

Article

Chasing an impossible dream (First examples of literature on the area of Montenegro)

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Abstract: So little attention modern science in Montenegro gives to the problem of our oldest literature. Actually, we never know or exploit those boundaries. Our goal is to be objective and study the facts about the earliest form of literature in ancient province of Praevalitana, today Montenegro. Modern Montenegrin historiography attaches the beginning of literature for the novel of Andreacci from year 809 AD. That means that in one great period of time, more than half of millennium, we have no traces of written word in this area. For same period of time, we attach the foundation of antic town of Doclea, Roman government, creation of Praevalitana province, but also and start of Christianity, lack of traces of written words, seems impossible. Remains of material culture from the period of late antiquity, tell us about very developed culture, so our opinion is that we can say the same thing for literature.

Keywords: Praevalitana; early Middle Ages; Doclea; literature; Montenegro

1. Quod non est in charta, non est in mundo

How to write about something that does not exist? Sometimes, it is easier to imagine and create fantasy worlds like many authors of science and epic fantastic. But we here don't have that privilege. Our goal is to be objective and study the facts about the earliest form of literature in ancient Montenegro. Still, this topic looks like fairytale and wrapped in tins of unknown that, maybe too much, is enigmatic. It looks so mysterious that many scholars and authorities in this field dismiss her as non-existent. The basic reason for that is lack of historical sources that can confirm any existence of written words in space of Praevalitana.

The otherwise scarce sources of Montenegrin history in that period, are mostly reduced to the remnants of material culture. Ruins of ancient city Dioclea and other Roman municipiums, a few villa rustuca and early Christian churches, are only witnesses of life on this space from the beginning of our era to settling of Slavs. Regarding development of arts in Praevalitana the best witnesses are mosaics from Risan, Tivat, Petrovac, Herceg Novi, then capitals from Doclea and Doljani, the plate from Podgorica, etc. [1]. All these findings tell us that inhabitants of ancient Praevalitana were completely bearers of Latin language and culture, and in cultural terms, leaned further on Dalmatia and Italy, from where the examples are drawn. Also proof of that is three Latin epitaphs from Kolovrat, Podgorica and Prijepolje. Only trace of Greek language is one letter π found near Tivat [2]. It is especially important to point out that the findings in the Latin language prevail in the interior of the province, which is clear proof of the purely Roman identity of its inhabitants. But we today know that in Praevalitana exists some mix of people, like elsewhere in Empire, because we find Jewish tombs with painted menoras. These facts tell us that Doclea was an important point in the main trade route of Empire which connects

eastern provinces with Rome. So, that put Dioclea in the centre of events, because she is on the road of ideas from East to West.

2. About previous knowledge of Praevalitana's literature

Unfortunately, from all arts in province Praevalitana, today at least we have traces of writings. That lack of evidence motivated researchers of this period of Montenegrin history, who in their own works tell nothing about this topic. Starting from the fact that Illyrian tribes, who were settled in Montenegro in the era BC, didn't have their own writing system, modern science was easy to go over the antique period of Montenegrin history. Montenegrin literature tradition found its own roots in the first writings of Slavic states Doclea and Zeta. That roots reached the most to the 9th century [3]. That literature was created in three languages: Greek, Latin and Slovenian, but her Montenegrin origin is a definitive fact [3]. Because of that, our literary theory never asks how old actually is Montenegrin literature. Statement in History of Montenegro, which we quoted above, about pure Latin literary tradition in Praevalitana, is a more general attitude than the result of actual research [1]. Instead, the roots of Montenegrin literary tradition are required in folk poems of Slavic tribes. Much research is required in that poem the base ground for notable *Scavorum regnum* anonymously presbyter from Bar. In that research there was no place for the literary tradition of ancient Praevalitana. The unique scientific attitude prevailed that there was a complete discontinuity between late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages in this region, not only the Praevalitana but also the entire Illyricum. Settlement of the Slavs in Balkan at the beginning of the 7th century, was considered as definite break with cultural tradition of Praevalitana. Because lack of historical sources, the Praevalitan literary tradition was denied existence. Great cities in Roman empire, Roma, Lungdum, Marcilia, on the West and Alexandria, Antioch, and other in the East, was centers of written words and education, and towns of Illyricum was only small rest points on that road. Still, playing the role of connection between East and West, Illyricum had its own centers from which it spread ideas toward all Empire. This most applies to religions. Going back and forth with legionaries, travelers and merchants, numerous religions and cults of the East, they received their temples and supporters at Illyricum, from which they conquered the other provinces of the Empire. Among them, the most influence on this area was left cults of Mithra, Cybele, Apollo and also monotheistic Judaism and Christianity. They spread his teachings more or less in secrecy depending on the attitude of Roman authority to some of these cults. Very popular among the legions on Danube, like the cults of Mithra, or Cybele in Dalmatia, they spread his teachings and secret rituals across Empire. Exactly because of the secrecy of this, once mighty cult, today there is no saved trace of written works about his teachings. Today's knowledge about them is based on the artifacts and frescoes found in his temples.

Unlike them, two monotheistic religions of East, Judaism and Christianity, were, because of their teachings, persecuted by Roman authority. Constantly fighting for survival, after being expelled from Palestine, these religions will turn their actions towards strictly targeted groups. For Judaism, this will be a great Jewish community spread throughout the Empire, which was to be reassembled and edited after the

destruction of the Second Temple (Herod's) in Jerusalem. About spreading of Hebrew community in that period of time, across Empire, tells a fact of thumbs with menorahs discovered in Doclea [1]. Separated from them, Christians will spread his holly message among the lower layer of society. But, both religions, will always try to write down his teachings and spread himself by literature. Judaism, through the letter of Torah, will succeed in maintaining itself as a community in the millennia coming and preserving its people from disappearance. Christianity, Orthodox and many other sects originated from the original Jesus teaching, on the verge of survival in the first three centuries, and later dominantly in the Empire, will transfer their teachings to parchment or paper to reach even those whose missionaries are unable to arrive. Christian communities across Empire left their own writings for future generations. Because of those writings today we can reconstruct all difficulties on the path of faith.

3. Praevalitana from foundation of Doclea till arrival of Slavs

Roman conquest of the east Adriatic coast and creation of the province of Illyricum, is the biggest turning point in the ancient history of Montenegro. Romans, as new masters, put under their own control seashore and main roads in the land. Domestic Illyrian tribes, if they survived, were sold as slaves or returned to Balkan's hills. Later, Rome will start to settle in this area own veterans. Roman's authority kept older tribal borders about what to write a Plinius in his work [1]. Soon after the consolidation of Roman rule in Illyrian the urbanization of the province began, and from the end of the century it is being led as "provincia inermis"¹ [1], or, without legions. It is precisely as a product of this Roman urbanization that was created, at the beginning of the 1st century, between the 10th and the 20th n. e., Doclea as a municipium and one of the centers of the imperial administration. Entering the Roman Empire opened the area of today's Montenegro. A huge traffic network, in which all the routes lead to Rome, also affected these areas that were found in the Middle East between the East and the West. This also changed the ethnic image of the province, and closed and primitive Illyrians, replacing the cosmopolitan hurried society of the Empire. According to archaeological finds, Doclea was at that time an advanced provincial town whose inhabitants came from all over the country. Around Doclea sprout many latifundias² which remains we discover today in valley of river Zeta [4]. All that create a cultural and religious mix, where official Roman religion is connected with local cults. Example for that situation we have remains of Diana's temple in Doclea and from East imported cult of Mithra in Minicipium S, near Pljevlja [1]. From pure Roman gods the most important was the cult of Mercury whose temple was found in Doclea. Also, Doclea was a very developed cult of empires probably because of many veterans in the city. From that fact we can conclude about loyalty of Praevalitana's habitant to Roman empire. Consequently, it is easy to explain the latency of the local population and their resistance to the new religions that came from the East. In this light, it is possible to interpret the fact that in Doclea and in the whole province, at that time, we have no meaning for the early Christian martyrs.

This situation on the territory of modern Montenegro will stay until 297 AD and

Diocletian reforms. Emperor divided his state into four prefectures: Orient, Illyricum, Italia and Gallia. Over the rule two Augustus and two Caesars [5]. Prefecture Illyricum was composed of provinces: two Dacia, Dardania, two Moesia and Praevalitana [1]. With new praefectura ruled Caesar Galerius from Sirmium. The administrative division of the Empire was followed by military, financial and tax reform [5]. All of this certainly affected the opportunities in the Praevalitana, especially the famous Diocletian edict on prices that cited the unified prices of products in the Empire. Today, we do not know how this affected the inhabitants of Praevalis³ because we do not have adequate resources. In any case, the general changes that affected the Roman Empire, since the middle of the 3rd century, when the border on the Danube began to threaten the Getae, certainly reflected on life in the Praevalitana.

On the economic conditions in the Roman Empire, from the beginning of the colonies, historical science draws information from sources related to the functioning of latifundia in North Africa [6]. According to them, the conclusion is drawn that this was the case in all other parts of the Empire, but we can't be certain of this because these data relate to imperial estates in Tunisia. The only data on the functioning of the economy in the provincial area are archaeological finds with several latifundias in the center of which were rural villas (villa rustica) [1].

The historical process known as the Migration period, brought the feeling of general insecurity to Balkan. Roman Empire fought fiercely for survival with threats from inside and outside. That's why Diocletian, another emperor from Illyricum, installed a new system of government and Roman empire began to look like the old kingdom of the Middle East, with emperor as a central figure with attribute of semigod [5]. Overall reforms in Empire haven't touched the religious question. Diocletian tried to reestablish a conservative religion and cult of ancestors. So, last time in history, he started a campaign of persecution against Christians. But after a series of civil wars, Constantine surfaced as the most powerful, who united the country and brought the Act of religious tolerance in Mediolanum 313 AD. These changes are also reflected in life in Praevalis. The drainage of the border on the Danube caused these provinces to be hit by barbaric tribes. Their hijacking campaigns have disrupted the population and again led to the deployment of troops in its territory.

