Imperial Spheres and the Adriatic
Byzantium, the Carolingians and the Treaty of Aachen (812)

Edited by Mladen Ančić, Jonathan Shepard and Trpimir Vedriš
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14 Lower Pannonia before and after the Treaty of Aachen

Hrvoje Gračanin

Introduction

We can be fairly sure – at least by the standards of early medieval history – that the Franks’ expansion into the region between the Danube and the Adriatic had a profound effect on the socio-political circumstances of the region’s peoples. Admittedly, this assumption rests on a weak base, since we know little about the previous period: the extant evidence allows us only a few glimpses of the historical processes at work in the region before the arrival of the Franks. It is as if the two-centuries-long Avar sway more or less froze the region in time. Undoubtedly this impression is wrong, but we have little to tell us exactly how societies in the region developed, and to what extent they may have already been affected by external influences during the seventh and eighth centuries. Here the archaeological record, as well as anthropological and forensic evidence, may be of use: artefacts and osteological remains can be instructive about everyday living conditions, burial customs, what was deemed to be of particular communal or personal value, and even how groups and individuals formed their social identity or defined their social status. But they cannot really help explain complex socio-political and economic processes.

Even our written evidence is practically non-existent before the late eighth and the early ninth centuries. One obvious reason is that the Avars never felt in need of a developed written culture. Another, equally debilitating, reason is that the region between the Danube and the Adriatic had for quite some time been a sort of a double periphery: there was no interest or ability in either the west or the east to record events in the former Roman provinces of Pannonia and Dalmatia during the seventh and eighth centuries. Furthermore, the surviving post-Roman communities on the eastern Adriatic were too insignificant to attract external attention, as well as being too small and too weak to deal with anything beyond their own affairs. The story of those affairs is, in any case, preserved only fragmentarily, and in much later traditions.

This would change with the advent of the Franks, and Pannonia and Dalmatia would once more become, to a degree, interesting to outside observers. The region between the rivers Sava, Drava and Danube, with which our overview is concerned, was caught up in the struggle between the Franks and Avars and
underwent significant socio-political changes, although essentially it remained an in-between zone, especially after the collapse of Duke Liudewit's revolt. One must, however, stress that, despite our Frankish writers' new-found interest in the region, extant written evidence is fragmentary at best. The same can be said of the archaeological evidence, which is still very far from being enough to fill the gaps in our knowledge or provide new insights. The inadequacy of both the narrative and the material sources presents a methodological problem not easily overcome. That said, it is also true that there are some firm points upon which to base a reconstruction, at least in general outline, of the main historical processes in operation in ninth-century Pannonia.

This chapter has two aims: firstly, to offer a brief narrative of events in southern Pannonia in the decades before and after 812 and to provide as coherent a picture as possible of its political history then. Our focus will be on the new political conditions that followed the Franks' encroachment and the overthrow of the Avar khaganate; on the establishment of a new polity between the rivers Sava, Drava and Danube under Frankish tutelage, serving their overall strategic interests; and on the clash between the recently formed Slav elite under Duke Liudewit of Lower Pannonia and his Frankish overlords. Within this framework, special attention is given to the questions of whether Frankish-Byzantine relations influenced the Franks' politico-military strategy in the region, and the extent to which Duke Liudewit's conspiring with Patriarch Fortunatus of Grado (who eventually turned out as pro-Byzantine) may have been construed by the Frankish authorities as a potential threat to their overall position in the region between the Adriatic and the Danube. Our second aim is to present and contextualize the existing archaeological evidence that indicates an influx of Frankish influence, sparse as it may be. In this respect, one may note that, given the present level of knowledge, there is no clear break in the customs and traditions of the material culture between the periods of Avar rule and Frankish domination in Pannonia.

