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THE BIOGRAPHY OF HERMANN THE DALMATIAN: SEPERATING CONJECTURES FROM VERIFIABLE CLAIMS

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Abstract

Based mainly on the results of the research of Croatian scholars, the paper discusses the role of Herman Dalmatin in the great medieval process of transmission of knowledge from Islamic civilization to Europe. Herman Dalmatin (c. 1105/10 - after 1154), also known as Herman of Carinthia, or Sclavus (The Slav), was born in the region of Istria in today's Croatia. After finishing his studies in Paris and Chartres he embarked on the perilous journey to Damascus and Baghdad together with the Englishman Robert of Ketton. There they studied the Arabic language and gained insight into the works of Islamic scholars. The route then led them to the West, first to Spain and afterward to southern France, where they participated in the process of translating works from Arabic to Latin, including works of Greek authors which had been preserved only in Arabic translations. Herman's translations include Euclid's Elements, Ptolemy's Planisphaerium, and Introduction to Astronomy by Abu Ma'shar, the famous astronomer and astrologer of the 9th century. Herman's translation of the Quran, made in collaboration with Robert of Ketton, is the first known translation of the Quran in Europe.

Introduction

This paper presents reassessment of certain claims about Hermann the Dalmatian, an illustrious twelfth-century scholar, philosopher and translator of scientific and religious works from Arabic to Latin. It addresses Hermann's journey to the Middle East and his purported co-authorship of the first Latin translation of the Quran. Examination of the literature has revealed that these widely accepted claims, which have been uncritically disseminated via Croatian scholarly literature and the popular media, appear to be based on conjectures and misreadings of the sources.

Biographical background

Hermann the Dalmatian (Hermannus Dalmata, c. 1105/1110 – after 26 February 1154) was an astronomer, astrologer, mathematician, philosopher, and one of the pioneers in the transmission of knowledge from the Islamic civilization to the medieval Christian West.[1] He translated Arabic works by great Muslim scientists into Latin, as well as works by Greek and Hellenistic authors that had only survived in Arabic translations.[2]

Hermann was born in the central part of the Istrian peninsula, most of which now belongs to Croatia, a small part to Slovenia and one per cent to Italy. One of his pen names, Dalmata, refers to the former Roman province of Dalmatia, which encompassed Istria. He is also known as Hermann of Carinthia (because Istria once belonged to the March of Carinthia of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation), Sclavus (the Slav), and Secundus, a designation he chose to distinguish himself from another author, Hermannus Contractus (the Cripple).

Croatian historians tend to attribute Croatian national affiliation to Hermann and refer to him as "our scholar,"[3] "a pioneer in European and Croatian science,"[4] and "one of the oldest symbols of the Croatian national and cultural identity."[5] Franjo Šanjek, a distinguished expert on Hermann, opines that he was most probably a descendant of Croats who invaded and colonized the Istrian peninsula in the sixth and seventh centuries.[6] On the other hand, some Slovenian authors number him among the great Slovenians,[7] and he has been called "the first known scientist of Slovenian descent and European reputation."[8] Others refer to him as "a Slovenian or a Croat."[9] The Slovenian philologist Kajetan Gantar argues that Hermann's national affiliation is an open question, but concludes that he was probably a Slovenian because the divide between the Slovenians and the Croats in his time was further south than it is today. However, Gantar concedes that there was no clear-cut differentiation between the two nations in twelfth-century Istria.[10] Šanjek briefly comments that

[1] I wish to express my gratitude to Margaret Casman-Vuko, who revised my English, improved the style and made valuable suggestions.

[2] The brief biography of Hermann the Dalmatian presented in this paper is mostly based on the works by Franjo Šanjek listed in the bibliography.

[3] See, e.g., Franjo Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin (oko 1110 – posl. 26. II. 1154). Bio-bibliografski prilozi," in *Herman Dalmatin*. *Rasprava o bitima*, Croatian translation, critical commentaries and annotations by Antun Slavko Kalenić, Vol. 1, Pula, 1990, pp. 8, 10 and passim.

[4] Ibid., p. 7.

