

= Michael of Zahumlje =

Michael of Zahumlje , also known as Michael Vi?evi? (Croatian / Bosnian / Serbian : Mihajlo Vi?evi? , Cyrillic : ??????? ???????) or rarely as Michael Vu?evuk?i? , was an independent Slavic ruler of Zahumlje , in present @-@ day western Herzegovina and southern Croatia , who flourished in the early part of the 10th century . A neighbour of the Kingdom of Croatia and Serbia as well as an ally of Bulgaria , he was nevertheless able to maintain independent rule throughout at least a good part of his reign .

Michael came into territorial conflict with Petar of Serbia , who attempted to expand his power westwards . To eliminate the threat , Michael warned his ally , the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon I , about the alliance between Peter and Symeon 's enemy , the Byzantine Empire . Symeon attacked Serbia and captured Peter , who later died in prison .

Michael was mentioned together with Tomislav of Croatia in Pope John X 's letter of 925 . In that same year , he participated in the first church councils in Split , something that some historians have taken as evidence of Zahumlje being a vassal of Croatia . In any case , Michael , with grand titles of the Byzantine court as anthypatos and patrician (patrikios) , remained ruler of Zahumlje through the 940s , while maintaining good relations with the Pope .

= = Background = =

Compiled in c . 950 , the historical work De administrando imperio , ascribed to Constantine Porphyrogenitus , notes that Michael was a son of Busebutze (Greek : Bouseboutzis) and that unlike many other Slavs in the Dalmatian region , his family did not descend from the " unbaptized Serbs " . According to Constantine , his family belonged to the Litziki (???????) , a unbaptized people on the River Vistula from south Poland . The region around upper Vistula was also known as a part of White Croatia (Chrobatia) , from where the Croats have migrated to the Roman Dalmatia invited by the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Emperor Heraclius . However , H. T. Norris notes that Croats and Serbs were intermixed in those parts of Poland .

The area controlled by Michael comprised Zahumlje , later known as Hum (what is now western Herzegovina and southern Croatia) , as well as Travunia (now eastern Herzegovina and southern Croatia with center at Trebinje) and a good part of Duklja (modern Montenegro) . His territory therefore formed a block along the southern Dalmatian coast , from the Neretva river to Ragusa (Dubrovnik) , latter serving as a tributary region .

Before the annexation of Serbia in 924 , Bulgaria did not yet border on Zahumlje and a part of Croatia lay between both lands . For instance , the chronicler John the Deacon (d . 1009) says that in 912 , a Venetian traveller who had just passed through Bulgaria and Croatia on his way home , next found himself in Zahumlje .

= = Alliance with Simeon I of Bulgaria = =

Michael was a close ally of Simeon I of Bulgaria , who had been mounting a number of successful campaigns against the Byzantine Empire . The traveler of John the Deacon 's account was an ambassador , son of the Venetian doge Ursus Particiacus II , who was returning from a diplomatic mission to Constantinople . When he entered Zahumlje , Michael " a prince of the Slavs " (dux Sclavorum) had him captured and sent as a gift to Simeon .

Simeon 's march for power posed such a great threat to the Byzantine Empire that it looked for allies in the area . Leo Rhabduchus , the strategos of Dyrrhachium , found one such ally in Serbia , Peter Gojnikovi? , who had been subject to Bulgaria since 897 . Peter had been busy extending his power westwards , and appears to have come into territorial conflict with Michael in the process of doing so . Constantine writes that Michael , " his jealousy aroused by this " , warned Symeon of the conspiracy . Symeon attacked Serbia and captured Peter , who died in prison . Most scholars prefer to date the war on Serbia to 917 , after 20 August , when Simeon had massacred much of the invading Byzantine army at its landing place at Anchialos . In 924 , Simeon conquered Serbia and ,

instead of appointing a vassal to govern on his behalf , placed it under his direct authority . In effect , Simeon became a neighbour of Michael and of Croatia , which was then under King Tomislav and had good relations with Byzantium . It seems probable that Michael remained loyal to Simeon until the latter 's death in 927 .

= = Church councils in Split , Croatia = =

The sources show Michael involved in important church affairs which were conducted on Croatian territory in the mid @-@ 920s . Two church councils were convened in Split (Latin : Spalatum) , in 925 and 928 , which officially established or confirmed the recognition of Split as the archiepiscopal see of all Dalmatia (rather than just the Byzantine cities) . Another major issue of concern was the language of liturgy : since the conversion of the Slavs by Cyril and Methodius in the previous century , the Slavic church was accustomed to use Slavonic rather than Latin for its church services .

The *Historia Salonitana* , whose composition may have begun in the late 13th century , cites a letter of Pope John X to Tomislav , " king (rex) of the Croats " , in which he refers to the first council in some detail . If the letter is authentic , it shows that the council was attended not only by the bishops of Croatian and Byzantine Dalmatia , but also by Tomislav , whose territory also included the Byzantine cities of Dalmatia , and by a number of Michael 's representatives . In this letter , John describes Michael as " the most excellent leader of the Zachlumi " (excellentissimus dux Chulmorum) . The sources have nothing to say about the nature of the relationship between Michael and Tomislav . Some historians have taken Michael 's participation at the church council as evidence for the idea that Michael had switched allegiance to Croatia . John V. A. Fine , however , rejects this line of reasoning , saying that the events represented an important ecclesiastical affair for all Dalmatia and stood under papal authority . Moreover , Michael appears to have retained a neutral position when Croatia and Bulgaria were at war in 926 and so it may be that Michael was on good terms with the rulers of both lands at the same time .

Michael apparently sacked Siponto (Latin : Sipontum) , which was a Byzantine town in Apulia on 10 July 926 . It remains unknown if he did this by Tomislav 's supreme command as suggested by some historians . According to Omr?anin , Tomislav sent the Croatian navy under Michael 's leadership to drive the Saracens from that part of southern Italy and free the city . Interesting , Constantine in his *De administrando imperio* makes no mention of Michael 's raid , nor does he mention Church councils in Split .

= = Later years = =

Constantine remembers Michael as a prince (archon) of the Zachlumi , but also uses such grand titles of the Byzantine court as anthypatos and patrician (patrikios) to describe his political rank and status . These titles have been interpreted as reflecting a more subordinate position after Simeon 's death in 927 , when Michael lost the Bulgarian support needed for any higher recognition . Michael does not appear in the sources for events after 925 , but historian Fine thinks that his reign lasted into the 940s . ?aslav , who became ruler of Serbia after Symeon 's death , may have seized some of Michael 's territory while securing his conquest of Travunia .