**Historical narrative**

The Frankish thrust into the central Danube region was a natural consequence of their expansion into areas to the east of the Rhine and in northern Italy. The central Danube basin opened up as a theatre of action for the Franks when, in 787–788, the duchy of Bavaria was finally subdued and absorbed into the *Regnum Francorum*.1 Around this time, and definitely before 791, the Franks occupied Byzantine-held Istria.2 In 791, the Franks invaded Avar territory. The southern Frankish army seems to have advanced along the old Roman road from Aquileia to Poetovio by way of Emona, before moving along the southern bank of the Drava and thus entering the 'Pannonia' of the *Annals of Lorsch*.3 In the Drava basin the Franks may have encountered an Avar stronghold, a fortified settlement enclosed by a defensive rampart. Archaeological investigations have revealed a significant concentration of Avar-Age finds in the Drava basin around Varázdin, Ludbreg and Koprivnica. There are also stray finds of weaponry in the vicinity of Koprivnica, dated to the late eighth and the early ninth centuries. Of these a sabre, a long fighting knife and several axes have been attributed to the Avars and Slavs, while two winged lances and a scramasax are of Frankish provenance. These finds may provide support for the assumption that this was perhaps the area where the Avar fortification which the southern Frankish army took by force was situated.4

The final blows to Avar rule in the region between the rivers Sava, Drava and Danube, and consequently in the whole of Pannonia, were dealt by two expeditions, the first in the autumn of 795 and the second in the summer of 796. In both cases the Frankish armies moved through southern Pannonia, presumably along the ancient Roman road through the Drava and Danube basins.5 Having subdued southern Pannonia, the Franks may have organized the area into a vassal principality called Lower Pannonia by 803. Our Frankish sources all start referring to Pannonia in plural form when describing events relating to the year 803, which may indicate that this organizational change was already in place by then.6 In any case, this is consistent with the system established by the Franks throughout their frontier areas: they relied not only on their own border regions (marches) but also on dependent polities ruled by local princes.7 The duke of Lower Pannonia, who presumably resided in Sisak, was directly subject to the duke of Friuli, whose jurisdiction extended, in the early ninth century, as far as the middle and lower Drava.

The principality of Lower Pannonia seems to have encompassed the entire region between the Drava, Sava and Danube, stretching from the river Sutla and the Gorjanci-Žumberak mountains in the west to the mouth of the Sava, where it discharges into the Danube in the east.8 This much can be deduced from our written sources. In Paulinus of Aquileia's poem on Duke Eric of Friuli, Sirmium is mentioned as one of the places under the duke's control.9 Much later, as recorded by Niketas Choniates in the early 1200s, the Byzantines knew the region of Sirmia as 'the Frankish land' (*Phrangochôrion*): this may either reflect local memory of Frankish rule, passed on to the Byzantines, or the significant presence of a new Germanic population — or possibly both.10 We know from the *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum* that the Bavarians settled the Slav dukedom of Priboina and his people in northern Pannonia, and that he was given rule over the area to the north of the Drava — and possibly to a limited extent also to the south.11 And there were always people ready to colonize frontier areas of their own volition: such frontiersmen (*confin(i)ales*) would establish themselves as part of the frontier defences and, like any other freemen, had to do military service and provide specific guard and reconnaissance duties.12 Present-day Fruska Gora, known in antiquity as *Alma mons*, still preserves the memory of the Franks in its name, since it is usually thought to be a Slavic rendering of the Latin *mons Francorum*.13 We should certainly allow for the possibility that such references to the Franks are the result of a much later influx of Germanic immigrants in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, colonists from the west invited into their lands by the Hungarian kings.14 However, it is equally possible that they evoke memories of a Frankish presence dating as far back as the ninth century. The archaeological evidence to corroborate this presence is unfortunately still negligible, apart from the isolated find of a belt assemblage in the present-day village of Zemun Polje (near Zemun).
in the far south-east of Syria, dating from the late eighth or early ninth century; its decorative motifs show Christian influence, usually explained by the arrival of Frankish rule.\textsuperscript{13} Furthermore, subsequent Frankish contacts with the Timociani and the Obodrites (\textit{Praedenercensi}) may also suggest that the Franks controlled the middle course of the Danube up to the mouth of the Sava.\textsuperscript{16}