[5] Franjo Zenko, "Hermann the Dalmatian (11th/12th century): A Signpost into the Dark Origin of European Science," *Studia historiae philosophiae Croaticae*, 1/1, (1990), pp. 117 and 120.

[6] Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin", p. 11.

[7] For example, Hermann is included in Sandi Sitar, *Sto slovenskih znanstvenikov, zdravnikov in tehnikov* (A Hundred Slovenian Scientists, Doctors and Technicians), Ljubljana 1987 and Jaro Dolar, *Dvanajst velikih Slovencev* (Twelve Great Slovenians), Ljubljana 1994.

[8] "Herman Koroški" http://wiki.fmf.uni-lj.si/wiki/Herman_Koro%C5%A1ki (accessed 4 June 2018). On the website of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, he is presented as "the first Slovene scientist to acquire a European reputation": "Slovene Contribution to World Civilization." Government of the Republic of Slovenia. Public Relations and Media Office. http://www.slovenija2001.gov.si/10years/contribution/ (accessed 20 June 2018). Similarly, we find Hermann included among Croatian scientists at "Science." Croatia.eu. (The Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography): http://www.croatia.eu/article.php?lang=2&id=36 (accessed 20 June 2018).

[9] Andreja Šmid writes that both Slovenians and Croats consider Hermann to be of their nationalities. *Herman s Koroškega*, Univerza v Ljubljani, FMF, Oddelek za matematiko in mehaniko: http://www.educa.fmf.uni-lj.si/izodel/ponudba/1996/herman/Herman.htm (accessed 4 June 2018). In the Slovenian article "Herman Koroški" on Wikipedia, Hermann is presented as "Slovenian or Croatian." https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herman_Koro%C5%A1ki (accessed 4 June 2018). He is also mentioned in "Category: Slovenian philosophers": https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Slovenian_philosophers (accessed 26 June 2018), but also in "Category: Austrian philosophers": https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Austrian_philosophers (accessed 26 June 2018).

[10] Kajetan Gantar, "Herman de Carinthia," *Jezik in slovstvo*, 10/8, 1965, p. 226.

Gantar's inclusion of the Istrian scholar in the Slovenian ethno-historical context is understandable to a certain extent,[11] as if to acknowledge that retrospective determinations of Hermann's nationality are subjective and tend to be influenced by the nationality of the individual researcher. These controversies have also been reflected outside scholarly circles, in the mass media. In an article published in the Croatian newspaper *Večernji list*, headlined Slovenians Appropriate Hermann the Dalmatian, the author reports that the Slovenian newspaper *Delo* expressed surprise that a Croatian national television station had included "the Slovenian" Hermann among the great Croats. However, the author reasonably concludes that literate individuals at that time rarely defined their nationalities but, instead, identified themselves according to local and territorial affiliations.[12] In the literature listed in the bibliography, I could find no sources confirming that Hermann had ever expressed his affiliation with either the Croatian or the Slovenian national corpus or with any national corpus whatsoever. When referring to his origins, he mentions only Carinthia and Istria.[13] Therefore, retrospectively ascribing a specific national identity to him can be viewed as a manifestation of "nationalizing the past."[14]

The scant biographical data on Hermann are mostly derived from letters and introductions to texts he translated or wrote and a few references to him by his contemporaries, while the lacunae are occasionally filled on the basis of conjecture by analogies. According to Šanjek, Hermann most probably attended a Benedictine monastery school in his homeland and proceeded to study at cathedral schools in Chartres and Paris under the guidance of Thierry of Chartres. There he met an Englishman, Robert of Ketton, who became his inseparable friend and companion in the quest for knowledge.[15] "These schools had already been influenced by Arabic sciences, especially by the knowledge of positional [place-value] notation and the astrolabe. This was probably what prompted Hermann and Robert to travel toward the very sources of Arabic sciences."[16]

Šanjek writes that in 1135, Hermann and Robert embarked on a journey to the Northern Mediterranean and the Middle East, where they studied the Arabic language.[17] After several years, their route led them to Northern Spain, by the Ebro River, where they participated in the great endeavour of transmitting the knowledge preserved in the libraries of Arabic manuscripts seized during the *Reconquista* to the West. They translated texts directly from Arabic into Latin, unlike most of their contemporaries, who translated from Arabic to a Romance language and then to Latin, or to Latin and then read the translation aloud to a Latin expert, who would improve the clarity

[11] Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin", p. 79.

