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CROATIA AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATIONS IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

The early medieval history of the Croats, namely, the Slavs who settled in the area of the former Roman provinces of Dalmatia and Pannonia, is characterised in large measure by their relation to the two centres of great power: the Eastern and the Western Empires. Since the Croats found themselves precisely on the boundary of their political influence, all important processes (settlement, Christianisation, the shaping of political organisations and cultural development) were dependent on relations with Constantinople and Western courts respectively.¹ This was especially manifest at that moment when Charlemagne the Great restored the Empire in the West and came into conflict with those rulers who regarded themselves as the sole legitimate heirs of Rome.² In the centuries that preceded the appearance of the Franks on the western borders of Dalmatia, that is, during the period of the migration of the Slavs and their earliest history which, owing to a lack of written and material sources, remains hardly visible, the Eastern Empire - from that period we rightly call it Byzantium - was the only nominal ruler of Dalmatia and Istria (if we exclude the period of probable Lombardic rule on the peninsula).³

We can, then, justifiably ask the question: To what extent was the presence of Byzantium real? I endeavoured to show, ten years previously, that the appeal to Heracles' role in Dalmatian and Venetian traditions could not be accidental, and that it was a reflection of the active policies of Constantinople in both provinces.⁴ Apart from that, the need to protect the sailing route from the centre of the Empire to Venice and the Exarchate of Ravenna, where the exarch presided in Rome as the emperor's governor, imposed the necessity of supervising the towns and islands of the eastern Adriatic coast. Poorly preserved reports also speak on behalf of the existence of

1 | For the most recent overviews of early medieval Croatian history, see Neven Budak, *Prva stoljeća Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 1994); Ivo Goldstein, *Hrvatski rani srednji vijek* (Zagreb: Novi liber i Zavod za hrvatsku povijest, 1995); Tomislav Raukar, *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovlje* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1997); Neven Budak, 'Hrvatska u ranom srednjem vijeku' in: Franjo Šanjek (ed.) *Povijest Hrvata - srednji vijek* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2003), pp. 47-113, 135-144. The first volume of the edition, 'Hrvatska i Europa: kultura, znanost i umjetnost', entitled *Rano doba hrvatske kulture* (Ivan Supićić, ed.) (Zagreb: Hrvatska akademija znanost i umjetnost, 1997), offers a good overview not only of the political, but also, cultural history. Unfortunately, it is based on outdated literature and lacks the most recent research results. In this text I will not refer to the works cited in this footnote, nor to the works to which the authors refer. I will draw attention to the literature only if it concerns new themes or works.

2 | Neven Budak, *Karlo Veliki. Karolinzi i Hrvati* (Split: Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika, 2001), pp. 88-94.

3 | On the character of Byzantine authority in the Adriatic during the early Middle Ages, see Ivo Goldstein, *Bizant na Jadranu* (Zagreb: Latina et graeca i Zavod za hrvatsku povijest, 1992). Goldstein adheres to a large extent to the views of Jadrana Ferluge, *L'amministrazione bizantina in Dalmazia* (Venezia, 1978), to which Nada Klaić also leans toward in *Povijest Hrvata u ranom srednjem vijeku* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1975). For a somewhat different view, see Budak, *Prva stoljeća Hrvatske*, pp. 56-57, 64-65, 81-83.

4 | Neven Budak, 'Tumačenje podrijetla i najstarije povijesti Hrvata u djelima srednjovjekovnih pisaca' in Neven Budak (ed.) *Etnogeneza Hrvata* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice Hrvatske i Zavod za hrvatsku povijest, 1995), pp. 73-78.

federative agreements between the Dalmatian Slavs and the Empire.⁵ Though on the periphery, those areas that today comprise the southern Croatian lands were positioned in the orbit of the Empire which, during that period, was a synonym for Europe.

Geopolitical relations began to change considerably with the rise of Charlemagne. Though the Lombardic conquest of most of the Exarchate of Ravenna in 752 significantly weakened the Byzantine presence on the Adriatic, it was only the Frankish conquest of the Lombardic Kingdom, as well as Istria and the Avar Khaganate, which brought Byzantine sovereignty over the Croats into question. As is well known, the Byzantine-Frankish conflict was solved by the Peace of Aachen in such a manner that Dalmatian towns and islands were imparted to Byzantium, and the Croats with Istria went to the Franks. That division of the area will characterise Croatian history up until the most recent times, regardless of the fact that the influences of Western and Eastern Europe will pass through changes in intensity, but also in centres in which they will be felt. Thus, in due time, it is precisely the littoral towns that will become the points of departure for Western cultural influences, and the Croatian interior will open itself - owing primarily to wars, conquests and migrations, but also to ordinary interpersonal relations - to the European East.

