

Christian-Muslim Relations A Bibliographical History

Volume 10. Ottoman and Safavid Empires
(1600-1700)

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Dominicus Zavoreus

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| DATE OF BIRTH | Approximately 1540 |
| PLACE OF BIRTH | Šibenik, Croatia |
| DATE OF DEATH | 5 October 1608 |
| PLACE OF DEATH | Šibenik, Croatia |

BIOGRAPHY

Dominicus Zavoreus (Dinko Zavorović) was born in Šibenik, Croatia, in about 1540, a descendant of a noble family. He studied law at the University of Padua. He held a number of important municipal, civil and military posts in his native city: he was a member of the City Council and the Council of the Fifteen, he was appointed city judge in 1580, and in 1584 he became the captain of the *borgo* of Šibenik. He was exiled between 1585 and 1588 by the Venetian government because of his anti-Venetian stance. He went to Bohemia and Hungary, staying with his brother-in-law Faustus Verantius (Faust Vrančić), who was secretary at the Court of the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II in Prague. As a result of his successful participation in the anti-Ottoman wars in Hungary and on the Croatian border, on 13 July 1587 Rudolf renewed his noble title and gave him a new coat of arms. Invited by his fellow citizens, he returned to Šibenik in about 1589 and became a member of the *Corte maggior*. He died in Šibenik in 1608.

Zavoreus is regarded as the first early modern Croatian historiographer, and a precursor of 17th-century critical historiography. His approach is characterised by anti-Ottoman and anti-Venetian attitudes. His *opus* includes three historiographical works, one in Latin and two in Italian. His only published poem, dedicated to Juraj Baraković, is written in vernacular Croatian, and it is published in the introduction to Baraković's epic *Jarula* (Venice, 1618). Two of his historiographical works remained unpublished: *Trattato sopra le cose di Sebenico* (before 1585) and *De rebus Dalmaticis libri octo* (1602). His only published historiographical work is *Ruina et presa del regno della Bossina* (Venice, 1602). This work, 23 pages octavo pages long, is significant because it is the first printed book about the fall of medieval Bosnia under Ottoman rule (1463). In this work, the last days of the Kingdom of Bosnia are described through opposing Hungarian and Ottoman points of view.

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WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Dominici Zavorei De rebus Dalmaticis libri octo,
 'The affairs of Dalmatia, in eight books by
 Dominicus Zavoreus'

DATE 1602

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Latin

DESCRIPTION

De rebus Dalmaticis libri octo is the first systematic history of Dalmatia. It represents Zavoreus's anti-Ottoman and anti-Venetian attitude. In 1598, Zavoreus lent the manuscript, originally divided into ten books, to the British priest and scholar Robert Turner, who died suddenly in 1599 and never returned it. Unaware of Turner's death, Zavoreus decided to write another version, which he completed in 1602. The re-written work was divided into eight books and Zavoreus dedicated it to his patron, Faustus Verantius. It was not published and the autograph manuscript is now lost, though it survives in 16 manuscript copies. There are two versions in Latin, one divided into eight books (*De rebus Dalmaticis libri octo*), of which two manuscripts are known, the other divided into five books (*De rebus Dalmaticis libri quinque*), of which seven manuscripts are known. The version in five books was made after 1602, and is the work of an unknown editor. *De rebus Dalmaticis* was translated into Italian in 1714 by Alberto Papali, and this also remains unpublished.

The manuscript *De rebus Dalmaticis libri octo* totals 135 numbered folios (based on MS Venice, Biblioteca Marciana – Cl. X Cod. XL-3652, which is considered the best copy; references below are from this). The work chronicles the history of Dalmatia from Antiquity to the year 1437 and the death of Sigismund of Luxemburg, King of Hungary and Croatia 1387-1437, and Holy Roman Emperor 1433-7. In six of its folios, it contains paragraphs about the Ottoman devastation of medieval Dalmatia and Croatia.

At the very beginning of the work, Zavoreus makes a general statement that Dalmatia, which had once belonged to Roman Illyricum, 'is partially subjected to the Hungarians, the Venetians and the Ottomans' (fol. 1r). Then, when he emphasises the cruelty of ancient Slav warriors towards their captives, he compares this to the Ottoman ill-treatment of Christians in Dalmatia (*quod usque in hodiernum a Turcis praecipue in Christianos in Dalmatia servari solet*) (fol. 44r). He also mentions how 'the Ottomans devastated the whole of Dalmatia and took hold of its parishes' (*Turci totam Dalmatiam vastarunt, eiusque parochias arripuere*) (fol. 69v).

The work also refers to the last large-scale crusade of the Middle Ages, briefly describing how in 1396 Sigismund 'unhappily conflicted' with the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I at the battle of Nicopolis and was defeated (fol. 126r). In the decades following this battle, fear of the Ottoman military force grew so strong among the inhabitants of Dalmatia, particularly the citizens of Šibenik, Trogir, Split and Kotor, that in 1420 they placed

themselves under the protection of the Republic of Venice, because the Ottomans 'have little by little destroyed all of the neighbouring rulers' (*omnesque sibi conterminos regulos paulatim destruebant*) (fol. 134v).

The work ends with the statement that in 1431 the Ottoman army began to oppress the whole of Dalmatia and caused great devastation. After the death of Sigismund in 1437, Dalmatia experienced such miseries that, as Zavoreus sees it, from that time there was nothing left worthy to be remembered in the future. Dalmatian towns and villages were extensively plundered, burned and devastated, and Dalmatia could not even keep its own laws. Zavoreus concludes the work with a poem by Daniel Difnicus Divnić of Šibenik: *Turcha heu, heu, rapuit rura et gens extera iura / Restat sola fides, caetera rapta vides / Deo gratias* (fol. 135r).

SIGNIFICANCE

De rebus Dalmaticis libri octo does not deal directly with Islam. Nevertheless, it gives an example of anti-Ottoman attitudes, which formed an important part of the ideological and political agenda in Croatian Renaissance historiography. Composed in the period following the most severe Ottoman invasion of Christian Europe, which inevitably led to a perception of the Ottomans as a threat, the passages about the Ottomans, although short, reveal a powerful pro-Christian and anti-Ottoman attitude. The work refers several times to the extreme cruelty of the Ottomans towards Christian institutions and inhabitants in Dalmatia, reminding the reader that Dalmatia was *antemurale Christianitatis*, the first line of defence against the Ottoman threat to Christian Europe.

PUBLICATIONS

There are two known transcriptions of *De rebus Dalmaticis libri octo* and seven of *De rebus Dalmaticis libri quinque* in Latin, and another seven in Italian translation, all of them dated between the beginning of the 17th and the second half of the 19th century.

Latin manuscripts

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(17th century)

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