injuria tum originem illius, cum plurimorum nomina Episcoporum oblitteravit. Quorum vero in publicis Instrumentis, Bullis Pontificiis, Regum privilegiis, et apud sui aevi authores memoriam reperi, eos in Chronologiam reducere libuit. 743. Joannes Episcopus Segni: in Sinodo, sub Zacharia Papa Romae celebrata, primum locum habuit. C. Baron: *Annal: Eccles: T. g. H. cod. fol 114. lit. C § 34.**

⁶⁰ Zeiller 1918, 146; Zeler 2005, 155: „Sumwa, uprkos svemu, ostaje, jer natpis *Seniensi* uvek moe da se suprotstavi ovim tvrdwama, koje nisu dokazane.“ (Despite everything, suspicion remains, because the sign *Seniensi* always be opposed these claims, which are not proven).

codexes, he was referred to as the Sirmien bishop (*Symiensi*). In the “Latin Patrology” that he cited,⁶¹ along with the term *Seniensis*, both *Siniensis* and *Symensis* are also cited⁶² – which are no easier to connect to Sirmium than *Seniensis* is to Senia. Zeiller considered that the case of Sirmium was strengthened by the fact that Photinus’ supporters would still have been located in his initial area of activity at the beginning of the 5th century.⁶³

Presenting the results of research into the history of the Roman Church during the first five centuries of its existence, Charles Pietri (1932-1991) also placed Laurentius among the bishops of Italian Siena (*episcopus Seniensis, Saena / Sena = Siena*).⁶⁴ As support for this, he cited the exile of Photinus’ supporters from Rome along with their leader Marcus, who subsequently found themselves in the rural sections („ils s’étaient établis dans des propriétés rurales pour tenir leur conventicule“)⁶⁵ of Laurentius’ diocese („sur les conventicules organisés dans le territoire de sa pastorale“).⁶⁶ The expulsion of Photinus’ supporters from Rome neither supports Siena nor contradicts Senia, as they could have arrived in either place just as they had arrived in Rome from the distant Sirmium in Pannonia. Although this is contested without valid arguments, the attribute of Tacitus (*Seniensis*)⁶⁷ supports Senia („the normal adjective for Liburnian Senia“⁶⁸), totally identical to the title of Laurentius from the letter of Pope Innocent I and the term for its population from the cited Early Imperial inscription from Senj (*Senienses*).⁶⁹ In support of Siena, Pietri cited the work of Francesco Lanzoni (1862-1929) about Italian dioceses, where he first stated that the letter of Pope Innocent could apply to Sirmium, Signia in Latium, or Siscia in Illyricum, but not Senia in Dalmatia, which seemingly had

never had a bishop.⁷⁰ In another section of the same work, he stated that Laurentius perhaps had indeed been a bishop in Illyricum („... un Laurentius „episcopus seniensis“, probabilmente dell’Illirico...“).⁷¹ Of the listed places in Illyricum, the title of Laurentius’ diocese was phonologically closest to Senia below Velebit Mountain. In contesting Senia, Pietri also depended on Zeiller,⁷² who, as can be seen above, neither proved anything discounting this town nor in favor of Siena. Pietri’s opinion was accepted by Bratož,⁷³ who had previously considered Laurentius (with a delay) the bishop of Senia (*Senia?*).⁷⁴

On the basis of the title used in the letter of Pope Innocent (*Laurentio episcopo Seniensis*),⁷⁵ Laurentius can quite justifiably be considered the bishop of Senia below Velebit Mountain, as had previously been noted in 1845 in the “Latin Patrology”.⁷⁶ Considering that this was one of the most significant northern Adriatic settlements with an excellent port („an excellent harbour“⁷⁷), through which passed the main Aquileia – Constantinople road and which was also connected by a main road to Siscia in Pannonia, and where remains of early Christian structures have been documented, Pietri’s rejection of the eastern Adriatic Senia („l’obscure Senia“)⁷⁸ does not contribute in any way to a case for the Italian Siena. While there is no clear evidence that Photinus’ supporters, against whom Pope Innocent had sent the letter to bishop Laurentius, had existed in the region of Senia, neither is there any for the Italian Siena. It is significant, however, that de-

⁶¹ Zeiller 1918, 146, not. 2.

⁶² *Patrologia Latina*, 20, col. 608, not. e: „In aliquot mss., *Siniensi*. Apud Merl., *Symiensi*“.