Although the Empire was divided before it was divided, its final division, carried out by Emperor Theodosius, in 395., on the Eastern and Western parts, will forever change the position of the Praevalitana. From the central point on the road that connects the two parts of the Empire, it will become a distant border province. All that once again brought legions and military authorities in Praevalitana [5]. The collapse of the border on the Danube and the Gothic attacks on the Balkans marked the end of a period of peace and unimpeded development in Praevalis. Their first conflicts with the Romans occurred during the time of Constantine the Great, who suffered the first defeat in a military career, in 328. The rest of the war brought defeats of Gothic troops and they had to seek peace with the Empire. The then kuning of Visigoth, Araric gives his son as a hostage, but generally Constantine gives favorable conditions for peace to the Goths [7]. This will mean another 30 years of peace between them. Fleeing from Hun's penetration, the Goths asked

Emperor Valens for permission to settle in the Empire in parts of Thrace and Moesia. In return, they promised him full submission and as a guarantor of loyalty offered everyone to go to Christianity, only to send them teachers who would speak their language. This allowed them and set them as a wall to other tribes in Moesia. As Valence was an Aryan, so Visigoths all went into this heresy, and they succeeded in transferring it further among the tribes of Ostrogoth and Ghepids who remained beyond the borders of the Empire. However, it looks like things did not go smoothly with filling. The Gothic settlers in Moesia, who were politically dispossessed at any time, did not have much choice but to adapt to the conditions of life in the Kingdom, and the acceptance of Christianity was the way to a better life and full status in society [8]. However, the corruption and arbitrariness of Roman officials entrusted with the obligation to fulfill their obligations to the Goths prompted Visigoths to lift the uprising in 377. In their course, they devastated Thrace, Epirus, Thessaly, and Achaia, and reached almost the borders of Constantinople. To stop them, Valens assembled an army of 30,000 people, but at Hadrianopolis, on August 9, 378 AD, he suffered a terrible defeat and was killed in battle [6]. After that, the new Emperor Theodosius managed to make peace with them. Using the opportunity after the division of the Empire, Visigoths under Alaric rose again, in 395., he moved to Constantinople. Nevertheless, imperial diplomacy managed to answer them from the siege of the city. Alaric awarded the title *magister militum per Illyricum* asking him to take eastern Illyricum. Thus, Visigoths penetrated the territory of Praevalitana. Soon, the authorities of the Eastern Roman Empire urged Alaric to go to Italy. After the death of the Roman military strategist Stilicho, Visigoths again attacked the Western Roman Empire in 410. they will conquer Rome [6].

Half the century after Visigoth in the Praevalitana will appear Eastern Goths. They succeeded in restoring their country after the death of Attila of Huns and defending themselves from his sons. Under their leader Theodor, they set fire to Moesia and clashed with Byzantium, occupying parts of the Empire along the Danube. With the new intervention of imperial diplomacy, the Ostrogoths were persuaded to go to Italy and there to overthrow the reign of Odoacer who overthrew the last emperor of the Western Roman Empire. Theodore succeeded in taking over Italy, and Ostrogoths created a powerful state that ran from the Apennine Peninsula to Western Illyricum and whose eastern border ended in Praevalitana. Today, it is considered that the early name *Nikšić-Anagastum* originates from the personal Gothic name *Anagast* [1].

Unlike Visigoths, who have just gone through this area, Ostrogoths will leave a deeper trail in Praevalitana. By settling along the whole of Dalmatia, it will hold this territory for many decades. According to the available sources, it seems that the center of the Praevalitana with the city centers remained in the hands of the Romans, and that to stop the fall of the Ostrogoth into the Empire, a wall that leads from above Risen to Kuche appeared, and he remained in the local folk tradition and remembered *Međa Vuka Manitoga* (The Wall of the Mad Wolf). Even the Justinian's wars failed to break Ostrogoth's resistance, so the Byzantine army would only manage the coastal belt of the Adriatic and the cities of the sea, while the interior of the continent would remain in the hands of the Ostrogoths.

The fact that the first part of the *Sclavorum regnum* is called *Libellum*

gothorum and begins with the Ostrogoth's ruler Totila testifies to the traces left by Ostrogoths in this area. The disappearance of the Ostrogothian state from the historical scene only for a short time caused the return of the Byzantine authorities over the entire Balkans. Already in recent years, the ruling emperor Justinian through the Danube has begun to enter the Slovenian tribes.

4. Spread of christianity in the area of Praevalitana in late antiquity

Religion started by Jesus from Nazareth, had been spreading, after his martyr death at Golgotha, in waves throughout the Roman empire. Among the first provinces where the Gospel had been introduced, was Illyricum itself. This had been testified by the apostle Paul himself, when he claims how he was, according to Christ's orders, spreading His word "from Jerusalem and its surroundings, all the way to Illyricum [2]. We don't have any evidence of whether Paul preached in Illyricum or not, but he did pass through Adriatic coast on his way to Rome. The apostle from Tarsus writes again about Illyricum and Dalmatia, stating that he had sent there one of his most trusted disciples—Titus to organize the church of Apostles there [2]. It is noteworthy to mention, that Paul's Epistle to Romans has been proved to be the oldest text from the new testimony, even older than the Gospel, created in 50 AD In autumn of 57 AD he went from Ephesus to Greece and Macedonia, concerned about the state of church in Korinthos. From Korinthos he writes his epistle to the congregation in Rome, although he did not know them personally, and he announces his arrival in the capital. Upon his return from Rome, in 58 or 59 AD apostle Paul has chosen to travel by land which clearly indicates that he took old Roman roads along the southeastern Adriatic coast [9]. In consistence to this claim, could there be even doubt that apostle from Tarsus hasn't used his journey to preach the word of Christ to the Dalmatian cities he has visited. So, whole this area had been very early incorporated into the sphere of Christianity and added to the ones to whom it has been revealed the word of god. According to that it is hard to justify the thesis that Christianity has been just a sporadic event on the Adriatic coast from the I until III century [1].

Besides Paul the apostle, east Adriatic coast had been visited by apostles Mark and Andrew. The first one founded a church in Aquileia, later a seat to Patriarchy, but about their missions in Illyricum, little is known today. It would be very interesting to examine how these arrivals of Christ's disciples reflected on the congregations that Apostle Paul has founded. Also, it is noteworthy to mention the tradition which is connected to the early Christian church in Butua⁴ today Budva, which has been found, according to legend, by St. Peter on his way to Rome.

The task, trusted to him by Paul from Tarsus, Titus, his disciple had been accomplished. In Salona, the capitol of (at that time unified) province of Dalmatia, had founded a community of first Christians. As Paul's associate, and one of seventy-two apostles, Titus was a true spiritual person for that task. "True son in our common religion", as he is described in St. Paul's words, dedicating to him even one of his Epistles, he was truly up to his task. Together with Timothy, who had two epistles dedicated to him, this Greek, who accepted the religion of Christ, was Paul's closest accomplice. According to The Apostle's deeds, he had three missions: in

Crete, in Korinthos and in Dalmatia, where he, founded the church or was bishop in those towns. Together with St. Paul he was a participant in Apostil's council in Jerusalem, in which it was decided that Christian teaching can be preached to non-Jews too [10]. Titus had left a developed network of Christian communities, before he departed to Crete, so rightfully he can be called the Apostle of Dalmatia. Besides Christian congregations in Dalmatia, Jewish communities had been recorded and there was also a synagogue in Salona [11]. This fact makes us rethink the findings of Jewish graves in Doclea. Simply put, we see no reason why they would situation be different in future Praevalitana, from the rest of the unified province of Dalmatia. Archeological findings of early Christian churches in Duklja (Doclea), Doljani, Budva and on Veliki pijesak in vicinity of Bar lead us to conclude that Gospel of Christ had been spreading in this area. Sadly, up to today we do not know how Titus ended, but all churches are celebrating him as one from the wider circle of apostles. Also, it would be fairly easy to conclude that Titus on his way to Salona had to pass through the newly founded city of Doclea, or some other town from Montenegrin coast. Being there, they surely must have had to spread the Gospel. So church in this land was surely founded in the time of apostles.

Titus the apostle had, leaving Dalmatia, made for his heir St. Hermes or Ermius, as he is also cited, who stayed as Apostle in Salona up to 68 AD. This early Christian martyr was also one of 72 apostles and St. Paul had mentioned him in his Epistles [2]. Very little information about him survived until today. Besides him taking the seat of the apostle in the time Titus went for Crete, we know that he died as martyr for faith, in the second half of the I century AD [12]. The only source which speaks about him in more detail is Canisius, which mentions him as "Hermaeus presbyter". He says about him (Titus) that he traversed many in the religion of Christ and therefore moved them away from idol worship, and he died for his religion together with Nicander from Mir in Asia Minor. He earned his martyrdom by being tortured, flailed and hanged [13]. That would be all that is known about him. Alas, with his work he acquired the title of "Dalmatia's apostle" [14] even though he succeeded Titus. As a martyr he was celebrated by the first Christians of Salona and Illyricum, and his remains (as a relic) were transferred to Rome, probably to preserve him from the barbarian invasion. Later, part of his remains, Pope Gregory the Great, donated to the city of Spoleto, so Pope Leo IV left the rest of the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire Lotar I, who took them to the monastery of Cornelius near Aachen. From there they were transferred to the Monastery of Ronnes during the ninth century, in order to be again hit by pagan barbarians, this time Viking. Finally, his remains were buried in a specially built crypt in 1083, and a church dedicated to this martyr from Dalmatia was built over it. He remained highly respected in Germany, where he retained the tradition of treating his relatives with mental illnesses, so Ronnes became a place of pilgrimage. It is not known today if there ever existed the hagiography of this saint was written by his disciples or the heirs in the church of Salona. If it is, a copy that would testify to early literature and martyr scripts in Dalmatia is not preserved. There is a great question that we cannot say for sure, whether the work of the Apostles Titus and Hermes was limited to the city of Salona or was spread throughout the province of Dalmatia. We are inclined to take the word of Christ's teachings along the eastern Adriatic coast. As a fact that can support this

view, it is precisely the fact that they have moved from the East to the West and certainly would not miss preaching in the cities on their way. There is no evidence of the work of the twelve apostles in this region, but it is more than certain that their disciples preached along the eastern Adriatic coast, and therefore in the area of what will become Praevalis.

It was at that time that the first persecutions of Christians in the Roman Empire began. Emperor Nero accused them of provoking a fire in Rome. It was the beginning of the two and a half centuries of a long period when Christian communities were outlawed in the Empire [15]. This was also reflected in the early Christian community in Dalmatia. After Hermes, the bishops of Solin were not known until the end of the third century. Previous historiography research has stood in this position by now. Bishop Nicodemus Milash denies the existence of Solin bishop Domna as the successor to Hermes, placing him only at the end of the 3rd century.