As noted, the establishment of Frankish rule in the central Danube basin was a natural consequence of Frankish expansion and may have served several aims. First and foremost, the expansionist move against the Avar khaganate aimed at securing their eastern frontier, but may also have been directed at strengthening the Franks' position in the wider region. Byzantino-Frankish hostilities broke out in 788, and shortly afterwards the Franks seized Istria from the Byzantines. Relations between the two empires continued to deteriorate, and it may be that the attack on the Avars was a pre-emptive strike to forestall similar action by the Byzantines in the future or, better yet, to prevent the Byzantines from attracting the Avars to join them against the Franks. That there may have been a real danger from such a development can be seen from the fate of Duke Eric. He was killed in ambush near present-day Rijeka in 799, apparently staged by the inhabitants of Tarsatica but probably due to Byzantine machinations.\textsuperscript{17} The Frankish occupation of the Avar khaganate may also have served as a barrier to future expansion from any other power in the region, notably the Bulgars (assuming that Charlemagne and his advisors were well informed about the situation in south-eastern Europe). In the 790s, the Bulgars were increasingly a force to be reckoned with, as is shown by the outcome of their clashes with the Byzantines.\textsuperscript{18} Moreover, the conquest of Avar-held Pannonia brought under Frankish sway a large portion of territory once belonging to the Roman empire, thus giving more substance to Charlemagne's claim of \textit{renovatio imperii Roman}i, which eventually resulted in his assumption of the imperial title in 800. Finally, such a thrust into the central Danubian basin gave the Franks the opportunity to deepen and intensify their policy towards regional groups of Slavs. This was all the more important, since good relations with the Slavs had proved of considerable value in the Franks' repeated attempts to pacify the Saxons; they might have expected similar support from the Slavs based on the central Danube and the Adriatic against Byzantium.

The provisions of the Treaty of Aachen in 812 presumably covered Pannonia, and it may even be that Frankish rule in the region was at least tacitly recognized by the Byzantines. We can assume that the first two decades of this rule saw profound changes in the social structure of the region and the emergence of a new elite enjoying the support of the Franks. The archaeological evidence suggests that there were members of local Slav groupings in Frankish service and that they had themselves buried with weapons and military equipment of Frankish provenance (for find sites, see Map 8 on xxxi).\textsuperscript{19}

We may also assume that missionaries regularly visited the region, bringing the Christian faith back to the local populations, as had been agreed at a synod held on the banks of the Danube in 796.\textsuperscript{20} A demarcation line separating the two missionary areas of Aquileia and Salzburg had already been set up along the Drava in the same year, and was confirmed by Charlemagne in 803 and again in 811.\textsuperscript{21}

The ultimate success of the Aquileian mission is confirmed by the Gospel Book of Cividale, which records the names of pilgrims from the principality of Lower Pannonia, undoubtedly members of the new elite.\textsuperscript{22} To be sure, the re-Christianization of the region does not mean that Christian worship had ceased altogether when the Avars occupied Pannonia. The Christian faith had lived on in the region. The acts of the synod in 796 mention \textit{clerici in litterati or idiotae}, who maintained some sort of Christian cult for the indigenous populations during the Avar period; but the ecclesiastical organization ceased to exist and was brought back to life only with Frankish rule.

In any case, Frankish influence may be seen as instrumental in giving rise to a south Pannonian Slav elite, and also in establishing favourable preconditions for the formation of an ethnic identity around a local polity created under their patronage.\textsuperscript{23} This was something the Avars were not prepared to allow and even tried to forestall - all the more resolutely, we may assume, in light of their experience with the 'Sermsianoi' in the late seventh century.\textsuperscript{24} However, the process was abruptly checked after the dismal failure of Duke Liudewit's revolt. What caused this revolt - the single best-known event in the history of ninth-century southern Pannonia\textsuperscript{25} - can only be surmised, but several factors seem to have been in play, the penetration of the Frankish socio-political system being the common denominator. In 818 Liudewit, duke of Lower Pannonia, complained to Louis the Pious about the cruelty and arrogance of the Frankish border governor Cadolah, duke of Friuli. This complaint has echoes of similar complaints raised by the inhabitants of Frankish Istria against Duke John and recorded in much detail in the PLEA of Rižana of 804.\textsuperscript{26} It is also possible that Cadolah tried to privilege new men, over whom Liudewit could not exercise as much control as he wanted, or whom he saw as a potential threat to his own position within the principality. Liudewit may also have sought greater autonomy or even to create a virtually independent polity, only loosely under Frankish suzerainty, much as Bavaria had been in the eighth century. It may be that personal motives were also at work in Liudewit's decision to rebel, namely rivalry with the duke of Dalmatia, Borna. The fact that Cadolah was in no hurry to fix the boundaries between the Dalmatian Slavs and towns of the \textit{Romanoi} on the coast - as the \textit{Treaty of Aachen} would seem to have prescribed - implies that Borna found favour with Cadolah, since such an adjustment would necessarily have been at the expense of Borna's people.