⁶³ Zeiller 1918, 145-146; Zeler 2005, 154-155, 534.

⁶⁴ Pietri 1976, 919-920; Pietri 2000, 1236.

⁶⁵ Pietri 1976, 919.

⁶⁶ Pietri 2000, 1391.

⁶⁷ Tacitus 1998, IV, 45, pag. 83: *Manlius Patruitus senator pulsatum se in colonia Seniensis coetu multitudinis et iussu magistratuum querebatur*.

⁶⁸ Wilkes 1969, 200.

⁶⁹ CIL III 3017.

⁷⁰ Pietri 1976, 920, not. 3: „Lanzoni, *Diocesi d’Italia*, 1, p. 566: „o a Senia di Dalmazia, che non pare abbia mai avuto vescovo (una lettera d’Innocenzo I „Laurentio seniensi“ [J-L, 318] non si riferisce a Senia ma forse a Sirmium) o a Signia del Lazio (oggi Segni); o a Siscia, città dell’Illirico“

⁷¹ Lanzoni 1927, 380.

⁷² Pietri 1976, 919.

⁷³ Bratož 2007, 266, not. 77: „Innocentius, *Epist.* 41 (*PL* 20, 607-608). V pismu, čigar naslovnik je bil *Laurentius episcopus Seniensis* (Siena in Etruriji) in ne *Sirmium*, *Siscia* ali *Senia* v severni Dalmaciji“. (In the letter, which was addressed to *Laurentius episcopus Seniensis* (Siena in Etruria) rather than on *Sirmium*, *Siscia* or *Senia* in north Dalmatia).

⁷⁴ Bratož 1986, 390; isti 1987, 194.

⁷⁵ Jaffé 1885, 48, 318 (115).

⁷⁶ *Patrologiae latinae tomus 20*, col. 608, not. d: *Immo si ad Seniensem in Croatia, seu, ut olim vocabant, in Liburnia, non ad Senensem in Hetruria episcopum haec epistola scripta est...*

⁷⁷ Wilkes 1969, 200.

⁷⁸ Pietri 1976, 919.

struction and burning were recorded as having taken place during the 4th and 5th century, which are attributed to the Germanic migrations,⁷⁹ i.e. to the Visigoths.⁸⁰ However, if the exiled Photinus supporters had arrived in the *Senia* area, from where the Pope was also requesting their removal by bishop Laurentius, it would not be unreasonable to presume that this destruction could also have occurred in the context of such events.

III. Jurisdiction

The acts of the Salonitan Church Synods from 530 and 533 AD mention only the Arba diocese (*sancta ecclesia Arbensis*) among the Kvarner islands, whose seat was at Rab (*Arba*) on the island of the same name. As this island gravitated even in antiquity to the sparsely settled coastal region below the Velebit Mountains (*Ortopla, Vegia*) and the somewhat more populated northwestern part of the island of Pag, where early Christian structures have also been documented,⁸¹ it can justifiably be concluded that the jurisdiction of the Arba bishop, in addition to the early Christian districts of the mentioned area, also included those of the islands of Cres (*Crexi*) and Lošinj (*Pullaria*). Such a conclusion can be assumed from the fact that no other diocesan center is mentioned, not merely in the acts of the above synod but also in other relevant sources for the Kvarner archipelago.⁸² The composition of the Diocese of Senia – to which the presbyter Vitalis belonged – in addition to the early Christian districts of the Senj and Vinodol regions, included those on the island of Krk. Without the latter, considering that the continental hinterland of the Senj was not particularly populated, the establishment of this diocese would have been pointless. Given the closeness of Senia and the island of Krk,⁸³ it is understandable that the population of Senia, along with its clergy and bishop would find a haven on Krk during a time of peril, primarily in the settlement from Late Antiquity

at Mala Luka – Bosar, where the remains of three early Christian basilicas were registered (including one with a baptistery), protected by the fortress of Korintija at Sokol – which also contained another early Christian basilica.⁸⁴ The existence of early Christian religious structures was also confirmed in the city of Krk⁸⁵ – the see of the too shiny municipality of Curictarum (*splendissimae civitatis Curictarum*)⁸⁶ where above the foundations of a three-apsed early Christian basilica from the 5th century, the cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was built during the 12th century.⁸⁷