However, the Church left its roots on the other end of the eastern Adriatic coast. In the same period when Titus became Bishop of Salona, in Durachium, then Dyrrachium, we record a Christian community led by Bishop Caesar, around 58 AD. And in the same wave of religious persecution, he will take the crown of martyrdom and earn the holy halo [14]. However, Christian communities across the Empire managed to survive, and the persecution diminished after Nero's death in the 68th year. So it was with the Church on the eastern coast of the Adriatic. For about 100 years in Dyrrachium we know about the bishop of Asclepius [14].

Saved sources are silent about the further development of the Christian dogma at Illyricum. New information about the Church is not recorded until the end of the 3rd century when Emperor Diocletian began the last persecution of Christians. Emperor Dalmatian, who founded Praevalitana as a province, tried to restore a quite shaken reputation to the traditional Roman pagan religion. For this reason, he turned to the already widespread Christianity, seeing in him the main obstacle to the renewal of old cults.

The position of the Christians in Praevalitana in the first three centuries can be perceived by several hagiographies of martyrs preserved from that time. Most passes in the eyes of the Passion (martyrdom) of the Holy Florus and Laurus. These early Christian martyrs were stonemasons, and for their faith they were murdered in Ulpiana, which was then part of Praevalitana's province of Macedonia. From the legend of their suffering, we find out that they have performed two miracles of healing for life, which in the end brought them a halo of martyrdom. First miracle, they healed the boy, the son of the pagan priest, and the other one of the same fowl of the same pagan cult, (hagiography doesn't say which one) [16]. By analyzing the text of the hagiography, it is possible to envision the position of Christians in the second half of the 2nd century when it is assumed that the two martyrs were killed. Namely, although their religion was officially banned, the first Christians were tolerated in their confession and were an integral part of Roman society. This is indicated by the scene when the priests of the pagan cult allow prayer in their temple prayers to the Christian God and Jesus Christ for healing, which further leads to the conversion in Christ's faith. Of course, this is yet another proof of the already famous Roman superstition, but also the conciliatory attitude of paganism towards

Christianity. In fact, martyrs Florus and Laurus their martyrdom only after they, together with the converters, demolished and broke the statues of gods designated for the temple, which they themselves built earlier. Because of public incitement, while preaching the forbidden religion, they were brought before Commander Illyricus Lycion (and not as some thought Emperor Lycinius), subjected to torture and thrown into a well. The other troublemakers were burnt alive.

But by the beginning of the 4th century, the entire Illyricum would be placed in the role of the center of the Christian world. Namely, by the decision of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, in 325, the Alexandrian preacher Arius, the founding father of the Heresy named after him, was exiled to Sirmium. This led the Balkans into the focus of the Church and every other policy, and the Aryan Heresy just got a foothold there, from where it spread further. Throughout the fourth century, Aryanism represented the Christian world divided into two currents that stood one against the other in deep antagonism. Having acquired its centers in the cities of the Danube, the Aryan heresy spread to the barbaric nations beyond the borders of the Empire. Thus, numerous tribes, who began their great migration, with their incursions into the territory of the Roman Empire, received Christianity in Aryan form. In addition to him, another heresy—Macedonian was started at Illyricum. Named after its creator, Bishop Skupius (Skopje) of Macedonia, this doctrine was created as a derivative of the Aryan and Orthodox with the intention of reconciling the two conflicting sides. Nevertheless, they are rejected by both the Arians and the others because of the calming and mild attitude towards the nature of Holy Spirit, by the Orthodox Christians because of their denial of the Holy Spirit [17]. The Praevalitana itself seems to have been spared by these disturbances. Already from the emperor Constantine the Great on the bishop's chair in Doclea we find Basos, a descendant of the famous Roman senatorial family. According to the information available to us, he came to the bishop's office very young and kept to a deep age at that position. Bishop Basos was a loyal member of the governing structures of the Empire, so the church entrusted to him was guided by the principles of orthodoxy [18]. It appears, probably due to the dominant Latin orientation of the region, to maintain the position and attitudes of the Roman Pope in church politics. Unlike many of the bishops of Illyricum, Basos accepted the decisions of the First Ecumenical Council and prevented the spread of Aryanism in its own diocese. It is not certain when and how his bishop Basos ended his life, which is presumed in the last decade of the 4th century. As for Basos, there remains an open question of whether members of the same family were already Christians before, because in the 2nd century n. e. are mentioned Basilus (Bacchylus) and Basilides (Bacchylides), who are most likely one person, as the bishop of Corinth and the writer of a work on Pasha. The Basos family was originally from Greece, but a direct link between these figures can't be withdrawn. Bishop Basos enjoyed his reputation in his time, as well as the fact that, on the occasion of his death, St. John Chrysostom dedicated him one homily [19].

There are no known names, or even his direct at the episcopal throne of Doclea, only in 451, at the Session of the Chalcedonian Assembly, we have the memorial of Evander, the bishop whom some historians consider the first historically confirmed Episcopo of Doclea [20]. Due to the scarcity of data today's knowledge of the oldest

church organization on the soil of Praevalitane is rudimentary and modest. For this reason, historians and researchers of this period tend to set up the first boundaries of the emergence of a firm church organization in Doclea late, while discarding certain sources as unreliable. This is the case with bishop Basus, who is unjustly omitted from the list of the chiefs of the church in Doclea, thus challenging this archdiocese more than a century of its true age. Also, there is still controversy about where the headquarters of the Duke's Episcopate were located in Doclea or in Doljani. At first, it was believed that the three early Christian churches that were found at the site of Doljani were younger than the Basilica A in Doclea, and accordingly, a conclusion was drawn that the seat of the episcopate was transferred from the city to village of Doljani. In the latest research, this thesis is challenged as impossible. It is absurd, without any logic, that the bishopric be moved from a fortified city to an open field, at times when the whole of the province is threatened by the danger of the invasion of the barbarian tribes [4]. It seems equally impossible that in the territory of all of today's Montenegro, there is almost no mention of the Christian communities in the first centuries of the new era, when we know that present-day Montenegro is located between two great centers of Christianity: Salona and Dyrrachium. Likewise, the Christian faith started to spread and bloom not only on the Adriatic coast, but also in the interior of the Balkans, from Noricum to Scythia, as evidenced by numerous saints martyred from these places and the branched net of episcopal seating. In such a layout and constellation of early Christian churches and bishops, only Doclea appears as a precedent and territory where there is no solid church organization. This thesis is even less meaningful when Emperor Diocletian separates Praevalatana from Dalmatia and Doclea becomes a provincial center. It is simply unbelievable that the church did not react with its organization that monitors the imperial occupation and the newly created province. Insufficient archaeological excavations of the sites in Doljani indicate that the found churches date from the first half of the 4th century. Their existence gives the validity of the information about Bishop Basus, who was in one of the three lower churches. In addition to these churches, the period of late antiquity also belongs to the localities found by the early Christian churches in Kotor, at the site of Rose and location of Veliki pijesak near the city of Bar.

The invasions of the Barbarian peoples on the Empire during the course of the century have completely changed relations in Illyricum, and thus the state of the church. The Roman population was making an exodus from the hordes of the barbarians mainly to the West due to linguistic identity, while the Greek-Syrian East was as foreign to them, as were the conquerors from the north. They also carry with them the relics of saints and martyrs of early Christianity in order to preserve them from pagan invaders. In addition to the turbulence caused by the arrival of the barbaric tribes, Illyricum at that time became the scene of the conflict between Orthodoxy and Aryanism. We only find out about these conflicts indirectly through significant teachers of the church and church writers who were themselves involved in them. Many great and sacred names of orthodox learning, such as Athanasius of Alexandria, Ambrosia of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, and Martin of Tour, were involved in polemics centered on Illyricum. On the other hand, few of the documents that survived until today were preserved from the other side, although there were equally educated names of Aryanism, such as Valens from Mursa and Ursatius from

Singidunum. Church conflicts within Illyricum about religious dogma, will reach their peak during the Council of Serdica. Only because of the fact that the two opposing sides, the Orthodox, led by the Bishop of Osius from Cordoba, and the Arian, led by the aforementioned Valens and Ursatius, did not meet, but held two different rallies, the congregation—council in Serdica was not included among the ecumenical councils. But, according to the decisions that have been adopted on it, at least for the orthodox side, this council in Illyria has the weight of the ecumenical council. Several dogmas adopted at the assembly will remain valid up until today in all Christian churches. The Council's decisions in the form of letters were sent to all churches in the world. Nevertheless, the council did not fulfill the wishes of Emperor Constantius and brought ecumenical peace to the Christian community, in fact, it widen the gap between Orthodox and Heretics. The attempt by the ecclesiastical dignitaries to solve the problems that were persecuted and shone the break in the church collapsed because of the intransigence of the views of both sides. Not even the imperial power could have done much on this issue. Thus, the same questions will be worked on again at the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople, which will be organized by Emperor Theodosius the Great in 381. One of the participants in the assembly in Sardinia was also Doclea's bishop Basos, who joined the party of Orthodox and Osius from Cordoba.