[12] "Slovenci svojataju Hermana Dalmatina," *Večernji list*, 5 February 2002: https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/slovenci-svojataju-hermana-dalmatina-709826 (accessed 27 June 2018).

[13] Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin", pp. 10–13.

[14] This term is borrowed from Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz, the editors of the book *Nationalizing the Past: Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe*, New York, 2015.

[15] Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin", pp. 16–17.

[16] Žarko Dadić, *Herman Dalmatin*, Zagreb, 1996, p. 60.

[17] Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin", p. 17.

and style.[18] Some authors associate the two friends with the famous Toledo School of Translators.[19] However, as Charles Burnett argues, they formed a distinct group in Northern Spain and Southern France, together with Hugo of Santalla and Hermann's pupil, Rudolph of Bruges.[20]

The translations attributed to Hermann include Euclid's *Elements*, Theodosius' *De sphaeris*; al-Khwārizmī's *Zīj* (astronomical tables), Ptolemy's *Planisphere*, Sahl ibn Bishr's text on astrology *Fatidica* and Abū Ma'shar's *Maius introductorium in astronomiam*. These titles indicate that Hermann's main interests lay in mathematics, astronomy and other natural sciences. It was only at the request of the Abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable, that he and his friend Robert undertook the task of translating and compiling religious texts on Islam. Hermann compiled *De generatione Mahumet* and *Doctrina Mahumet*. Among his original works and compilations are an astrological-cosmological treatise, *De essentiis*, an astrological compilation, *De indagatione cordis*, and a collection of texts on weather forecasting entitled *Liber imbrium*.[21]

Some authors credit Hermann with co-authorship of the first Latin translation of the Quran, an issue which will be addressed subsequently. The aforementioned itinerary of his sojourn in the Middle East will also be examined, on the basis of the available literature.

Hermann's Journey to the Middle East

As an Arabist, I was intrigued by accounts of Hermann's sojourn in Baghdad, particularly those presented by Šanjek.[22] In the absence of primary sources, I resorted to speculation, trying to imagine how Hermann may have been received by the local inhabitants and learned Arabic, basing some of my assumptions on the well-documented experience of another Christian, Riccoldo da Montecroce, a Florentine Dominican who lived in Baghdad and travelled across the Holy Land, Anatolia and Mesopotamia for more than a decade in the late thirteenth century.[23] Riccoldo wrote an extensive account of his impressions of the Muslims, their religion and rituals, methods of teaching and studying, and attitudes toward foreigners. Incidentally, among the texts he perused while writing his critical work on Islam, *Improbatio*

[18] Ibid., pp. 34–35.

[19] For example, Arjan van Dijk claims that Robert's translation of the Quran was prepared in Toledo. "Early Printed Qur'ans: The Dissemination of the Qur'an in the West," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 7/2, (2005), p. 140.

[20] Charles Burnett, "A Group of Arabic-Latin Translators Working in Northern Spain in the Mid-12th Century," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1, 1977s, pp. 62–108. According to José Martínez Gázquez and Andrew Gray, the group worked in Tarazona or Tudela. "Translations of the Qur'an and Other Islamic Texts before Dante (Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries)," *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*, 125: *Dante and Islam*, (2007), p. 81.

[21] For lists of Hermann's works, see Charles Burnett, "Introduction," in *Hermann of Carinthia. De Essentiis*. A critical edition with translation and commentary by Charles Burnett, Leiden-Köln, 1982, pp. 7–8, and Franjo Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin" in *Herman Dalmatin. De Indagatione Cordis: O preispitivanju srca*, ed. Alojz Čubelić, Zagreb, 2009, pp. 19–20. For a more comprehensive overview of Hermann's translations and original works, see Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin", pp. 35–52.