The Kvarner islands were politically isolated during the Byzantine rule – extending into the 12th century – from their continental hinterland that was governed by Croatian rulers.⁸⁸ In such conditions, the Senian diocese was divided into an island section with its see in the city of Krk and a continental part whose center remained in Senia. The “Chronicles of Grado” (*Chronicon Gradense*), which mention the Rab diocese (*Avoriciensis / Avonciensis ecclesia*),⁸⁹ establishment of the Krk diocese (*episcopatus in Vegla*), Osor diocese (*episcopatus in Asparo*) and the Pićan diocese (*episcopus Pathensis*) in Istria in the context of the provincial synods held in Grado in 579 and 585,⁹⁰ attributed to the Patriarch of Grado, Elijah (*Helias episcopus sanctae novae Aquilegiensis ecclesiae*).⁹¹ Although this source is considered a forgery created at the beginning of the 8th century,⁹² in it the actual state of the church conditions can be recognized that were merely formalized at the mentioned synods.⁹³ This is supported by the participation of the bishop of Osor, Lawrence (*Laurentius episcopus sanctae*

⁷⁹ Glavičić 1993, 98; isti, 1994, 56.

⁸⁰ Glavičić, 1994, 56; isti, 1993, 98.

⁸¹ Jurković 1988, 123-125; Škunca 1988, 26; Regan / Nadilo 2009c, 761-767.

⁸² Margetić 1988, 4.

⁸³ Zaninović 1988, 11.

⁸⁴ Brusić 1988, 112-113; Starac 1999, 86; Regan / Nadilo 2009a, 1080-1083.

⁸⁵ Regan / Nadilo 2009b, 1175-1185.

⁸⁶ CIL III 3126; Starac 2000, 81.

⁸⁷ Mohorovčić 1988, 18; Starac 1999, 84.

⁸⁸ Margetić 1988, 11-13.

⁸⁹ Monticolo 1890, 49, 25; Kos 1902, 96, nr. 85.

⁹⁰ Klaić 1901, 78.

⁹¹ Rački 1877, 235-236, doc. 8; Monticolo 1890, 43, 1-10; Kos 1902, 100, nr. 86: „tunc Helias patriarcha egregius cum omni illa episcoporum multitudine ac cleri et populi collaudatione ordinavit et constituit et de novo erexit XVI episcopatus tam inter partes loci Foroiuliensium nec non et Histrie et Dalmatie regiones, videlicet Veglensem, in Apsaro, in Pathena, quam in Venetiarum partibus.

⁹² Kos 1902, 100.

⁹³ Šišić 1925, 286, not. 43.



Fig. 4. Senia on the main coastal road Aquileia - Constantinopolis

Apsaretianensium / Apsetianensium / Absartianensis / Apsetianorum ecclesiae),⁹⁴ and the bishop of Rab, Ursus (*Ursus episcopus Avaritianensium / Hibaritensium / Avaritianensium / Baritianorum ecclesiae*)⁹⁵ at the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 787, along with the bishops of Split (*Ioannes episcopus sanctae Salonentianae / Salonentiae / Saluntianensis ecclesiae*)⁹⁶ and Kotor (*Ioannes episcopus Decateron*),⁹⁷ both named John. As the continental sections of the former Liburnia Tarsatica were not under Byzantine

rule,⁹⁸ the appearance of a bishop of Senj (*Seniensis episcopatus*) in the 8th century should not be surprising.⁹⁹ This church leader is proof that the ecclesiastical authority was functioning in that part of the Senian diocese not under Byzantine rule. It is understandable that its see was located in the same place where it had been at the time of the foundation of its diocese – in Senia (Senj), where the Romanesque cathedral was erected above the remains of an early Christian basilica and had probably inherited the original dedicatory title from antiquity.¹⁰⁰ It is not clear when the division of the Senj diocese occurred. However, if the bishop of Krk was Andreas (*Andreas episcopus sanctae ecclesiae Veientanae provinciae Istriae / Ἀδρέας ἐλάχιστος ἐπίσκοπος*

⁹⁴ Mansi 1960, vol. 13, col. 141, 142; 367, 368, 387, 388, 724, 732; Darrouzès 1975, pag. 63, nr. 76 E, nr. 77 D, pag. 64, nr. 108 F; Katičić 1993, 32-33.

⁹⁵ Mansi 1960, vol. 13, col. 141, 142, 367, 368, 387, 388, 732; Darrouzès 1975, pag. 63, nr. 71 E, nr. 72 D; Katičić 1993, 31-32.