During the course of the ninth century, the association of Croats with the Franks or with Byzantium determined the entire further development of Croatian history: a *regnum* was created and Christianity was accepted under the wing of the Western Church, but it remained open to Eastern influences, which shaped the multi-lingual Croatian culture of three alphabets.⁶ Croatian princely rule developed under the wing of Frankish sovereignty, after which the Croats found themselves under the rule of the Friulian margrave and, after 828, directly under the Carolingian king of Italy. The first known Croatian rulers appeared as Frankish officials, the administrators of a specific territory within the Frankish Kingdom. Governmental rule was organised in a similar fashion in Slavonia and Istria.⁷

Without wanting to get into a discussion about the period of the migration of the Croats and their ancestry, one ought to take heed of the fact that the Croatian name appears in the Croatian lands only after the consolidation of the rule of local princes, which implies that ethnogenetic processes intensified precisely during the course of the first half of the ninth century, and that owing to the creation of more durable political organisations, which were again made possible by the direct encroachment of the Franks on the social structures and power relations between the Slavic and Romanic population in Dalmatia.

The creation of a principality under Frankish influence went necessarily in step with Christianisation.⁸ The acceptance of Christianity was a lengthy and complex process in which

5 | Radoslav Katičić, 'Vetustiores ecclesiae spatensis memoriae', *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* 17 (1987), pp. 17-51.

6 | The most recent research results on the Carolingian influences on the Croats and the areas of Istria, Dalmatia and Pannonia are collected in the catalogue of the exhibition *Hrvati i Karolinzi I-II*, Ante Milošević (ed.) (Split: Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika, 2000). On the concept of the tri-lingual Croatian medieval culture of three alphabets, see Eduard Hercigonja, *Tropismena i trojezična kultura hrvatskog srednjovjekovlja* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1994).

7 | Neven Budak, 'Croats between the Franks and Byzantium', *Hortus artium medievalium* 3 (1997), pp. 15-22.

8 | Neven Budak, 'Frühes Christentum in Kroatien', in G. Hödl and J. Grabmayer (eds.), *Karantanien und der Alpen-Adria-Raum im Frühmittelalter* (Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau, 1991), pp. 223-234; Budak, *Prva stoljeća Hrvatske*, pp. 79-99.

the Carolingians had a decisive, but not the only, say. Nonetheless, today one can discern, from the rarely preserved sources, the heterogeneous directions with which the Church endeavoured, with the help of secular governments, to take root amongst the unbaptised Slavs: missionaries came from the Aquileian Patriarchate, Rome and Benevento,⁹ as well as from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Byzantium, either directly from Constantinople or through the Slavic principalities north of Croatia. With these missionaries came various forms of liturgy, languages, alphabets, priests, artisans, stonemasons, builders, painters and theologians. The relics of saints arrived in various ways in urban and rural churches, not only as symbols of ties, but also as the means for creating new concentrations of power. On this score, Byzantium was the most frequent, but not the only, origin of those cults which were resettled during that period on the Croatian coast. The manner in which time was measured was also a reflection of the influence of strong cultural and political centres, and the proportionately frequent usage of dating according to the birth of Christ is an indicator, for example, of the intensive ties between the ruling court and Rome. Very meagre sources enable us to speak, with great caution, of the echoes of the Carolingian renaissance amongst the Croats, and the interest of Western theologians for the state of affairs at that time indicates that Croatia also entered into their intellectual horizon. The well-known inscription from Gornji Muć bearing the name of Prince Branimir, dated the year 888, when a united Western Empire ceased to exist, synthesised the influence of the Carolingian world on Croatia, on the one hand, and foreshadowed, on the other, the cessation of those strong links with which the Croats were tied, for several decades, to a dynasty that shaped the medieval West.

If Western influences were predominant during the course of the ninth century, then Byzantium began to play a more significant role after the fall of the Carolingian Empire. This role was not immediately visible at the outset, even though we can safely assume that Byzantium was meritorious for the return of the Trpimirović dynasty to the throne after the death of Branimir. Namely, Branimir's predecessor Zdeslav, the son of Trpimir and Muncimir's brother, was a protégé of Basil I, whilst Muncimir could enjoy the support of Leo VI in like measure. Owing to the lack of sources which could eventually confirm these links, this remains only a hypothesis, even though one should not forget that it was precisely Muncimir (or some unknown heir of his by that name) who actively involved himself in the Bulgarian-Serbian wars, which were part of the Bulgarian-Byzantine conflict, by helping the Serbs, the allies of Byzantium.