[22] Baghdad is mentioned in most of Šanjek's articles listed in the bibliography.

[23] For Riccoldo's experiences, see Rita George-Tvrtković, *A Christian Pilgrim in Medieval Iraq: Riccoldo da Montecroce's Encounter with Islam*, Turnhout 2012. I am grateful to Dr. Jonathan Rubin of the Bar-Ilan University, Israel, for drawing my attention to Riccoldo's account.

Alcorani, was Hermann's compilation *Doctrina Mahumet*.[24]

The Baghdad of Hermann's time could not have been the same as the Baghdad Riccoldo visited about a century and a half later. Around 1136, the year of Hermann's alleged sojourn there, it was still a capital city of the Abbasid Caliphate. In 1258, Baghdad was conquered and demolished by the Mongols but, according to Riccoldo's testimony, among other sources, even under the new rulers it retained the reputation of a lively centre of learning. Riccoldo thus writes: "Saracens come from all over the Islamic world to study in Baghdad, where great schools, monasteries [dervish lodges, T. P.-V.], and masters can be found."[25] However, an important change occurred between Hermann's time and Riccoldo's sojourn there. Travelers like Riccoldo, who arrived as missionaries, could freely engage in their activities, which had not been the case in the previous period. "The scope of such activity was at first restricted by the laws of Islamic states which, while permitting religious disputations, did not allow the Prophet and his teaching to be publicly criticized, and treated the conversion of Muslims to Christianity as a capital offence. In the case of Iran and Iraq this changed after the Mongol conquest in 1258. Mongol law granted parity of status to all faiths, and after diplomatic relations had been established with the Roman curia in 1263, Western missionaries were able to work freely in the lands of the Il-Khanate, whose population was overwhelmingly Muslim."[26] Riccoldo's journey to and sojourn in the Middle East were further facilitated by the growing number of communities of Christian monks there. As George-Tvrtković writes, "his itinerary gives witness to the presence of numerous Dominican houses throughout the Middle East at the end of the thirteenth century.[27] (...) When his party arrived at the outskirts of Baghdad, they were met by 'brothers of our order.' While he never explicitly mentions a Dominican house in Baghdad, the fact that he was welcomed upon arrival by several friars implies its existence."[28]

This kind of support was not available at the time when Hermann and his friend are said to have travelled to the lands of the Arabs. However, one significant feature noted by Riccoldo can be viewed as a constant: the respect afforded by Muslims to those who travelled in quest of knowledge. Epitomized in a famous saying (hadith) attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, "Seek knowledge, even as far as China," this attitude was deeply embedded in the Islamic civilization. In a city where teachers and students from all over the Islamic world gathered, Hermann and Robert could have been welcomed as "confrères in pursuit of knowledge," albeit of a different faith. They may have encountered an environment resembling the one they were used to in Paris, judging from Riccoldo's remarks about the devotion of Muslim students and teachers to learning and their voluntary poverty.[29] To him, "the asceticism

[24] Šanjek, „Herman Dalmatin", p. 70.

[25] George-Tvrtković, *A Christian Pilgrim,* p. 50.

[26] Bernard Hamilton, "Knowing the Enemy: Western Understanding of Islam at the Time of the Crusades," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, 7/3, (1997), p. 376.

[27] George-Tvrtković, *A Christian Pilgrim*, p. 12.

[28] Ibid., p. 14.

[29] Ibid., p. 50.

required of Baghdadi scholars and Dominican friars seems quite similar."[30] "Baghdad resembled Paris as a centre of international theological learning, its professors were comparable to the Parisian masters."[31] It is probable that Hermann could have been admitted to the study circles, just as Riccoldo was given the opportunity to attend lectures at Muslim religious schools, madrasas.[32] Intermingling of people of diverse religious affiliations in search of knowledge was not uncommon. In medieval Damascus, another centre of learning that Hermann and Robert are also said to have visited, teaching sessions were occasionally held with participants of different religions. According to Chamberlain, there was a shaykh (professor) who "held a study-circle in which Samaritans, Muslims, Jews, and Christians cultivated the Hellenistic sciences (*'ulūm al-awā'il*) together. (...) Another shaykh was known for holding study-circles in the many fields of knowledge he had mastered, including one for Christians in the New Testament and one for Jews in the Torah."[33]