Duke Liudewit's uprising was crushed after a prolonged struggle: ten Frankish forces were involved in suppressing the rebel and his allies, and they employed a scorched-earth strategy. The outcome was no surprise, despite the somewhat dramatic description of the revolt by our Frankish narrative sources as the \textit{Liudewiti-cum bellum} and of Liudewit himself as \textit{tyrannus}.\textsuperscript{27} What is surprising is the fact that Liudewit ventured to challenge Frankish might in the first place: he must have been aware from the start that his own resources could not match the Franks', especially in the long run. There seems little doubt that Liudewit attempted a full-scale rebellion. However, he would have been a very poor politician and an imprudent military leader had he counted solely on local forces. The only other power in the region that could effectively counter the Franks was Byzantium,
notwithstanding the recent understanding reached at Aachen, and it may be that Liudewit raised the banner of rebellion in expectation of concrete help from Constantinople. That there may have been at least some contacts, possibly even some sort of Byzantine promise of support, can be deduced from the fact that the by now pro-Byzantine patriarch of Grado, Fortunatus, encouraged and aided Liudewit in his struggle against the Franks. But it soon became clear that the Byzantines were not capable of providing any tangible help: they had their own battles to fight with another flare-up of iconoclasm and, far more importantly and debilitatingly, the rebellion of Thomas the Slav in 820. This effectively paralysed the imperial government for a full three years. Such inability on the part of the Byzantines to act when circumstances seemed favourable for challenging Frankish dominance in Dalmatia and Pannonia may have been why Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos blamed Michael II (820-829), the emperor at the time of Liudewit's revolt, for the total collapse of Byzantine influence on the eastern Adriatic coast and the Slav lands of the western Balkans. The resolute action taken by the Franks against Liudewit in 820 and 821 may to some extent be explained by their concern that the Byzantines would use any apparent weakness in dealing with this revolt to undermine the Frankish position in the region. Patriarch Fortunatus of Grado's escape to Byzantine territory in Zadar in the autumn of 821, after being exposed as a traitor to the Frankish cause, may have convinced the Franks that they were right to suspect the Byzantines of being ready and willing to take advantage of Liudewit's revolt to destabilize Frankish dominance in the region between the Adriatic and the Danube. It may even be that Fortunatus' subsequent rendition was by way of making up for the Byzantines' role in Liudewit's revolt, minor as it turned out to be.

### Archaeological narrative

As already noted, our archaeological evidence for the influx of Frankish influence and the rise of new socio-economic conditions is meagre, but instructive nevertheless. The spread of elements of Frankish material culture is likely to have started even earlier. The local population adopted and new political identity of Carolingian origin, and the spread of elements after the establishment of Frankish rule in the region, when commerce and cultural contacts are likely to have started even earlier.

The excavated portion of the cemetery contains in total 21 graves. A silver spur from the Carolingian period, with silver fastenings, has been found in a grave located just south-east of the early medieval building.