Again, the lack of historical sources makes it impossible for us to continue to follow the development of church opportunities in Praevalitana. The bitter times that followed, and the bursting of barbaric peoples into the Empire reflected on the state of the church. As we have already pointed out, the native population of the province moved towards the West and took with them the precious relics of saints and ecclesiastical writings so as not to be destroyed by pagan barbarians. Nevertheless, the bishopric seat, whether in Doclea or Scodra, managed to preserve its continuity in such conditions. Most probably at that time, the center of the Doclea Episcopate was transferred from Doljani to Doclea just for protection. The arrival of the new population opened up opportunities for new missionary missions. However, the first Bishop of Doclea mentioned in the sources is Evander, who was in this position in 451. We know about him because he is on the list of signatories of the decision of the Chalcedon Council, but that's all we know about him. After that, there is again a void of some centuries and a half, to the significance of another bishop of Doclea, Paul. This period in the history of the church in Praevalitana will mark the dispute between Constantinople and Rome over the jurisdiction over this region. The Popes tried to impose their power over all of Illyricum, calling upon the authority of Apostle Peter and disregarding the decisions of the Constantinople emperors. That is why they founded their vicariate in Thessaloniki, during the Pope Innocent I (402–417), to which the jurisdiction over Doclea belongs. On the other hand, the division of the Empire in 395, the Praevalitana joined the Eastern Roman Empire. That is why Emperor Theodosius II brought an edict to give the Church jurisdiction over Illyricum to the patriarch of Constantinople. The Western Roman emperor Honorius (395–423), who ordered the prefect Illyricum to order the implementation of the Theodosius edict, was opposed. More precisely, the Byzantine emperor Zeno (474–491) issued an act, in 481, which separated the Thessalonian vicariate from the pope. These changes influenced the state of the church organization in Praevalitana,

although it was at that time most severely affected by barbaric invasions. The conflict between the two centers of Christianity broke out precisely through the Balkan provinces, and the bishops, at their discretion, chose who they would adhere to. This state will last for decades, almost all over the centuries, because as the barbarian migration developed, so did the chaos on the routes of the barbaric tribes. It will only change after the coming into power in Constantinople, Emperor Justinian Great, (527–565), whose attempt to restore the unified Roman Empire, will permanently change this area. In his church policy, the Emperor tried to resolve disputes within the church, defeated heresy and established a unified church community with the center in his throne city (seat of power). Such imperial policies reflected directly on the church in Praevalitana. Namely, the emperor founded a new metropolis in 535 in the newly built Justinian Prima, and the Duke's bishop became her suffragan. The church in Justiniana Prima did not depend on other church centers. Justiniana Prima Archdiocese, as one of five dioceses, also had in itself the Praevelis Center (Scodra Center). However, by the novel of 545 AD, Justinian changed his decision and recognized the jurisdiction of the pope over the church in Illyricum. Archbishop Justinian Prima is mentioned for the last time in 602 AD. This was the time of the Avaric-Slavic invasion of Constantinople. Thessalonica again became the church center to which the church of Praevalitana was subordinated [21]. Of how much church of Praevalitana depended on the (all) power of the emperor, we can witness through the fact that, Justinian, in order to gain the will of Pope Vigilius, granted him estates in Dalmatia and Praevalitana [22]. We find this out of the charter that the Pope left and asks him to send to Thessaloniki the revenues (penses) from the property. Pope Vigilius ultimately ended his life in exile, and his decisions were not accepted in Rome, where, even during his life, they chose a new representative of St. Peter. But this will not prevent half a century later, Pope Gregory the Great to search again from the bishop of Scodra revenue from the indicated estates [22].

According to available sources, we can see that the episcopacy in Duklja did not easily receive power over itself. They were particularly disturbed by the subordination of the vicariate in Thessaloniki. In one of the last mentions of the Doclean Episcopacy, at the end of the 6th century, Pope Gregory I intervenes in the conflict over the bishop seat in Doclea. Namely, by the confirmation of the metropolitan Justinian Primo, Nemesion was elected chief of the Duke's Church, but the deposed Bishop Paul did not acknowledge this appointment with his supporters and with the help of the local authorities, he took position forcefully, while Nemesion had to take refuge in Rome [20], there was dissolution in the church in Praevalitana, and in 599 AD, when we have preserved the information, Bishop of Lješ (Lezhe) had to leave his own diocese under the pressure of avaro-slovenian invasions. Also, the Roman bishop Sebastian, in 595 AD, escaped to Italy. The last significant notice of the Praevalitanian church is from the year 602 AD, when the bishop of Shkoder is mentioned [1]. This is the interrupted continuity of the church in this area since the apostolic times. But this will only be brief, because the church organization will soon be restored, but this time not for the Romans but for the newly-established Slavic population.

5. Of the literature at the land of Praevalitana

About old written inscriptions in what will be today Montenegro we have a lot of written materials, but, as we said at the beginning, all researchers stopped at the time of the arrival of Slavs at the Balkan peninsula. To some extent, this attitude in science has its solid ground, because since the VI century and the arrival of the Avar-Slavic tribes, we indeed encountered the beginning of a new era that will be shaped into what is Balkan today. The first written records of literature on the Slavic language came to be much later than their initial settlement, in a time span from IX until XII century, which is quite a big gap of more than two centuries. These facts will correspond with the remains of the literature of other peoples of Europe, which, too, during the darkest period of the early Middle Ages are more than modest. The barbaric tribes that destroyed the Roman Empire, if they did not accept Latin language, took almost three hundred years to reach the level of culture to compose literary works in their own language. However, these people brought with them a rich and developed oral tradition of epic and lyrical poetry. The first meaning of Slavic oral-literary traditions has been recorded in the work of the early Byzantine chronicler Teophylact Simocatta from the end of the 6th century [3].

However, what is a topic of interest to us, is literature in the area of Praevalitana before the arrival of the Slavs. Contemporary science used to reject the idea of such things, however, certain leads do exist.

5.1. Of the oldest scripts after the Slavic arrival

The oldest Slavic script on the soil of Montenegro is the Andreatius Charter, founded in the early nineteenth century in Kotor. For the first time published in the work “Illyricum sacrum”, this title of the charter is a work composed of three parts. The first is the life or vitae of the virgin Theodore, the daughter of Andreatius, the second legend of the passing of the castle of Saint Triphun to Kotor and the third testament of the very Andreatius. Although the age of the charter is questioned, researchers have already noticed that some of its original or more originals may be “felt” in it. In this way, we get to the traces of early literature in Doclea (Duklja) and Boka Kotorska [23]. Taking the traces of this early literature of Doclea, the very self-imposed need to look for its roots from the very creation of the city. Simply, it is not acceptable that in the period of 600 years, there were no traces of any written words. The above-mentioned archaeological findings and epitaphs pointed to the existence of forms of literature in Praevalitana. Starting from Andreatius, we first paid attention to the early Christian writings and the living martyrs and saints. Other works composed in the monuments of Praevalitana have not been preserved, all the way to the bar presbyter and his Sclavorum Regnum.

5.2. Praevalitana literature at the Age of Apostles

According to contemporary knowledge, the first Christian writings belonged to the canonical literature corps in the regions of Illyricum, most of Dalmatia, Prevalitana, Epirus and Moesia, originating in the second half of the 1st century, after the first great persecutions of Christians. Faced with persecution and being made outlaws, the Christian community began to write down its teachings in order to

preserve a trace of itself for future generations. Today, the Church explains these assumptions:

“In Christian society with the development of Christian education, Christian literature also began to develop. It came to be from the need of the Christian spirit to pursue and explain more clearly and present her religious teachings. But heresy played a particularly important part in its development. Contrary to heretical delusions, the true teaching of the church in its scientific form was to be delivered. In the development of Christian literature, strict adherence is observed. It began with the simplest form of literary work. The earliest monuments of Christian literature are not scientific tracts, processed by the scientific methods of the day, but simply and directly exposing the truth of faith, without imposing any subjective illumination. This form of literature fully meets the needs and requirements of that time. In the apostolic age and in the immediate vicinity, it was not necessary for the Christian truth to be scientifically expounded. The abundance of wonders and graceful gifts, and the same living tradition of the Founder of the Christian Church was the best evidence of the truth of the new science. Then it was enough that the Christian truths were not proven, but that they were, to be said, shown” [15]. Christian literature was born and spread not only from one center, but each community simultaneously writes texts presenting their beliefs and the teachings of Christ. As we pointed out earlier, one of the earliest centers of Christianity was also Illyricum and Praevalitana. What has been passed down to us from the writings that originated in Christian centers throughout Dalmatia are unfortunately only fragments and subsequent references to long lost texts. Nevertheless, with certainty, we can establish that one of the files preserved from that period is the Hagiography of Saint Caesar from Durres from the second half of the century. We believe that there were still similar stories that spoke of the sufferings of the first martyrs throughout today’s Balkans, from Noricum to Thrace. All these works, together with the Hagiography of St. Caesar, are clearly distinguished from others from that time, which originate in other great centers of Christianity in the Middle East and North Africa. Written almost always in Latin, rarely in Greek, quite stuttered in the language without additional decorations, probably due to the needs of the audience they were intended for. In their conception, these works are intended to be relevant and accurate historical testimonies both on the suffering of a single saint and on the spread of faith. Therefore, there is not much theology, description of miracles, or philosophical discussions in them, but the simple language explains events with the tendency to communicate to the audience as realistically as possible [18]. Only Hagiography of St. Caesar is one of the oldest early Christian writings from this region. In addition to him from this period, we only note the significance of the bishops of Salona, Titus and Hermaes, of which we have already spoken. This community brings Daniel Farlatti in his famous work “Illyricum sacrum” in this VII, which refers to the churches of Praevalitana. It is important to point out that at that time Durres was, according to the church jurisdiction, subordinate to Doclea as a church headquarters, and certainly this community belongs to the works of praevalitan literature. In addition to Farlatti, Draco’s bishop Caesar mentions Gams in his work [24].

5.3. Examples of pagan literature in Praevalitana

Although Christianity had quite quickly spread its roots on the eastern shore of Adriatic, it had to struggle for three more centuries for its status in the Roman Empire. Officially, paganism will uphold its status of primacy in the general population. As an example of literature and presenting that part of people itself (from the Praevalitana), we will present one song dedicated to the god Medaurus, which was made far from Praevalitana, who springs from that land. It is as follows:

*O Ti, koji obitavaš na Eacidskim
Zidinama Risinija tvrđave
U Dalmaciji, zajednički Laru
Našega naroda,
Medaure, kojisi svet kako u otadžbini
Tako i ovdje, jer te molim
Da iste skromne hramove
Primiš kao svoje, Ti koji si
Tako velik u svojoj pojavi,
Ti pod kojim se, obuzdan
Tvojom ljevicom, konj
Propinje u vazduh,
Dok tvoja druga ruka podignuta
Pored uva sije smrt.
Takvog te, kao već
Određeni konzul, u ovo
Sjedište smjestio Tvoj rob
Koji ti odaje poštu,
Poznat ratnom gradivu, i
Tebi Cezare Marko,
Uvijek istaknut u
Prvom bojnem redu.
II. pošto je primio konzulat...
Živu sliku očinskog duha
Kako sa obuzdanog konja baca koplje
Tebi, Medaure, posvećujem
Tvoje Medaurije.*