⁹⁶ Mansi 1960, vol. 13, col. 139, 140; 366, 368; 387, 388, 723, 732; Darrouzès 1975, pag. 64, nr. 106 F; Katičić 1993, 28-31.

⁹⁷ Mansi 1960, vol. 13, col. 373, 374; Katičić 1993, 34.

⁹⁸ Margetić 1988, 11-13.

⁹⁹ Kraljić 1971, 287-288.

¹⁰⁰ Starac 1999, 84.

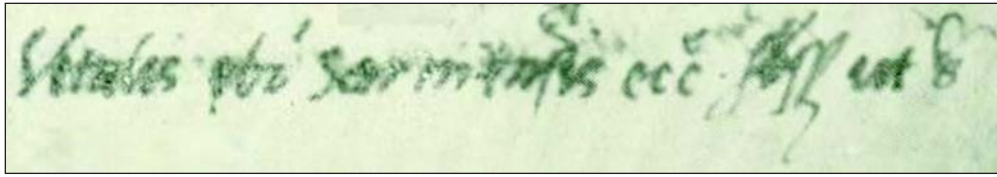


Fig. 5. *Vitalis presbiter Sarniensis ecclesiae*

της ἁγίας ἐκκλησίας Κελαϊάνης ἐπαρχίας Ἰστρίας), mentioned as a participant at the Roman Synod of bishops held in 680 at the invitation of Pope Agatho (678-681),¹⁰¹ then it would have occurred prior to 743, when Johannes was mentioned – as “first among the bishops of Senj” (*ipsa Joannis, in hac seria primi Segniensis episcopatus*).¹⁰²

Conclusion

The Sarnien diocese is known only from the presbyter Vitalis, the last signatory of the acts of the Salonitan Church Synod in AD 530. Other than him, no other priest or bishop is known from this diocese, which is not mentioned in any other source. Therefore it would not be unreasonable to conclude that the Sarnien diocese (*Sarniensis / Sarnitesis ecclesia*) had never even existed. Vitalis belonged to an early Christian diocese whose existence is not debatable, i.e. for which the evidence does not consist merely of his mention. It is not justifiable to search for the see of this diocese at the road stations of Sarute on the Roman road Salona – Servitium, or the road station Sarnade on the Sirmium – Salona road, nor at Servitium – a road station and port on the Sava River. No early Christian religious structures whatsoever have been found at the sites where these road stations were located. Vitalis’ diocese, which he represented in 530 at the Salonitan Church Synod, should be identified with the town of Senia on the north-east Adriatic coast below the Velebit Mountains, whose name had been incorrectly recorded through copying of the synod acts throughout the Middle Ages. Vitalis was referred to as a Sarnien priest (*presbiter Sarniensis ecclesiae*) in the codex of the “Historia Salonitana Maior”, a title created by the exchange of the vowel *e* with the diphthong *ae* and

its transformation into the very similar cursive letter combination of *ar* (*Seniensis > Saeniensis > Sarniensis*).

The existence of an early Christian religious building cannot be disputed in the most important port and trade center of northern Dalmatia – Senia. Numerous similar remains have also been confirmed on the island of Krk – which also points to Senia. There are no convincing arguments to contest the connection between bishop Laurentius and Senia. Presbyter Vitalis was the deputy for his, i.e. Senian bishop at the Salonitan Church Synod in 530. In addition to the bishops, the acts of this synod were signed by Salonitan presbyters, as well as certain other priests with undefined diocesan affiliations. Their presence at this synod was caused by problems occurring at that time in the Church in Dalmatia, which in fact to a great extent affected presbyters in particular. It is not clear what was happening in the Senian diocese in 533 at the time when the second Salonitan Church Synod was being held. There is, however, no doubt that it survived the decline and fall of Roman civilization by dividing itself in the newly existing political circumstances into an island (Byzantine) part (with a center in the city of Krk /*episcopatus Veglensis*/), and a continental part under Croatian rule – whose center remained at Senj (*episcopatus Segni*). The signature of presbyter Vitalis on the acts of the Metropolitan Synod of Salona in 530 is proof of the existence of the Senian diocese in the period between the Senian bishop Laurentius, in the third decade of the 5th century, and the appearance of the “first among the bishops of Senj”, John in AD 743.

¹⁰¹ Kos 1902, 231, št. 186, not. 1.

¹⁰² Kraljić 1971, 287-288.