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<th>Locality</th>
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<th>Finds</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Bojna</td>
<td>Brekinjova Kosa</td>
<td>Early medieval building (possibly a church) containing graves of the same era. Two Carolingian deluxe gilded, bronze spurs with decorated fastenings, a gold coin of Constantine V (741-775), a semiprecious stone pendant mounted with gold, an iron knife, gold thread (possibly from a mantle) and parts of a funeral cloth found in the southern grave.</td>
<td>788-852 (Carbon-14 dating)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Brestovac</td>
<td>Brestovac</td>
<td>Gold pieces of a belt assemblage and the iron strap-end of a Carolingian sword scabbard</td>
<td>Early ninth century</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pozeski</td>
<td>Pozeski</td>
<td>K-type double-edged iron sword and a teardrop stirrup, probably from a looted grave</td>
<td>c. 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Crklovian</td>
<td>Diven Gravel Pit</td>
<td>Iron-winged spearhead (Westphalian type III)</td>
<td>Late eighth/early ninth century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(near Prelog)</td>
<td>River Mreznica</td>
<td>Iron-winged spearhead (Westphalian type II)</td>
<td>c. 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Duga Resen</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Grave find of a double-edged iron sword (apparently Geibig Combination Type 5, Variants I and IV), with repousse decorated hilt and damascened blade</td>
<td>c. 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Dugo Selica</td>
<td>Medvediciška</td>
<td>Other finds made out of archaeological context include an iron battle axe with a hammer; a small knife; and a Carolingian-type bronze, fire-gilded strap-end (with Insular animal decoration in Tassilo Chalice style)</td>
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<td>7. Koprivnica</td>
<td>Jagnjede Gravel Pit</td>
<td>Two iron-winged spearheads, probably from looted graves</td>
<td>c. 800</td>
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<td>Šoderica Gravel Pit</td>
<td>Several battle axes, an iron sabre and a long scramasax, probably from looted graves</td>
<td>c. 800</td>
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<td>8. Nartski Novaki (near Dugo Selo)</td>
<td>Nartski Novaki (reportedly a gravel pit on the right bank of the river Sava; archaeological context unclear)</td>
<td>Francisca-type battle axe</td>
<td>Second half of the fifth/early sixteenth century</td>
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<td>Three battle axes, iron tools and an awl (from a possible hoard)</td>
<td>Eighth to tenth century</td>
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<td>9. Ozalj</td>
<td>Stari Grad</td>
<td>Iron spur</td>
<td>Undetermined (possibly ninth century)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Prelog</td>
<td>Šljunčara</td>
<td>Arrowheads; horse bits; stirrups; eight ‘Danubian-type’ pottery vessels; an iron battle axe; small knives; and a long scramasax, from looted graves</td>
<td>c. 800</td>
</tr>
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<td>11. Sisak</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Small battle axe with Frankish features and bilaterally widened blades (possibly francisca-type) and pieces of spur fittings with Carolingian features</td>
<td>c. 800</td>
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<td>12. Sremška Mitrovica</td>
<td>Grgurević–Šuljam on the southern slopes of Fruška Gora mountain</td>
<td>Iron-winged spearhead</td>
<td>Assumed to be ninth century</td>
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<td>13. Torčec</td>
<td>Torčec</td>
<td>Battle axe with Frankish features (possibly francisca-type)</td>
<td>Undetermined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Tovarnik</td>
<td>Banovci</td>
<td>Sword with Carolingian features</td>
<td>Undetermined (possibly ninth century)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Varaždin</td>
<td>Stari Grad</td>
<td>Iron-winged spearhead (Westphal type III)</td>
<td>Late eighth/early ninth century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Zagreb</td>
<td>Krugc</td>
<td>Long scramasax; riding gear (stirrups, horse bits and sheet-metal reinforcements); three bronze quadrangular buckles; a small iron knife; iron fragments; a bone reinforcing plate for a composite bow; a sharp bony tip; and a cast bronze strap-end with tendril ornamentation from the burial of a human with horse</td>
<td>Late eighth century</td>
</tr>
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<td>17. Zagreb</td>
<td>Podsused Hill (below Susedgrad Fort)</td>
<td>Warrior grave with belt fittings and double-edged K-type sword with five-lobed pommel</td>
<td>First half of the ninth century</td>
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<td>18. Zemun</td>
<td>Zemun Polje</td>
<td>Gilded bronze belt assemblage with strap-ends and fasteners; two bronze hairpins; three glass paste beads; a hand-made pot; and an iron battle axe from a male grave</td>
<td>c. 800</td>
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</table>
Finds of Abbasid coins may also be taken as indicators of the opening up of communication routes in the region between the Sava, Drava and Danube in the twilight of the Avar khaganate. The hoard of Abbasid dinars struck by Caliph al-Saffah (749–754) or al-Mansur (754–755), al-Mahdi (775–785) and Harun al-Rashid (786–809) discovered at Donji Petrovec in Syria testifies to long-distance trade. Their deposition may have been due to the Avar-Frankish wars in the late eighth century, since the coins seem not to have circulated for long before being deposited. The most recent piece is dated to 788–789, which has led some scholars to conclude that the coins were buried in the ground around 790. Along with the coins, Byzantine-style jewellery of the late Avar period has also been discovered in the hoard. So if the owner concealed his treasure because of wartime uncertainties, a somewhat later deposition date is more likely. On the other hand, the hoard may have been created for savings purposes. Besides the Donji Petrovec hoard, there are several other stray finds of Arab coins: single dinars found at Gradište Bekteško on the southern slopes of Mount Krdilja; at Opatovac (near Soćin); in the vicinity of Zemun; and two dinars from Sremska Mitrovica. All of these were struck in the caliphate of al-Mahdi. Three are pierced (those from Opatovac, Sremska Mitrovica and near Zemun), which shows that they were used as jewellery. What may seem odd is that only gold dinars have been found in the region, and not a single silver dirham. This may imply that the dinars were primarily set aside as savings. In any case, the Arab coins would indicate that local trade-routes were now operational again.