However, after these attempts at imagining the circumstances of Hermann's alleged sojourns in Baghdad and Damascus, which are mere guesses by analogy, and after examining the relevant literature, I realized that his journey eastward requires further clarification. An exhaustive review of articles on Hermann's life reveals only one primary source related to his journey, a brief account by an anonymous English chronicler during the Second Crusade, who does not mention the exact place of their stay. Nonetheless, Šanjek writes that Hermann "embarked on a very exciting and perilous journey from the banks of the Seine to Baghdad on the Euphrates [*sic*]."[34] He repeats this assertion further in the text, adding more details: "The name Dalmatian is also used by an anonymous English chronicler, who conveys news about an exciting and perilous journey **from Paris to Baghdad** [emphasis T. P.-V.] conducted by his countryman Robert of Ketton and 'his inseparable companion, Hermann the Dalmatian.'"[35] Several pages later, he quotes the full text of the Englishman's account, which in fact does not mention Baghdad at all.[36] The text runs as follows:

"This Robert Ketenensis was called an Englishman by surname, as he was by birth: who after some time spent in the foundations of humanitie, and in the elements of good Artes in the Vniuersities of England, determined to trauaile to the partes beyond sea: and so trauailed through France, Italie, Dalmatia, and Greece, and came at last into Asia, where he liued in great danger of his life among the cruell Saracens, but yet learned perfectly the Arabian tongue. Afterwardes he returned by sea into Spaine, and there about the riuer Iberus, gaue him selfe wholy to the studie of Astrologie, with one Hermannus a Dalmatian, who had accompanied him in his long voyage."[37]

[30] Ibid., p. 51.

[31] Ibid., p. 51.

[32] Ibid., p. 14.

[33] Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350*, Cambridge 1994, p. 85.

[34] Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin" in *Herman Dalmatin. De Indagatione Cordis*, p. 7.

[35] Ibid., p. 9.

[36] Ibid., p. 11, note 10.

[37] The English text is quoted here as published in Richard Hayklut and Edmund Goldsmid (eds.), *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, Vol. VIII: Asia, Part I, Edinburgh 1888, pp. 29–30.

If this is really the only piece of evidence for Hermann's journey to the Middle East, what is the basis for claims that he was in Baghdad and/or Damascus? Accounts appear to be contradictory. For example, Šanjek does not mention Hermann's stay in Baghdad, only Syria, in an article published in 1983[38] and a book published in 1988.[39] The map he drew in the book does not include Baghdad in Hermann's itinerary.[40] However, in a map accompanying an article published in 1990, he drew a map with a different itinerary, indicating that Hermann passed through Constantinople on his way to Baghdad in 1135, stayed in Damascus between 1136 and 1138, and visited Aleppo and Antiochia on his way back to Europe.[41] There is a similar map in an article Šanjek published in 2017.[42] Again, since no sources were cited, on what basis were these different itineraries (re)constructed?

Another Croatian author, Franjo Zenko, only mentions Hermann's stay in Syria but not Baghdad. "With his friend, he shared a great deal of his living and intellectual destiny: they went together to eastern countries by way of Greece, remaining for a longer time in Syria, where they studied languages, specially Arabic, in order to be able to study the 'secret writings' from the 'most hidden Arabic treasury.'"[43]

Again, there is no evidence supporting the claim that Hermann was ever even in Syria. The passage ends with a reference to Hermann's work *De essentiis,* where reminiscences of "secret writings" from the "most hidden Arabic treasury" are mentioned, but these are not necessarily reminiscences of studies in the Middle East, let alone Syria. For instance, Šanjek understands these words as references to the Arabic libraries on the Iberian Peninsula.[44] Nevertheless, Zenko further elaborates on this undocumented assumption:

"To curious intellectuals coming from the Latin Christian West, directed towards the Islamic-Arabic East from which the light of the *'new'* science—astrology came, the path to Syria, as one of the first 'islamized and arabized' eastern countries with numerous cultural centres rich in writings coming from diverse traditions (early Christian, classical Greek, Hellenistic and Islamic-Arabic), was opened by the First Crusade starting the Christian reconquist [*sic*]. Its first result was the fact that the Christian-Jerusalem kingdom reached its widest expanse under Fulke of Angevins [Fulk of Anjou, T. P.-V.] (1131–1143), therefore **at the time when Hermann the Dalmatian was staying in Syria** [emphasis T. P.-V.] with his friend."[45]

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[38] Franjo Šanjek, "Doprinos Hermana Dalmatinca zbližavanju arapske i evropske znanosti na Zapadu u XII. stoljeću" in *Zbornik radova četvrtog simpozija iz povijesti znanosti. Prirodne znanosti i njihove primjene kod Hrvata u srednjem vijeku*, Zagreb, 1983, pp. 70 and 72.

[39] Franjo Šanjek, *Crkva i kršćanstvo u Hrvata*, Vol. I: *Srednji vijek*, Zagreb, 1988, p. 151.

[40] Ibid., p. 156.

[41] Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin", p. 24.

[42] Franjo Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin" in *Leksikon hrvatskoga srednjovjekovlja*, eds. Franjo Šanjek and Branka Grbavac, Zagreb, 2017, p. 271. A similar itinerary is presented on a map in a Slovenian article about Hermann. http://www.educa.fmf.uni-lj.si/izodel/ponudba/1996/herman/SPotovan.htm (accessed 20 June 2018).

[43] Zenko, "Hermann the Dalmatian", p. 122. Herein I quote Zenko's article which was published in English in 1990. Its Croatian version was published the same year: "Herman Dalmatin: putokaz u tamno porijeklo europske znanosti" in *Herman Dalmatin. Rasprava o bitima*, Croatian translation, critical commentaries and annotations by Antun Slavko Kalenić, Vol. 2, Pula, 1990, pp. 43–61.

[44] Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin", in *Leksikon hrvatskoga srednjovjekovlja*, p. 269.

[45] Zenko, "Hermann the Dalmatian", p. 122.

The aforementioned claims may be based upon relevant sources that our authors simply failed to cite or upon conjectures uncritically transmitted from one article to another. Whatever the case, such claims have been further disseminated through review articles, essays, and popular articles published on internet portals.[46] A cautious approach seems warranted, as taken by Žarko Dadić, a Croatian historian of science, who mentions only a journey to the Middle East. Likewise, Charles Burnett states that little is known about Hermann's life except for the years 1138–1143, when he was living in Northern Spain.[47]

There is also the issue of repeated assertions that Hermann's journey to Asia was perilous. Traveling eastward at that time could have, indeed, been a risky adventure but there are no sources indicating that Hermann and Robert actually encountered any specific dangers. The above-cited English chronicler's biographical note on Robert of Ketton, "he lived in great danger of his life among the cruel Saracens," can be taken as a reflection of attitudes toward the Muslim world at the time. "Cruel Saracens" could have been an expression from the usual repertoire of attributions for the enemy of Christian Europe and the Crusaders. This is somewhat contradicted by the remainder of the account, which states that Robert (and Hermann, who is mentioned as his inseparable companion) learned the Arabic language, which implies that they could have lived in relative safety there, as did Riccoldo da Montecroce.