Various locations

Term	Equilizations	Locations	Authors	Year
<i>Sarniensis ecclesia</i>			Daniele Farlati	1753
<i>Sarsenterensis Ecclesia</i>			Ignaz Batthyány	1785
	Sarsentorum; chiesa di Mostar; sedi di Mostar	Mostar	Donato Fabianich	1874
<i>sarniensis ecclesia</i>			Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski	1875
<i>Sarniensis Ecclesia</i>			Giuseppe Alačević	1878
<i>Sarniensis ecclesia</i>	<i>Sarnacle; Sarnade; Saniglo</i>	Donja Pecka (Mrkonjić-grad); wellspring of the river Sana	Wilhelm Tomaschek	1880
<i>sarnitensis ecclesia</i>	<i>Sarute; Sarnite</i>		Franjo Rački	1894
<i>Sarnitensis Ecclesia</i>			Giuseppe Alačević	1897
<i>Sarnitensis</i>	<i>Sarnite; Sarnade; Sarniclo</i>	„in present Bosnia“	Vjekoslav Klaić	1912
<i>Sarsenterensis ecclesia</i>			Ferdo Šišić	1914
<i>Sarnadi</i>		„in Bosna“	Krunoslav Draganović	1934
<i>Sarniensis</i>	<i>Servitium</i>		Anton Mayer	1957
<i>sarniensis ecclesia</i>			Nada Klaić	1967
<i>sarnitensis ecclesia</i>			Nada Klaić	1967
<i>sarsenterensis ecclesia</i>			Nada Klaić	1967
<i>sarniensis ecclesia</i>			Stjepan Gunjača	1973.
<i>eccl. Sarniensis</i>		„unidentified“; „problematisch ist die Lokalisierung“	Rajko Bratož Rajko Bratož	1986 1987
<i>sarniensis ecclesia</i>			Milan Ivanišević	1994
<i>Sarniensis ecclesia</i>	<i>Sarnade; Sa(r)niglon; parochia mun. Sarniensis</i>	Donja Pecka (Mrkonjić-grad)	Ivo Bojanovski Ivo Bojanovski	1980 1988
<i>ecclesia Sarniensis</i>		„non identifiée“	Pasquale Chevalier	1995
„episkop Sarnije“			Tibor Živković	2004
<i>Sarniensis (?) ecclesia</i>			Radoslav Dodig / Ante Škegro	2008

Sažetak

Sarnienska biskupija (*Sarniensis Ecclesia*)

Sarnienska dijeceza (*Sarniensis ecclesia*) je poznata samo po svećeniku Vitalu (*Vitalis presbyter*), posljednjem potpisniku akata metropolitanskog sabora održanog 15. srpnja 530. g. u *Saloni* pod predsjedanjem salonitanskog nadbiskupa Honorija II. (528.-547.). U spisu poznatom pod imenom „*Historia Salonitana Maior*“, čiji se najstariji rukopis – onaj iz Kongregacije za širenje vjere (*Congregatio de propaganda Fide*) – pripisuje kulturnom krugu krbavsko-modruškog biskupa Šimuna Kožičića Benje (1460.-1536.), zabilježena je u spomenutoj formi. Zapravo se radi o Senijskoj biskupiji (*Seniensis ecclesia*), čiji je apelativ zabilježen diftongom *ae* (*Saeniensis*), koji je prepisivanjem tijekom srednjeg vijeka preoblikovan u vrlo sličnu kurzivnu slovnu kombinaciju *ar*. Na taj je način nastao novi crkveni subjekt - Sarnienska dijeceza te prekinuta Vitalova veza s njegovom stvarnom biskupijom. Sarnienskom biskupijom usputno se pozabavilo nekoliko autora, koji su je dovodili u vezu s putnom postajom *Sarute* s magistralne ceste *Salona – Servitium* ucrtanom na „*Tabuli Peutingeriani*“, odnosno postajom *Sarnade* s magistralne ceste *Sirmium – Salona* ubilježenom na Antoninovom „*Itineraru*“. Ova se postaja, kao i središte Vitalove dijeceze, locira u Donju Pecku kod Mrkonjić Grada u Zapadnoj Bosni, iako u tom mjestu nema tragova nikakvog ranokršćanskog sakralnog objekta. Osim Vitala, nije poznat nijedan drugi sarnienski svećenik niti biskup. Senijska biskupija je postojala i prije i nakon održavanja spomenutog metropolitanskog sabora.

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