The finds of several iron axes from Soćin and Vukovar, in the region of the Danube, and from Zbijeg (south-west of Slavonski Brod) in the region of the Sava, may also belong to the late eighth and the early ninth centuries. To these may be added several axes found in the area of Sisak and dated to around 800. Stray finds of axes that might belong to the late Avar period have been discovered in the vicinity of Koprivnica and Torćec in the region of the Drava; and several iron axes have also been recovered from the river Sava at Bosanska Rača, south-west of Sremska Mitrovica, but their date is undetermined. Whether these finds are connected to the Avar-Frankish wars or the war against Duke Liudewig cannot be said with certainty, but it may at least be hypothesized where the finds did not originally form part of a grave assemblage. However, where the finds lack a clear archaeological context, interpretation is almost impossible, although their location in the Drava, Danube and Sava basins would certainly fit into our general picture of fighting along the main river routes, that is near suitable river crossings: it is well known that the Franks made use of riverways as convenient corridors for advancing troops. Archaeological remains of the early Carolingian era have also been found at sites on the right bank of the Sava, in modern Bosnia and Herzegovina. From Petoševci near Laktasi (the site of the Bagrušac necropolis) comes a stirrup of an early Carolingian type dated to the ninth century. An iron spearhead and an iron spur of Frankish provenance have been found in Kočičevo (formerly Junuzovci) near Bosanska Gradiska and Prijedor respectively, both probably dating from the ninth century.

There are two finds of Frankish provenance that may deserve special attention. First is the francisca-type battle axe from Nartski Novaki (near Đuro Selo), which actually dates from the fifth or early sixth century, but has traditionally been assumed to form part of a possible hoard — together with three other battle axes, iron tools and an awl — dating broadly to the eighth to tenth centuries. More recently, however, the francisca-type battle axe has been dissociated from this possible later hoard and ascribed to a Germanic presence in sixth-century southern Pannonia. There are two other finds of battle axes, from Sisak and Torćec respectively, believed to have francisca-type features; but the unclear archaeological context makes it difficult to confirm their provenance. However, rather than being seen as testimony to a Germanic presence, the find of at least one and possibly three francisca-type battle axes may be explained by contacts the Avars had with the Franks in the second half of the sixth century.