This is the song dedicated to the god of Medaur, by the legate and consul (consul designatus) Medaurus, from Lambes in North Africa. The mentioned god, Medaur was worshiped in the town of Risan. Legate Medaurus served during the time of emperor Marcus Aurelius (161–180 AD). God Medaur was a cavalry deity and the center of its cult was in Risan. There is a great resemblance with Thracian gods worshiped in Moesia, Thrace and Pannonia. On many carvings, Medaurus was depicted as a horseman with a fluttering hlamida (cloak) and a spear. In his right hand, he holds a short spear and in his left hand, he holds a saddle strap, shield and a flute. Besides him, usually on carvings, there are depictions of a tree with a snake around it, and ara. Upon which the horse is standing with its front legs. Sometimes, dogs running around him are also depicted [25]. To this poem dedicated to the god

Medaurus we can add one more example of literature from Praevalitana, but this time one which is actually made in its soil. It is an epigraphic monument in the form of a stone plate, which has been found in 1889. In Doljani, next to Podgorica. The original plate has not been preserved today, but we do have some archival sources in which it is thoroughly described, as well as its written contents. What is of special interest is the fact that it has been found in the confines of one of the basilicas in Doljani, a former seat of archbishops of Praevalitana. The inscription on the plate was as follows:

VIIIMIIDVIIETIN
IVOCENT · ISSIMO
PVSIIODIENVΛEIS
LIOEIVŜVIXAN
IMIIDXVIISEξVN
DIAN·VSETIANVA
RIAĪARENT·EILIN
ETNEPOTK·EEE⁵ [26]

Even at the time the stone plate was found, attempts were made to translate the text engraved on it, but no reliable results were obtained. According to one of the four versions of the translation, the third line of the text mentions the cult of the Syrian god Baal, to whom the panel is devoted. Based on this, the age of the text was estimated around the first century AC. but other possible translations (or variations of translations) give a different age, from the third to the seventh century. The most significant aspect of all is the fact that the stone plate was part of the early Christian basilica, which can testify to religious circumstances in Praevalitana in late antiquity. Since the panel text definitely refers to a sacrifice made in honor of the dead ones, and the panel was part of the basilica, we can draw a conclusion on the relatively peaceful coexistence of various pagan cults and Christian faith in Praevalitanain the period from the third to the fifth century. Many researchers have presumed the absence of Christianity from this area in this mentioned period of time, by referring to the lack of historical sources, but these examples, though rare, still speak of the peaceful existence of a few religions.

5.4. Christian literature of Praevalitana

The accomplished religious so to say harmony, in the Praevalitana, is the only possible explanation for the events that occurred. The first Christians did spread their communities along the provinces, likely without the consent of the local authorities. Another example that can serve as proof of this thesis is the epigraphic monument from the bay of Boka Kotorska, where the Roman family is depicted, but one member is separated from it, and marked by a cross, which is interpreted as that individual accepted Christ's faith [1]. All these presented facts lead us to the conclusion that a strong family and possibly tribal ties, since Illyrian times, were the specificity of Praevalitana. Respecting the power of these ties, in the Province, the authorities behaved quite differently in relation to other parts of the Empire. Doclea itself was a commercial, cosmopolitan town, like any other Roman city of that time, but the connection with the interior and the local population meant that provincial

authorities were quite careful in dealing with such issues. Only this can be explained by the fact that in the first three centuries, how much Christianity was underground as an Illegal cult, there are no examples of martyrdom in the Praevalitana. Although this statement of the non-existence of martyrs has led many researchers to conclude that the faith of Christ in this region is only a sporadic thing, which contradicts the fact that Christian shrines were found. That being said, it seems more realistic explanation that although Christ's faith was illegal, on the local level authorities did not want or were not able to persecute Christians and in the same time to cause disturbance in their domain. This allowed the first Christian communities to continue their work and to survive the emperor's pursuit of persecution. Even during the time of Diocletian's persecution, commencing in 286, there were no martyrs recorded, although this was also contributed by the fact that Praevalitana was not under the jurisdiction of Caesar Maximinus Daya and Licinius, who carried them with all fervor. Finally, with the Edict of Milan, the empire Constantine allowed free profession of Christ's faith, and in the short term, at the beginning of the IV century, we have several churches on the soil of Praevalitana. Together with the freedom of religion, there has been, naturally a rise in the production of the script with Christian religious themes. In order to satisfy the needs of the church, scripts with religious themes such as hagiographies of martyrs, theological discussions, and such, were rewritten, copied, etc. At the same time, correspondence with other churches also significantly increased. As Illyricum, in the second half of the 4th century, became the epicenter of the Christian world because of its conflict with the Aryan heresy, this brought the Doclea's eparchy in the focus of interest. As we have already seen, bishop Basos remained loyal to Orthodoxy during those turbulent times, thus preserving his diocese of turmoils. While at Illyricum a heated conflict arose with Aryan's supporters, who found their headquarters in the cities on the banks of the Danube, many great saints found themselves in the center of the conflict. The greatest protectors of the Orthodoxy and Nicaeanons, such as St. Athanasius of Alexandria, St. Ambrosius from Milano, St. Martin of Tour, St. Augustin of Hippo, were actively included in this conflict, so to speak, and with their testimonies and letter dedicated to the bishops of Dalmatia, Praevalitana, Illyricum and Macedonia, they campaigned for orthodox teachings and advised them to stay firm in front of temptations of heretic teachings. Even the St. Martin of Tour was coming in person to the Danube provinces with his mission of preserving the orthodoxy in these areas. Letters from St. Augustin to the bishop of Salona Hesihius were preserved until this day. Augustin, Epistole: 99 [27], in those letters, a famous north-African theologian gives his opinion about the apocalypse, so the letter itself is named after it. The barbarian invasions, especially the one by Goths, will wreck chaos throughout the Illyricum so many of the frightened believers will start to think about the doomsday and the second coming (of the Christ). The verses about the Apocalypse by John, about the great armies of the north in the battle of Judgment day seemed to be filled with horror for every Christian in the Empire. St. Augustine, with his answer, tries to calm the Bishop of Salona and his congregation with words that the Lord will prepare the faithful for his second coming. Theologically, Bishop of Hyppo answers Hessius to his interpretation of the biblical verse: "It is not your time to know the time and summer that the father holds in his power" [2]. Bishop of Salonica

interprets this as if the Lord had told his disciples that they were not determined to see the end of the world, but only to testify to his resurrection. But St. Augustine expresses doubt in such an interpretation and emphasizes that the Lord speaks of what is not theirs to know, and not what they are not to preach. In other words, one is the level of knowledge that the apostles receive, and the other is their preaching about the near ruin of the world. And in other letters to him, St. Augustine advises Bishop Hesius to take more care of the past, than about future events and not to try to calculate the time of another Christ's arrival [27]. Nevertheless, the bishop of Hippo begged his Dalmatian colleague to share with him the knowledge he had come to, or to which he would come, because in his answer it says that the Scriptures say: "Blessed are those who await the second coming of the Lord", from what concludes that it is nevertheless possible, by interpreting the sacred texts, to reveal the exact date of Christ's coming [27].

Reading this correspondence, we are able to reconstruct the situation in churches on the eastern Adriatic coast from the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th century. From the letters, it can be seen that in the theological view, the bishop of Salona, does not fall back much behind St. Augustine. His references to numerous parts of the New Testament, other texts of ecclesiastical fathers, as well as the works of his contemporaries, give a picture of the educated and inspired theologian. That Bishop Hesius has not only a theological but also a wider education, is seen in the fact that in his letter he expresses the conviction that by interpreting the writing and applying intellect and knowledge from other sciences, probably mathematics, the date of Christ's return can be reached. From this, it is easy to conclude that the churches of Dalmatia and Illyricum are well connected with other Christian communities, participate in theological discussions, and have their own copying centers in which the works of the fathers were being multiplied. Also, their fear of what their future brings about is obvious, because the incursions and robberies of the barbarians are getting harder by the year. The unwillingness of the Roman Empire to resist and stop the invasion, the collapse of the whole system of values, under the impact of heresy, and the conflict between the churches, contributed, to the Christians around the Balkans turning to the prophets and thinking of the foretaste of the recent end of the world. All these fears were common among churches, therefore including one in Praevalitana.

Desolations of the Barbaric tribes, mostly the Gothic ones, will sow panic among the inhabitants of the Empire, and so in Doclea, and will force the local novel population to move to Italy. The ruin of the Roman Limes on the Danube will also affect the situation in the church, which will be encountered with severe temptations due to internal struggles with Aryanism. Church leaders were faced with dilemmas, how to protect the pasture, church and sanctuary from destruction and to accept others as barbarians and Arians as Christians. The foundations of the Christian science of compassion and respect for all nations will come into conflict with the chauvinist exclusiveness of the Hellenic and Roman worlds. It seems that every early Christian community had to find the answer to these dilemmas on its own. In his letter to the bishops of Macedonia, in 383, n. e. St. Ambrosius from Milan, is trying to encourage and leave on the path of Orthodoxy after the death of Episcopo Aholius of Thessalonica [28]. In it, St. Ambrosius, compares the deceased with the Bible

prophet Elijah and says that his prayers forced Goths to return. Already in his next letter, he addresses the newly elected bishop of Thessalonica Anisius. Encouraging him to continue in the footsteps of his predecessor, he gives him advice on how to deal with Gothic newcomers, citing the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Who are they that fly like clouds and like doves to their windows” [2]? St. Ambrosius asks him to accept the barbaric tribes so that they too can absorb the wisdom of Solomon and to create peace between them and the Romans. He also requested the Church authorities of Macedonia to be the perpetrators and guarantors of peace in their territory. Today we are not sure how these tips were taken into account, because the Gothic conflicts with Rome have continued [19]. However, one thing is certain, the Varvara infestations are no longer random incursions, but many of them choose to permanently settle in occupied places in the Balkans.

5.5. Arian and Gothic literature in Praevalitana

The arrival of the Alexandrian presbyter Arius to Sirmium, where Emperor Constantine sent him into exile, made the province of Illyricum a haven and a basis for heresy named after him. It caused a fracture of the church community in the Balkans and also caused major conflicts. Using the position of Sirmium, Aryanism turned its spread to tribes on the other side of the Danube. Therefore, when these tribes entered the Empire, they were already Christians, but because of their belonging to the Heretical Church, they were again separated from the Romans. Soon, for the needs of God’s service, works and translations of church books in the Gothic language were created at Illyricum. Of these works, it is certainly the most famous translation of the Bible in the Goths from the learned bishop Vulfilas, who is therefore called the Apostle of Goths. To accomplish this task, Vulfilas first created the Gothic letter. This translation will leave a powerful echo to all barbaric tribes that have received Christianity, and the Goths will remain Arians until the 7th century. The only opponent will be the Pontiff of Rome, who will adhere to the view that liturgy must be in Latin. This teaching will be later condemned by the church and known as heresy of the three languages.