After Branimir's death (he died between 888 and 892), the Croats attempted to acquire a more favourable position by performing a balancing act between endeavours at gaining independence and fostering reliance upon the Byzantine Empire. Crucial questions concerning these relations remain unsolved to this day: When and from whom did the Croats receive the royal crown? On the one hand, it demonstrated their independent position, whilst on the other indicating that whosoever gave them the crown thereby showed that he had at least symbolic sovereignty over the Croats. Though the title of *rex* appears early on in the sources (the first time for Trpimir, the second for Tomislav), the earliest testimony of anyone being crowned was found by Thomas

9 | On the influence from Benevento, see Neven Budak, 'Was the Cult of St. Bartholomew a Royal Option in Early Medieval Croatia?' in: Balázs Nagy and Marcell Sebök (eds.)...*The Man of Many Devices, who wandered full many ways...Festschrift in Honor of János M. Bak* (Budapest: CEU Press, 1999), pp. 241-249.

the Archdeacon in connection with Stjepan Držislav who, for that reason, we must designate as Stjepan I.¹⁰ If we are to believe Thomas, the crown arrived from Byzantium, which reinforces us in the conviction about the correctness of those reports which, from the time of Tomislav, and from Mihajlo Krešimir II to Držislav's sons, refer to the Dalmatian cities as being handed over to the administration of Croatian rulers. They administered these cities as representatives of Imperial authority so long as it was in the interests of the emperors in Constantinople, namely, so long as it was permitted by wider geopolitical circumstances.

At that time, the Croatian region remained more open to influences from the West, or at least their traces have been better preserved in the material culture. However, through Dalmatian cities, as well as through the Pannonian area, and then Istria, the Slavic liturgy spread throughout Croatia, which brought with it both Slavic literature and the Slavic alphabets: the Glagolic and the Cyrillic. These influences were not so much explicitly Byzantine as they were initiated from Constantinople as part of the political program for consolidating power over the wider areas of South-Eastern Europe, which was settled predominantly by Slavs. They were promoted from the centres of Slavic culture in Bulgaria and Greater Moravia, and then by the Kočelj Principality in Lower Pannonia. Croatia found itself, therefore, in the orbit of the two great European cultural spheres during the period of the creation of its kingdom (from the end of the ninth century), thereby enriching itself with contributions from both.

The end of the tenth century announced the changes that would bring the Croats even closer to the West. The Venetian doge Peter II Orseolo undertook the well-known raid with which he compelled Istrian and Dalmatian towns, all the way to Dubrovnik, to pledge loyalty to him. At that time Venice was still, in theory, a Byzantine possession, so it would appear, at first glance, that the Venetian doge merely replaced the Croatian king as the representative of Byzantine rule in Dalmatia. Meagre sources do not allow us to create a clear picture of the events of the period. In spite of the capable Basil II, Byzantium still found itself enduring difficulties owing to its conflict with Samuil, so it is probable that Peter Orseolo acted in his own name, and not in the emperor's. At the same time, on the Western throne sat the ambitious Otto III, whose aim was to restore the Empire as it existed in the time of Charlemagne, and his friend, Pope Sylvester II, supported him in these efforts, attaching to this his own work on the restoration of the Church. It seems that the pope expected from the doge that he facilitate the more intensive work of his delegates in Dalmatian towns, which could be observed in the context of the long efforts of the Papacy to push aside the liturgical practices and customs in Dalmatia and Croatia that had their basis in the Eastern Church.

Though the raid of Peter II Orseolo further weakened the influence of Byzantium on the Adriatic, Basil II nevertheless still had the forces to impose, with the help of Norman mercenaries, his will upon the Croatian rulers, and the ties between the Dalmatian urban elite with his

10 | As the genealogy of Croatian rulers was already constructed before the discovery of Queen Jelena's epitaph, in which Držislav is mentioned as Stjepan, it had become customary to denote with ordinal numbers only two rulers with the name of Stjepan: the father of Petar Krešimir IV (Stjepan I) and his nephew (Stjepan II). However, there is no doubt that it was precisely Držislav who was first called Stjepan. Thus it is groundless to continue in the old fashion of denoting the rulers, which resulted from ignorance of sources that are accessible today. Accordingly, Držislav is Stjepan I, whilst the aforementioned two are Stjepan II and Stjepan III.