The second find of Frankish provenance is a winged spearhead from the river Kupa (near Lasinjska Kiselica), presumably found on the site of an old river ford. It is dated to the first half of the eighth century and thought either to have been brought to the area by a Frankish soldier or to have been lost by a Slav warrior fighting for the Franks against the Avars. If the spear had been used over two generations, as has also been suggested, it may possibly be connected to the time of Duke Liudewig's rebellion. However, attention has been drawn to the practice of the votive deposition of spears. Neither of the proposed hypotheses can be substantiated and the question remains open as to how the spear ended up in this area and in the river. It may even be that it was loot from one of the Avar campaigns in the west in the first half of the eighth century, for instance, from the border clashes with the Bavarians and the Carantanians in 713–714 and 741–742.

Conclusion

On balance, we can draw one general conclusion from the archaeological record: Frankish rule in southern Pannonia facilitated the rise of a new warrior elite, whose members had themselves buried with military equipment of Carolingian provenance. It is believed that the owner of a double-edged iron sword and a teardrop stirrup from Cirkovljan (near Prelog) was probably a distinguished local Slav warrior in Frankish service, who was deliberately buried apart from the nearby Avar-Slav necropolis; the idea was to emphasize his association with the new elite, which owed their status to their Carolingian overlords. The owner of another double-edged iron sword from Medvedička (near Đurđevac) is similarly thought to have been a member of the Slav elite who was in the service of the March of Friuli. The same, then, may be concluded for the owners of iron spears from the gravel pit at the Jagnjed site (near Koprivinica). The practice of leaving weapons with the dead had a clear social function. In ninth-century southern Pannonia after the destruction of the Avar khaganate, the appearance in local graves of elements of Carolingian military equipment indicates that some saw their chance in adapting to the new political situation and to advance socially...
by adopting a new allegiance and identity. The members of this newly created, or merely refashioned, elite detached themselves from those who seem to have preferred to cling to old identities and ways, such as the people buried in the Avar-Slav graveyards in Prelog or at the Kruege site in Zagreb. That this political conversion or re-invention brought many benefits is self-evident, but there may be more telling testimony: the Brestovac Požeštik ‘treasure’ could easily have belonged to a member of this new south Pannonian Slav elite, who owed his promotion to the Franks.74

Notes
1 Wolfram 1995, 338–44.
2 *FiF,* 1999–2000. In terms of chronology, it is worth stressing that no Istrian bishops are recorded as attending the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, which may or may not be the result of Frankish influence in the region. The matter is surely open for debate.
3 It is presumably the area around Poetovio which the *Annales Lorsch* understands as ‘Illyricum’: *Annales Laureshamenses* s.a. 791, 34–35. See also *ASM,* 316; *Bowlus* 1995, 49 (who omits the duke of Friuli).
4 Gračanin 2011, 151.
5 *ASM,* 319; *Bowlus* 1995, 55–56. Béla Míklós Szöke (2011, 282) believes that the Franks moved along the Sava, but it is more likely that the main strike force marched down the Drava. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that there had also been some fighting in the Sava area (see below, 228–29).
6 *ARF,* Einhard, *Annales* s.a. 803, 191; *FKM,* 17–18; *Poeta Saxo,* *Annales V.*195, 270.
7 Goldberg 2006, 119.
9 Paulinus Aquiliensis, *Carmina,* 11.
10 Niketas Choniates, *Historia,* vol. 1, 18, lines 58–60, 92, lines 50–52, 127, line 73.
11 *Conversio Bagariorum,* chs 10–11, 120–23.
14 Engel 2001, 60.
15 Gračanin 2011, 140 n. 147, 154 n. 61.
16 Einhard (*FKM,* 17–18) says that Dacia on the left bank of the Danube was under Frankish control, which means that the Franks perceived the Obodrites as under their sway.
17 *FKM,* 15–17.
18 On deteriorating relations between the Bulgars and the Byzantines, see *Bol,* 159–286. See also the chapters by Sophoulis and Nikolov in this volume.
20 On the synod, see Bratož 1998, 154–79.
22 Pilgrims from the principality of Lower Pannonia are recorded in ‘The Gospel Book of Cividale’, 249–50, 252.
23 See also Ivan Majnaric’s study in this volume for the importance of the concept of *aemulatio imperii* and the process of ‘othering’ in the formation of ethnic identity along the south-eastern frontier of the Carolingian world.
25 For the historical narrative of Liudwit’s rebellion, see *Wolfram* 1987, 268–72; *FiF,* 186–92; *Bowlus* 1995, 60–71; Gračanin 2011, 158–64. The principal sources are