In addition to the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the Gothic language, another work takes an important role in the Arian literature of Illyricum, known under its Latin title *Opus imperfectum* and *Matthaum* or the *Incomplete collection of Homilies on the Gospel of Matthias*. This work for a long time was attributed to St. John Chrysostom, but because of open Arianism in it, this claim is not possible at all. That is why it can be said with certainty that the author of the works is Aryan Bishop Maximinius. In them, the writer attacks the chiefs of the opposing side, with great fervor, that they are glory-loving and greedy, forsaken by God. On the other hand, with fervor and quite emotion, he shares the tips with his congregation, so his sermons are less speculative and theological, so they speak more about the practical problems of the faithful. In his work, the author sets himself up as a pessimist, and although he believes in the victory of justice, he sees only a sin around him and sharply attacks him, from which it is concluded that the work was written in the years when Aryanism lost its strong position on Illyricum [18]. With Maximinius and his attitudes, there was the discussion by St. Augustin and St. Ambrosias who

denounced his convictions/argue against them. From the same author, we have another work by *Dissertatio Maximini contra Ambrosium* in which he exposes his Arian theology directly by attacking the bishop of Milan and continuing the controversy begun by Paladius. This work, or more precisely the document that came to us, is actually composed of several parts of the various editorials and added over time, but it is generally assumed that it was created in several decades, certainly before 438 AD. The dissertation is therefore the work of several authors who added their thoughts, and is inspired literally in the literary exegesis, completely distracted by dialectics in order to explain Arian theology. The author suggests an ecumenical council in Rome, which will allow the pagans and Jews to participate and follow the discussions [17]. However, the work is of great importance for understanding the situation at Illyricum, since it mentions a lot of Aryan and Orthodox bishops who are otherwise little known outside the region. In addition to these works, other Aryan works have been preserved in the Illyricum churches, of which only fragments are preserved today. In them, the views and interpretations of the gospels and the works of the church fathers are mostly expressed. Most of them come from the library of the Bobbio Monastery, founded by the Irish saint of St. Columbus, as the center of the battle against heresy. That's why his scriptorium has preserved many works in order to argue on them/contradict them.

Aryanism, assisted by the masses of barbarians who have intruded the Empire, has been held for more than half a century at Illyricum. How great the polemic among the opposing sides had been, is also confirmed by a letter from Orthodox bishops of Illyricum addressed to the churches of the East in which they warn them of the Arians and their heresy, by listing them personally with names [17]. From this, it can be seen how the defense of Orthodoxy and Nicene faith was difficult and long. Especially during the second half of the 4th century until the emperor Theodosius, the Great came to power, when Aryanism enjoyed the protection of the imperial authorities. In addition to them, there were also other heresies that seduced believers in their teachings and made Orthodoxy a minority on the ground. From one letter of Emperor Theodosius, we see that the religion established by the council in Nicaea fought against Anomoeans, Aryans, Macedonians Pneumatomachi, Manicheans, Encratites, apotacts, sakoforums, hydroparastes, in order to survive [18]. In this period, one of the most famous musical works of Christianity was born. This is the Hymn Thee God we praise, or in the Latin *Te Deum*, written by the Orthodox bishop of St. Niceta from Remesiana [12]. This work is now accepted by all Christian churches and the oldest anthem in the Christian world has been preserved to this day. Despite the great fame of the work, her author remained somewhat oblivious. The works of the Niceta from Remesiana are known only through mediators, most of his friends, Bishop Paulinus of Nola, although other writers, such as Bede Venerabilis, say it. One of his most important works is *Instructio ad competes* in six books written about the year 380 AD. It gives instructions on who can be baptized, which suggests that the author wrote about himself the contemporary moment, and the issues that tortured his church. The work is written as a handbook with a clear and simple language. In the first book, the bishop remembers the correct preparation of baptism candidates. In the second, he explains sinfulness in human relationships, and in the third, he gives reasons for the need for faith in one God. In the fourth book,

Saint Nicholas gives reasons for rejecting the spell and horoscope, in the fifth, it breaks the rule of faith, and in the sixth focuses on the importance of the victim of the Lamb. Of these books, only the heels are preserved in their entirety, they remain in the fragments. His three other works are known only to the remains or extracts from other authors: On the names that Christ deserves *De diversis appellationibus Jesu Christo convenientibus*; About the devotion *De vigiliis*; and About the beauty of singing *De Psalmodiae Bono*. According to his good knowledge of Manichaeism, we see that his work is fully depicted in the ecclesiastical conditions in the Balkans. Manichaeism, as a gnostic learning, has found its stronghold at Illyricum since the beginning of Christianity. At the time of St. Niceta, it may have played a dominant role in the church life of these spaces. His strength and presence testify, in addition to the bishop from Remisiana and the inscription of a Manichean virgin, Base discovered in Salona [29]. The long tradition of learning of Mani in Illyricum certainly influenced the later emergence of Bogumilian heresy in the Middle Ages, which found a foothold in Bosnia and Bulgaria.

5.6. Literature of Praevalitana in V. and VI. Century

The rise to the throne of the emperor Theodosius the Great marked the victory of the Nicea faith canons. The new, second Council held in the year 381. in Constantinople, was marked by definite condemnation of all heresies, and the emperor declared Christianity the only official religion of the Roman Empire. This gave rise to a religious calm state until the middle of the century when a new heretical teaching emerged-the one of Nestorians, named after its beginner Patriarch Nestorius, who was seated in the Byzantine capital. This period brought Praevalitana many changes, some of which have been felt even in modern times. Emperor Theodosius, with his will, divided the Empire among his sons Arcadius and Honorius, thus making the Praevalitana area one of the central regions of the Empire and one of the border regions of the Eastern Roman Empire. The province itself was abolished and merged with Macedonia. Thus, it was struck by the barbaric tribes again, above all the Goths, which were making intrusions into the territory of the Empire. At the very beginning of the century, Visigoths, under the leadership of their cunning Alaric, were passing and plundering the eastern parts of the Praevalitana before being stopped by the Roman army officer Stilicho. But that was just an introduction to the upcoming events. With the disappearance of the country of Attila the Hun in the year 453, the Ostrogoths were finally freed from their yoke, as well as other nations. Their ruler from the genus Amal Theodoric united the parts of Goths on both sides of the Danube and created a strong state. The imperial policy of the empire succeeded in convincing the Ostrogoth leaders to go to Italy and to break the rule of the German general Odoacer, who in 476 abolished the Western Roman Empire. Having mastered the great part of the Apennine Peninsula, the Ostrogoths created a powerful state that extended to the Balkans. The eastern parts of this state reached the former Praevalitana, and Byzantium built a defensive wall to protect itself from unfortunate neighbors, which remained remembered as the "Wall of the mad wolf" (in Međa Vuka Manitoga). That's how it will remain until the launch of Justinian's wars in the middle of the 6th century.

While the territory of Praevalitana was politically affiliated to Byzantium, religiously it was subjected to the papal chair in Rome in the ecclesiastical division. It is for sure that the Doclea bishops led to great dilemmas in reconciling two opposing interests. However, it seems that most Bishops of Doclea were leaning toward the political power of Constantinople, sometimes openly defying the decisions of the Pope. In order to secure his interests in Illyricum, Pope Damas in the year 379 proclaimed the bishop of Thessalonica as his vicar [17]. This papal decision was not to the liking of the bishops of Doclea, a move which put them in opposition to Rome. Consequently, they turn to Constantinople and St. John Chrysostom composes the homily on the death of Duke's bishop Basus. In her Chrysostom, talks about Bishop of Doclea, "the holy and famous martyr and bishop Basus, for whom this sacred congregation has gathered today, wins the prizes he deserved in his struggles, not by gathering or paying our praise, but for us, as is customary for the Lord prayers refer. Therefore, the one who is martyred for freedom of speech is more worthy to be given the crown of immortality, which Christ prepared for the believers" [30]. His preaching over the tomb of Bishop Basus, the first independent Patriarch of Constantinople, was dedicated with Christ's words: "Come and learn from me, and be humble in the heart" [6]. Interpreting and developing these words of Jesus, St. John Chrysostom presents the philosophy of Christian mercy, which is guided by Christ's example. That's why he says, "I do not speak because I exist, but I'm saying that my mercy fits."

While the subtle conflict between Doclea and Rome lasted, and barbaric insurgents devastated the inland Empire, a great thing happened in Christian literature. Namely, in 406, a learned Dalmatian from Stridon, St. Jerome, completed his translation of the Holy Script in Latin—Vulgate (vulgar Latin). This way, the Roman Latin population of Illyria, but also other provinces, was given the means by which to defend their religious writings from the Aryan and Gothic Bible of Vulphila and the Greek Septuagint. In this way, Rome succeeds in restoring part of the influence on Illyricum through the imposition of Jerome's translation.

However, everything did not go so smoothly to the Roman Curia. The Papal authority, as the chairs of St. Peter the Apostle, depended on the support of the state authorities, and the Western Roman Empire, since it was chaos, could not fulfill this task. The real imperial power was in the East, and the Second Ecumenical Council in Istanbul, in 381, established the patriarchal seat in that city, recognizing it as a championship over the churches of the East. The Primate of the Roman Church will come to fruition during the struggle with the non-native heresy. By supporting the Patriarch Kirill of Alexandria, Pope Leo I formed a Christian dogma, opposing the Constantinople Patriarch Nestorius and his heretical teaching. Heresy was convicted at the Third Council of Ephesus in the year 431. Using weaknesses and disagreements at the imperial court in Constantinople, after the death of Emperor Theodosius II, the Pope tried to impose himself as a main authority in the Christian-Roman world. The largest rise of the Roman Curia will take place at the Fourth Council in Chalcedon in a year 451, when it will win and condemn the heresy of monophysitism, even though that teaching had the protection of the imperial authorities. The greatest problem for the Roman Pontifical was the establishment of the dominance of Illyricum. By the Pope's established vicar in Thessaloniki, could

not establish primacy among the Illyria churches. Opposing the papal vicar, the bishops of Illyria turned to help the emperor. The main reason for this is political nature, because at that time the entire Illyria was devastated by the Eastern Goths. Seeking the protection of the church, the Illyria turned to Constantinople, even if it meant the temporary acceptance of monophysitism. Rome, while protecting the faith, is unable to impose its will and authority. Therefore, in several letters that are preserved, bishops of the Illyria churches give respect to the newly elected Emperor Leo I, and among them is the bishop of Doclea, Maximus [12]. In order to regain control of the situation in Illyricum, Pope Gelasius sends several letters to the local bishops, in which he does not hide his dissatisfaction and bitterness toward the current situation [2]. Nevertheless, this does not go hand in hand because the Bishops of Illyricum are turning to Constantinople and adapting themselves to the church circumstances of the East. In his letters, the pope warns Illyrian bishops that they are obliged to guard their true religion. He stresses out with anger that their churches kept mentioning in prayer, people who were condemned by the Council as heretics. These letters tell us a lot about the situation at the then Illyricum, not only religious but also the situation in society in general.