successors demonstrates that, during the thirties of the eleventh century, one had to reckon with Constantinople as a political factor on the eastern Adriatic coast. Without the formal support of some secular ruler, in rather strained relations with the Western emperors, only the popes endeavoured to compete with Byzantium in the struggle for greater influence over the Croats. Since neither Rome nor Constantinople had at its disposal a military force that could tip the scales in this rivalry, the influence of ecclesiastic structures administered by Rome predominated, regardless of some of the sympathies which Dalmatian and Croatian priests might have felt for the Eastern Church. That dominance of the Papacy began to be noticeably felt during the reign of Petar Krešimir IV, when - following the Great Schism - the priesthood stood by the reforms proposed by Rome at the Church Synod in Split in 1060. But the final victory was attained with the crowning of Dmitar Zvonimir in 1075 who, as the first Croatian king, received the crown from the hand of a papal legate (though one should not reject outright the possibility that Petar Krešimir was also crowned in this manner). In this way, the Croatian king became, beside the Dioclean, the only ruler who found himself in the position of vassal to the pope, and for Gregory VII, who was in conflict with the emperor over investitures, this was a great victory. Croatia was thereby strongly tied to Rome and, with that, Western culture. The formal removal of Byzantine sovereignty was only a symbolic confirmation of that process which lasted several decades. From the end of the ninth century, the Croats also had to reckon with their new neighbours to the north, the Hungarians. Their presence began to be intensively felt only in the eleventh century, but the vague reports do not permit us to evaluate precisely when and how the Arpads began to build their bridges towards the Kingdom of Croatia and Dalmatia. Nevertheless, it seems indubitable that this influence became stronger from the 1060s, when family ties were established between Zvonimir and the Hungarian dynasty.¹¹ After Zvonimir's death, the Arpads began to interfere more intensely in the affairs of Croatia until Koloman was finally crowned Croatian-Dalmatian king in 1102. With that Croatia entered, for the first time, into a political union whose centre was in the Pannonian area of Central Europe.¹² Though a century earlier Byzantium still had a real chance of imposing itself on Hungary as a political mentor, this possibility was no longer there. And even though the Hungarians were in conflict with the Salians, Byzantium was too weak to be capable of offering any serious assistance. Hungary was, like Croatia, already firmly in the Western half of Europe. With the victory of the reformed Papacy in Croatia and the choice of the Arpads as the successors to the Trpimirovićs, the Croats became integrated into the Western European civilisational sphere, but in such a manner that they never closed their doors to the influences of the East.

11 | Lujo Margetić, 'Iz starije pravne povijesti Raba' in: L. Margetić - P. Strčić, *Statut rapske komune iz 14. stoljeća* (Rab-Rijeka: Grad Rab - Adamić, 2004), pp. 30-34. In the same text, the author refers to some of the aforementioned questions and cites a series of his works dealing with these themes.

12 | Apart from the aforementioned literature, see the catalogue of the exhibition *Kolomanov put*, Zagreb: Hrvatski povijesni muzej 2002.

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Hrvatska i europske integracije u ranom srednjem vijeku

Ranosrednjovjekovna povijest Hrvata obilježena je njihovim odnosom prema dvama središtima najveće političke moći: Istočnom i Zapadnom Carstvu. Budući da su se Hrvati nalazili upravo na razmeđu njihovih političkih utjecaja, tako su svi važniji procesi (naseljavanje, pokrštavanje, oblikovanje političkih tvorevina) ovisili o odnosima prema Carigradu, odnosno zapadnim dvorovima. To poglavito dolazi do izražaja u trenutku kada Karlo Veliki obnavlja Carstvo na zapadu i dolazi u sukob s vladarima koji su se smatrali jedinim legitimnim nasljednicima Rima. Tijekom 9. stoljeća povezivanje Hrvata s Francima ili Bizantom odredilo je sav daljnji razvoj hrvatske povijesti: stvoren je *regnum* i prihvaćeno kršćanstvo pod okriljem zapadne Crkve, ali otvoreno utjecajima istočne, što je oblikovalo hrvatsku višejezičnu i tropismenu kulturu. Ako su zapadni utjecaji imali prevagu tijekom 9. stoljeća, nakon slabljenja franačkih vladara Bizant je počeo igrati važniju ulogu u sljedećem stoljeću. Hrvatski vladari nastoje steći što povoljniji položaj balansirajući između nastojanja za samostalnošću i oslanjanja na Bizantsko Carstvo. Cesto nam, nažalost, sačuvana vrela ne omogućavaju stvoriti jasnu sliku o političkim i vjerskim odnosima, a pogotovo o utjecaju otonske dinastije, koji zasigurno nije bio beznačajan. Hrvati od kraja 10. stoljeća moraju voditi računa i o pojačanom pritisku Venecije, ali i o novim susjedima na sjeveru, Mađarima. Napokon, kao važan politički, ali još više kulturni činitelj, u 11. stoljeću javlja se reformno papinstvo čija će aktivnost utjecati ne samo na politiku vladara, nego i na oblikovanje svakodnevnog života, a na kraju ovdje promatranog razdoblja Kraljevstvo Hrvatske i Dalmacije uklopit će se u prostrano područje pod suverenitetom krune sv. Stjepana. Crkveni raskol, reformno papinstvo i podložnost ugarskom vladaru odredit će integraciju hrvatskih zemalja u zapadnoeuropski kulturni krug, ali će vrata utjecajima Istoka ostati i nadalje otvorena.