26 On the Plea of Rizana, see *FiF,* 200–43.
28 For the iconoclast crisis and the rebellion of Thomas the Slav, see *BR,* 207–44.
29 *DiM,* ch. 29, 124, lines 60–63; *Life of Basil,* ch. 52, ed. *Bekker,* 288–89; ed. and trans. *Sevcenko,* 188–89.
30 Fortunatus accompanied a Byzantine embassy to Louis the Pious’ court in 824 and was interrogated by the emperor about the reasons for his flight to Byzantine territory, while the Byzantine envoy said nothing in his defence (*ARF,* s.a. 824, 164–67).
31 Miletic et al. 2015, 77–98. I wish to thank wholeheartedly Vinko Madiraca, who led the 2015 archaeological field campaign at the Brekinjova Kosa site, for kindly providing me with information on the preliminary research results.
34 Bošković 2002, 168, no. 41; Sekelj Ivancan 2004, 112; *Demo* 2010, 71, *Demo* has re-dated the spearhead from the ninth to eleventh centuries (as suggested by Bošković and Sekelj Ivancan) to the late eighth/fifth half of the ninth century.
35 *Demo* 2010.
44 Markovic and Zvijerac 2000, 57.
45 Sekelj Ivancan 1995, 239, no. 792.
46 *Demo* 2010, 71; Tomićič 2013, 137–39.
47 Sekelj Ivancan 1995, 93, no. 1.
52 *OEE,* 377–78, 828.
53 Kovač 1989, 55, no. 277.
54 Mimik 1997, 194, 198, nos 10–14 (incorrectly identified as dircrams, which is repeated in Gračanin 2011, 166). One more Arab dinar, dated to 707/708, has been found at Futoj on the northern bank of the Danube (Kovač 1989, 121; *OEE,* 377, 822), strictly speaking outside the region between the Sava, the Drava and the Danube; it has therefore been omitted from this overview.
57 Two battle axes from the Jagnjede gravel pit, broadly dated between the eighth and tenth centuries: Kolar 1976, 110–11; Markovic 1993.
Einhard, Conversio Bagoariorum. Annales Laureshamenses.

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Primary sources

60 Filipec 2002–2003, 125.
61 Bowlus 1995, 49–52.
63 Miletic 1963, 158, 160.
64 Tomić 2000, 157.
65 Simoniti 1982.
67 Vinski 1983, 495. One may also note the chance find of an X-type sword at the Plan site in Brodski Drenovac, where an Avar-Slav necropolis dating from around 800 has been discovered (Sekelj Ivancan 1995, 191, no. 534; Szentpéteri 2002, vol. 1, 71); the sword probably dates to the second half of the ninth century, and comes from a looted grave located close to the Avar-Slav graveyard (Vinski–Gasparini and Ereçgović 1958, 145, 153; Sekelj Ivancan 2004, 122).
70 It is worth noting that a gold ring with the inscription 'IYI' is usually taken to indicate a lasting Bulgar influence in the region between the Sava, Drava and Danube and that even the Brestovac belt assemblage was worn by a Bulgar (see Stanilov 2006, 221, 223). However, the ring may have been an import from Bulgar territory, whereas the style and technique of the belt assemblage point to Byzantine models, which were also imitated in the Avar khaganate (see Bühler 2014, 198–202). There is really no need to explain the find of either the ring or the belt assemblage as proof of a Bulgar presence in the region, given Frankish contacts with the Timocians: previously under Frankish-Bulgar relations in ninth-century southern Pannonia, see Gračanin 2013, 3–18.
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