At the time when the great migration of peoples reached its peak, in the middle of the 5th century, the provinces of the Balkans were the epicenter of all events. The demise of the state of the Attila the Hun in Pannonia leads to a chaotically difficult situation on both sides of the Danube. The collapse of the Atilla's short-lived state, releases the Ostrogoth peoples, which now occupy the provinces of Upper and Lower Moesia, Macedonia, Dardania, Thrace and Epirus. Blending with the already-settled Goths within the Empire, they became a major threat to Byzantium. In such an order of things, the Episcopate of Illyria is forced to fight for bare survival. Consequently, on territories occupied by barbarians, who profess Aryanism, it was not easy to maintain Orthodoxy, and many bishops are looking to adapt to the current situation. Division within the Empire also does not make thing better. Under the circumstances, they are forced to choose, or rather to say, balance, between the three centers. The Orthodox Faith, established at the Council, as insisted on by the Roman Pope, the monophysitism of Constantinople, which was condemned at the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon, but which enjoys the support of the emperor and barbarian Aryanism that is dominant in the field. According to the documents that were passed down to us, we see that most bishops decided to find a compromise in the whole situation. In the letters they send, they declare themselves as defenders of the faith established by the councils of the universe, but by their work, they do not try to prevent the spread of heresies [6]. The overall situation and extremely unstable circumstances also reflected the flourishing of literature and other arts in the Praevalitana area. The bishopric seat moved from the Basilica in Doljani to Doclea itself, apparently looking for the safety of the city walls [31]. The civilization of late antiquity was slowly extinguished and gave way to the barbarian cultures and the distressing gloomy times of the Middle Ages.

The crises and instability of that era are best illustrated by the lack of any primary historical sources to testify to these events. At the end of the V and the beginning of the 6th century, monophysitism supported by a number of Byzantine emperors brought chaotic circumstances to the Church. The entire Illyricum was hit

by Acacciuse's Schism, which was promoted by monophysitism and Henothicon Emperor Zeno. It was at the beginning of the 6th century that Illyria became a place where one of the great figures in church circles would arise—Dionysius Exigeus (Dionysius Exiguus). This learned Slavic theologian, for the first time, appears in a letter he has compiled and is addressed to Pope Hormisdas, who announces that he translated, most likely to the Latin work *Canonum Graecorum*. His work expands as a defense attorney of the Orthodox doctrine, but also of Latinity in this region. In a letter sent to two Scythian Bishops, he emphasizes the necessity of accepting Christianity as determined by the ecumenical councils. He also seeks the acceptance of the Latin language in God's service in order to stay on a true path of faith. By doing so, Dionysius strives to defend Justinian's policy of trying to establish the reunification of the Empire. For the authorities of the bishop of Salona Stephen, Dionysius translates into Latin 50 apostolic canons from various councils that have been held until then, then a collection of Roman Pontifical decrees from the Pope of Sirion to Anastassius II. This work promoted him to one of the first archivists of the Roman Curia [19]. By translating letters about Pasha he was interested in the problem of determining the Easter, and he made a Pasha plate that should have been valid until the year 626. This work, preserved only in fragments, later became a canon for all Christian churches, and it is also significant in that for the first time the calculation of the time from the birth of Jesus Christ is introduced. He translated from the Greek Hagiography of St. Pachomius and then to the epistle "On the faith of the Armenians", which had already been singled out in the national church, then two the homilies of St. Gregory of Nica, which he called "On the service of God" to the address of a presbyter Eugene. He also translated the work "Historia inventionis capituli S. Joannis Baptistae" by Greek hegumen Marcel [18]. Unfortunately, the work of Dionysius remained quite forgotten, and he has never been canonized by the church.

Only during the middle of the 6th century, during the reign of Emperor Justinian, we find some mention of these areas (Illyricum). The emperor, Dardanian of Bederiana, stabilized the ecclesiastical churches at Illyricum by establishing a new Archbishopric, Justiniana Prima, to whom the other provincial bishops were subordinate. This decision was legalized by his Novel XI, and those Novels themselves represent equally literary as well as legal acts [17]. Likewise, Justinian renewed good relations with Rome and definitively established the doctrine of Orthodoxy. He called the Fifth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople and definitively condemned the monophysitism. After the great wars in Italy, the kingdom of Ostrogoths was destroyed, and this brought great changes in the Balkans. In accordance with his policy of good relations with Rome, Emperor Justinian gave the pope Vigilius estates in Dalmatia and Paevalitana. For the first time, those estates are mentioned in documents about the year 550, when the pope sent his envoy to collect the income from those properties and brought him to Thessaloniki, where he was staying at that moment. The cooperation between the Pontifical and the Emperor was not long time standing, but the estates remained in the possession of Rome. At the end of the 6th century, Pope Gregory the Great in several of his letters, from 591 to 594, mentions these properties. In one letter to the pope, the bishop of Shkoder Stephen asked the priest to collect the proceeds from the praevalitanian possessions

and send them to Rome [22]. This document is one of the last preserved in which the Praevalitana is mentioned.

6. Conclusion

The first couple of centuries of the new era, were marked by peace and prosperity in the area of Praevalitana. Roman Empire managed to pacify the aboriginal Illyrian tribes and introduced its own system of rule. The same area was a place of settlement of legion's veterans, to whom the state was granting land after full military service. The whole province of Dalmatia has been sorted as a "provincia inermis" (province without legions) since the I century of the new era. The favorable conditions in the area led to the foundation of Doclea as a municipium, which would later become the provincial headquarters. All these factors were bringing through the entire history of humanity to the flourishing of culture. But it seems that the Praevalitana is an exception. In the half of the millennium of the existence of Doclea as a city center for cultural life in this region, there are almost no traces. Therefore, the history of the past has little to do with this topic, and the history of literature, at least domestic, has not even looked at this period of our history. The scarcity of the source instructs the researchers to search for the beginnings of literature only in the period after the arrival of the Slavs to the Balkans. The Roman province of Praevalitana was not very interesting as an object of analysis. As part of the political history, what we know about it is actually pretty general and can be applied to any other province of the Empire. Hence the motive for the creation of this work, that it seemed to us that it was impossible for six centuries to have no traces of written words originally created in this area or related to it. For this reason, it was necessary to take into consideration the works that were created throughout the Balkans as well as in the neighboring areas, Pannonia, Italy, and even North Africa. In order to answer the lack of historical sources, we had to expand the circle of our research and include not only purely literary works, but also letters, records, homilies, epitaphs, and epigraphic inscriptions. All of this helped us to get a more coherent picture of the literary, and therefore, cultural aspects of the Praevalitana during this period.

Our direction in this research was a timeline we have chosen. As stated above, the language of the Illyrians had no codified writing system, so we couldn't even speak of it. On the other side, the founding of Doclea is almost parallel with the original spread of Christianity. That leads us to turn our attention to the scripts created by church, or created for the church. Alas, even here we were severely limited, because scientific works so far haven't offered any substance about it. In the works created by local authors, this period of early Christianity in the Balkans, and in particular about the Praevalitana, was mentioned very scarcely. The works of academic scholars such as Pavle Mijović and Branislav Borozan were pioneering, but they related mostly to the material remains of late antiquity in this area. As far as foreign literature is concerned, not only the Praevalitana, but the whole of the Balkans is completely circumvented in the studies that dealt with the period of early Christianity. Just to mention, for example, the study of English historian Peter Braun's "Ascent of Christianity in the West" in which the author speaks of the Christian communities of Western China, and mentions the Balkans only in one

place as an adjective in a negative context. This state of current literature has led us to more extensive research and addressing directly to sources, in order to try to perceive the subject that interests us. For this purpose, we relied on the collection of documents such as *Illyricum sacrum*, *Monumenta Montenegrina*, *Patrologiae graeca et latina*⁶ by the abot Migne, the Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, and so on. Using the benefits of modern information technology, we have succeeded in reaching sources or literature, especially articles, which would otherwise remain unavailable.

Guided by the sources we collected, we are able to give an opinion about the art of writing in Praevalitana in the first six centuries of our era. First of all, we think it is quite clear from what we have been saying that the tradition of written words in this region was both strong and fruitful throughout the entire period. It certainly cannot be compared to large centers, Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, the cities of the Middle East, which were at the time, the focus of civilization, culture and religion, but still large enough that they cannot be ignored. Likewise, the literacy of the Praevalitana followed the role models from these centers, and because of its good traffic connections, it served as a clue between the two parts of the Roman Empire. It is precisely in the Balkan region where the Latin and Greek civilizations are overlapping. Ideas, beliefs, traditions and knowledge were transferred to the great Balkan roads from the East to the West or vice versa. The Balkan itself has generated all this in itself and for its own needs, giving everything its own unique and original line. Christianity has been moving along this path since the apostolic times. Already from the middle of the century, we recorded along the eastern coast of the Adriatic, the work and preaching of the apostles Paul, Andrew, Luke and Mark, as well as the first Christian communities that they founded in the cities of Dalmatia. Knowing that Christianity was based on the spread of the word and it was scientifically established that all the Christian communities wrote their sacred texts; we can safely say that the first Christians of Dalmatia had their own tradition of written words. Unfortunately, the traces of this literature have not been preserved to this day. What has passed down to us are hagiographies or stories of martyrdom, of several martyrs throughout the Balkans that originated in this region. Since such works were extremely important to proto-Christian communities and were readily read by believers, their copying was also present in Doclea, Bar, Budva, Kotor and Shkoder for the needs of Christian communities there. In this tradition of copying, there is also an original style that distinguishes hagiographical works from the Balkans. As we have already pointed out, these works are written in Latin, simple style with clear and simple sentences, separating them from the flamboyant equivalents from the Middle East. Their writers have not been taught by theologians of the East and are turning to a far more laity audience to discuss the current problems of religion in them. That is why they aim to describe the exact event or sequence of events with their work, precisely and clearly, in order to strongly transmit the message of martyrdom for faith. Therefore, we can conclude that by adapting to the audience, the writers of these hagiographies created more history than literature.