Translation of the Quran

Another issue that merits attention is Hermann's alleged role in the translation of the Quran into Latin. It is known that Robert and Hermann were persuaded and generously compensated by the Abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable, to translate the Quran and various texts about Islam and the history of the Muslim peoples.[48] The Latin Quran was published in Basel in 1543 and 1550 by Theodore Buchmann, known as Bibliander, with only Robert of Ketton listed as the translator.[49] Some authors may have been prompted to attribute (co)authorship of the Quran translation to Hermann[50] because of a reference by Peter the Venerable to the knowledgeable scholars to whom he had entrusted the task of translating texts on Islam:

"Using pleas and money, I persuaded them to translate the history and the doctrine of that unfortunate man and his law which is called the Koran from Arabic into Latin. And to ensure that the translation would be entirely accurate and no errors would hinder our complete understanding, I included a Saracen among the Christian

[46] For example, Constantinople and Damascus are mentioned in Stipe Kutleša, "Croatian Philosophers I: Hermann of Dalmatia (1110–1154)," *Prolegomena,* 3/1, (2004), p. 58; Baghdad and Damascus in Miljenko Jergović, "Dva srednjovjekovna intelektualca u Puli," Ajfelov most: https://www.jergovic.com/ajfelov-most/dva-srednjovjekovna-intelektualca-u-puli/ (accessed 28 June 2018); Baghdad and Syria in Hrvoje Spajić, "Herman Dalmatin," Portal Hrvatskoga kulturnog vijeća: https://www.hkv.hr/izdvojeno/vai-prilozi/s/spajic-hrvoje/19919-herman-dalmatin-pokretac-europske-i-hrvatske-znanosti.html (accessed 20 June 2018).

[47] Burnett, "Introduction", p. 4.

[48] Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin", p. 34.

[49] Šanjek, *Crkva i kršćanstvo u Hrvata*, p. 160.

[50] For example, Johann Albert Faber (according to Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin", p. 59), Sheila Low-Beer (p. 63) and Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (p. 68).

translators. Here are the names of the Christians: Robert of Ketton, Hermann the Dalmatian, Peter of Toledo; the Saracen was called Mohammad."[51]

Although the names of four persons are mentioned, it does not follow that all four of them translated the Quran, as there were other texts on the agenda. However, as Vjeran Kursar notes, Croatian authors tend to ascribe greater or lesser co-authorship to Hermann with Robert.[52] At one point, Šanjek changed his views on the issue, as noted by Kursar.[53] In 1983 and 1988, Šanjek wrote that the letter by Peter the Venerable confirmed that Hermann was one of the translators of the Quran,[54] adding that the work on the translation was led by Robert.[55] However, in a subsequent article published in 1990, Šanjek writes: "The editors of *Patrologia latina*, Vol. 189, insist on the joint work of the two key protagonists, Robert of Ketton and Hermann the Dalmatian. However, it seems that in the translation of the Quran the share of our scholar does not exceed the limits of an expert advisor, a fact to which some other elements point."[56] In 2017, Šanjek published an article in which Hermann is neither mentioned as a translator of the Quran nor as a collaborator on this translation.[57]

And while Šanjek recanted his previous assertion that Hermann was a coauthor of the Latin translation of the Quran in his aforementioned article of 1990, Zenko published the following ambiguous account that same year:

"They were received by Peter the Venerable (Venerabilis) and were prevailed upon to translate, with an abundant financial compensation, some Islamic religious texts, including Kur'an itself. From this Islamic religious group, **Hermann translated the texts entitled *De generatione Machumet et nutritura eius* and *Doctrina Machumet, quae apud Saracenos magnae autoritas est*** [emphasis T. P.-V.]. As one of the contributions of the people of this country to the process of creation of the universal European spirit out of heterogeneous elements, we should point out the fact that the Ragusean Ivan Stojković (1443), during a diplomatic mission, found in Constantinople a manuscript of **Hermann's translation of Kur'an** [emphasis T. P.-V.], had it copied, and it was on the basis of this copy that Bibliander was to publish it in Baselin 1543, together with Hermann's translations of the mentioned Islamic texts."[58]

Furthermore, Zenko claims that "the main interest of Hermann and his friend is revealed in Robert's dedication of his translation of al-Kindi's *Indicia* to Hermann, as well as in Robert's letter to Peter the Venerable, which he sent together with the translation of Kur'an in which he says that this work had taken **them** away from

[51] Jacques Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, MA, 1993, p. 16.

[52] Vjeran Kursar, "Srednjovjekovne percepcije islama," *Povijesni prilozi*, 24, (2003), p. 144.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Šanjek, "Doprinos Hermana Dalmatinca", p. 77; Šanjek, *Crkva i kršćanstvo u Hrvata*, p. 160.