On the other side, in the first few centuries of our era, there was a parallel development of pagan literature in this area. That is why we note examples that were preserved today, so we can point out the very existence of that tradition, which faded away with the rise of Christianity, but managed to leave traces of it.

The outing of Christianity from the underground in the year 313, by edict of Milan, brings new and fresh strength in the development of literature in Praevalitana. Soon on the throne of the bishop of Doclea, whose seat was in Doljani, comes the bishop Basos, who will occupy that position for the whole second half of the IV century. This will be crucial for the church in Praevalitana, for Basos, during his term, will succeed in maintaining Orthodoxy in his diocese. When, after the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, the Alexandrian presbyter of Arias is expelled to Sirmium, the entire Illyria will be at the epicenter of the battle against his heresy. This struggle will last more than half a century and will require the inclusion of all forces from both sides. On the side of the defense of Orthodoxy will be the greatest theologians of that time, such as Athanasius of Alexandria, Ambrosia of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, Martin of Tour. With their works against heretical teachings, they earned the primate among defenders of Christian teaching and a sacred halo. It is through their work and correspondence with the bishops of Dalmatia, Praevalitana, Dardania and Macedonia that we succeed in the reconstruction of the extent of fierce struggle against Aryan and other heresies of that era. From them, we also learn about the names of the bishop in Illyricum in that period, as well as about the church organization. Also, their letters, appeals, and advice represent the greatest achievements of ecclesiastical literature. These works, although sent to the Illyrian churches, were copied and read throughout the Christian world and served for didactic purposes to the generations of believers, long after their creation.

Simultaneously, there was a development of a relatively rich production of various theological scripts, and scripts of other substances, of the Aryan origin, which is also related to Illyricum. After Arius, leaders of this heresy were Valens from Murcia and Ursatio from Singidunum. Together with "half Aryan" Makedonius, they left a somewhat respective number of works and scripts in which they elaborate their theology. Since these works were persecuted and burned later, only a few of them survived in later transcriptions and copies through the libraries of medieval monasteries. Again, thanks to the internet, they are reachable and available to contemporary researchers, which is very important for this era of Balkan history.

A breakthrough event in this period at Illyricum is certainly the beginning of the great migration of the barbarian peoples. From the second half of the 4th century until the beginning of the 7th century, numerous barbaric tribes from Goths to Slavic tribes passed through this area. These peoples have left deeper traces in the history and culture of the Balkans. Advocating for Aryanism, the Goths at Illyricum managed to establish their church. Bishop Vulfilas, later named Apostle Goth, created a script for the Gothic language in order to translate the Bible and other church works on it. Although today a copy of his translation of the Holy Scripture is kept in Uppsala in Sweden, this work was created at Illyricum and is an important part of the written tradition of our space. Some texts written in the Gothic language are related to Praevalitana, because the scriptoriums in the Doclea Episcopal remains were preserved from barbarian destruction. Another great name in the history of the church at Illyricum, believed to have originated in Goths, is Saint Niceta of Remeziana. Unlike Vulfilas, this bishop of ancient Bela Palanka, remained faithful to Orthodoxy and was his great defender. He left behind many important works, but they are poorly examined or studied by modern science. He will certainly remain

best known as perhaps the first Christian composer and creator of the most famous church anthem “We Praise thee God”, which is today accepted by all Christian churches and segregations.

The turbulent times of the 5th and 6th centuries and the events that struck Illyricum during that period were also reflected in literature. Wars with the barbaric peoples contributed to the distortion of the written word in this region. A large number of the original Roman population under the barbarian invasion moved to Italy or other parts of the Mediterranean. They took with themselves, as important and precious, the relics of saints and martyrs, but also sacred texts to save them from destruction. An example of this is the case of Saint Hermes, whose relics from Salona eventually ended up in Germany. The ravages of wars threatened to destroy the work of the church. Many episcopates have disappeared, some will only be recovered much later, or new ones will be created. However, the Illyrian churches have their representatives in the three ecumenical councils that met in this period. The Bishop of Praevalitana, Epalsium, appeared among the signatories of the documents at the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon in 451, so this year is taken from the historiography so far, as the initial one for the Duke’s bishopric. According to the sources, we presented in this paper, we can see that the episcopacy in Doclea existed at least a century earlier than this date. The chaotic state of the entire Illyria caused the church organization to weaken and decline. Sometimes authoritative centers and respectable bishops, which have practiced their tradition from apostolic times, have been lost and have lost prestige in the Christian world. And Praevalitana shared this fate together with Salona, Sirmium, Serdica, etc. Since the division of the Empire in 395, the province of Illyria lost its power and turned from the center to remote border provinces. The infighting of the barbarian people across the Danube further complicates the situation, and the patriarchal seat in Aquileia, for which Illyricum is bound, dies under the blows of the Huns. Therefore, the Balkan churches will be found in the middle of the V and the beginning of the 6th century, between the three centers. The first is Rome, which uncompromisingly defends the positions and decisions made in the councils of the ecumene, opposite to him stands Constantinople, in which several emperors protect the heresy of monophysitism in turn, and the third is the island of Orosok, which extends from Pannonia to Tuscany. Faced with this state of affairs, and again conditioned by the situation on the ground, Illyria’s churches, as the sources say, decide on a compromise. In the coronation with the Roman Pope, they expressed their adherence to the principles of Orthodoxy, although they reluctantly agreed to cooperate with the Theocracy in Thessaloniki. Still, they are in a position to be more conciliatory to the monasticism of Constantinople, since only the emperor can expect real protection, so that they do not hinder the spread of the heresy imposed by the imperial capital. It is one of the few provinces that remained in the possession of Byzantium, and the emperor’s troops and the administration imposed a new heresy. Likewise, because of the large number of barbaric peoples present there, while the Ossetian state occupied parts of Praevalitana, their Aryanism will be freely confessed.

This situation will last for several decades. During the same period churches of Illyria will carve their own way, separated from the rest of the Christian world, so it will look for solutions to preserve its congregation in these turbulent times. This

doesn't mean that they denounced orthodoxy or symbols of the faith established as such in Nicaea, because they were as their predecessors, fighters for their doctrine and against all heresy. The exception is, that under these difficult circumstances they had to make undoubtedly painful choices and concessions, as well as finding some sort of *modus vivendi* with the rest of the congregations of various religions. Finally, with Justinian's Reconquista, Illyrian churches had finally entered the sphere of the Christian ecumenical world again. Doclea remained under the Byzantine administration, making it part of the narrow coastal area that the Empire controlled on the eastern coast of the Adriatic. Thus, the end of the 6th century saw the arrival of the Slavs in this territorial form. The bishopric in Doclea is last time mentioned in the letters of Pope Gregory the Great. At the beginning of the seventh century, the city of Doclea was destroyed in the invasion of Avar and the Slavs, and along with it, ended the epoch of antiquity in this region.

This work hasn't been formed as a form of irrational search for fictional or nonexistent. Its goal is to pinpoint the issue which was until now avoided in our scientific research. Our motivation was to present that in six centuries of late antiquity, Praevalitana had its own tradition of the written word and that literary works were equal to the ones created in other parts of the empire. These works had left their marks in these areas and they marked, not just the era in which they were created, neither remained in the confines of the province in which they were made. In addition to this, some of the works created here were spread throughout the empire and were gladly read by many. Some of them were immortalized so they were objects of inspiration and learning for many generations. So, one more time we want to stress out the charter of Andreacious, as a script, which was one of the oldest literary forms in this region. Researchers of this work already stressed that it contains much older roots in it, and we consider that the tradition of the written word in Praevalitana which was created in the late antique certainly inspired the authors of this work. That is the thesis that is yet to be researched in the history of literature.

Because of the author's vocation, these lines were written as a review of the events and works which were available to us. Therefore, this work is above all else historical analysis and not a literary critique. So it was our intention to entice research on this topic—literature in Praevalitana and to put it in the list of potential works of Montenegrin scientific community. Surely, this work is not and cannot be the last word about this topic, but a call for thorough research thus giving it a rightful place in the history of antique literature.

7. Summary

This work was not created as an irrational search for impossible or non-existent worlds. His goal is to point out a problem that has been simply neglected in our science so far. Our motive was to show that during the six centuries of late antiquity Praevalitana had its own special tradition of the written word and that literary creations were created in this area just as in any other part of the Roman Empire. These works left their mark on these areas and marked not only the era in which they were created, nor did they remain only within the borders of the province in which they were created. The first centuries of the new era meant a period of peace and

prosperity for the area of Praevalitana. The Roman Empire pacified the domiciled Illyrian tribes and misled its administration. Soon, veterans who were granted land by the state began to settle in that territory. Since the end of the 1st century, the entire province of Dalmatia has been known as “provincia inermis”, i.e. without legions. What directed us the most in the research was the time frame that we took into consideration. As we have already stated above, the language of the Illyrians did not know a codified writing system, so it could not be spoken of. On the other hand, the founding of Duklja almost coincides with the beginning of the spread of Christianity. This led us to pay the greatest attention to writings that were created under the auspices and for the needs of the Church. However, here too we met a wall in the beginning, because the previous scientific literature did not provide any data on this. In the works of the domestic province, the period of early Christianity in the Balkans was covered in a haphazard and patterned way, and specifically there was almost no mention of the Praevalitana. For this purpose, we relied on Collections of documents such as *Illyricum sacrum*, *Monumenta montenegrina*, *Patrologiae graeca et latina* by Abbot Migne, *Homilies of St. John Chrysostom*, etc. Using the benefits of modern information technology, we managed to get to sources or literature, especially articles, which would otherwise have remained inaccessible to us.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Notes

1. Province without legions.
2. A large Roman estate.
3. The shorted name of province Praevalitana.
4. Probably the oldest town in Montenegro.
5. This is original transcript of Latin table.
6. This is titles of books.

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