[55] Šanjek, "Doprinos Hermana Dalmatinca", p. 77.

[56] Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin", p. 28; also: Franjo Šanjek. "Herman Dalmatin" in *Herman Dalmatin*. *De Indagatione Cordis*, p. 21, note 44. However, even in this article by Šanjek, where doubts regarding Hermann's co-authorship are raised, there are some sentences uncritically repeated from earlier articles by the same author, such as the one stating that Peter the Venerable entrusted Hermann with the translation of the Quran. Ibid., p. 12.

[57] Šanjek, "Herman Dalmatin", in *Leksikon hrvatskoga srednjovjekovlja*, pp. 268–271.

[58] Zenko, "Hermann the Dalmatian", p. 123; the Croatian text: "Herman Dalmatin: putokaz u tamno porijeklo europske znanosti", p. 49.

their main task" [emphasis T. P.-V.].[59] This assertion is supported by a reference to Robert's words, as quoted by Burnett. However, Burnett actually quoted Robert as follows: "[Your wisdom] has compelled **me** meanwhile to lay aside **my** main study of astronomy and astrology."[60] Burnett is faithful to the Latin original: "que **me** compulit (...) studium **meum**" [emphasis T. P.-V.],[61] while in Zenko's text, the singular pronouns are mistranslated into plural, thereby erroneously implying that Robert could have been referring to the translation of the Quran as a product of his and Hermann's joint efforts.

Conclusion

In this article I have presented no new biographical data about Hermann, but rather called attention to specific widely disseminated assertions that do not appear to be source-based. I have also pointed out mutually contradictory claims in the Croatian edition of *De essentiis*, in which Šanjek cautiously approaches the issue of the authorship of the Quran translation in the first volume, while in the second volume Zenko asserts that Hermann translated the Quran together with Robert. Furthermore, in the first volume of the same work, Šanjek claims that Hermann was in Baghdad and provides a map of his itinerary, including Baghdad and a longer stay in Damascus, whereas in the second volume Zenko mentions only Syria, but neither author provides documentation for their claims. Speculations and conjectures aimed at bridging the lacunae in our knowledge due to a dearth of sources are indeed legitimate methods in historiography, as long as speculation is clearly identified as such.[62] In the case of Hermann's biography, conjectures have sometimes been presented as facts and further disseminated via Croatian scholarly literature and popular articles, thereby creating an image of "our scholar" as a co-author, or even the sole author, of the first Latin translation of the Quran in the collective memory of Croatian intellectuals and the general public.[63]

[59] Zenko, "Hermann the Dalmatian", p. 123, note 10. In the same footnote Zenko also refers to Šanjek's article "Doprinos Hermana Dalmatinca", p. 83, note 68, but the note 68 does not exist.

[60] Burnett, "Introduction", p. 6.

[61] Ibid., p. 6, note 27.

[62] See Jessica Roitman and Karwan Fatah-Black, "Being speculative is better than to not do it at all": an interview with Natalie Zemon Davis", *Itinerario*, 39, (2015), p. 6.

[63] See for example Kutleša, "Croatian Philosophers", p. 58 (On p. 64, Kutleša adds that Hermann performed the translation with three other authors); F. Šanjek and J. Skunca, "Herman Dalmatin" in *Istarska enciklopedija*, 2005: http://istra.lzmk.hr/clanak.aspx?id=1110 (accessed 20 June 2018); Jergović, "Dva srednjovjekovna intelektualca"; "Herman Dalmatin": https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herman_Dalmatin (accessed 27 June 2018); "Croatian—Herman Dalmatin translated Kur'an on [*sic*] Latin": Croatian attractions. http://croatianattractions.com/croatian-herman-dalmatin-translated-kuran-on-latin/ (accessed 27 June 2018). In the article „Science" at Croatia.eu (The Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography), Hermann is presented as the first person to begin translating the Qur'an. http://www.croatia.eu/article.php?lang=2&id=36 (accessed 20 June 2018).

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