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Tomisław I Trpimirović – w dziejach i narodowej legendzie Chorwatów

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Summary

The history of Croatia is as interesting and the unknown. This country, located on the east coast of the Adriatic, appeared on the maps as early as the sixth century as two Croatian principalities: Dalmatian and Pannonian. At that time also, in their initial period of activity, the Croats led to an increase in their significance at sea, which was often proved by winning against the more-powerful Venetian, Byzantine and Arabian fleets. Among the princes wielding over them, there appeared more efficient, better prepared to govern as well as worse. An unusual figure in the long history of the country on the Adriatic was Prince Tomislav, who was considered the first king. It is a character with which every visitor to Croatia can come in almost every step. Each city has a street or square named after Tomislav, his image is decorated with the highest-denomination banknote, and on his behalf the most important order of the Republic of Croatia and the highest equestrian statue standing in Zagreb in front of the exit from the central station. For the Croats and the majority of inhabitants of the Balkan states, the significance of this form is obvious. Tomisław is completely unknown to people outside the Balkan Peninsula. In his native Croatia, however, he grew to the symbolic level.

The Trpimirovic dynasty, from which Tomislav originated, was the only national dynasty of the Croats, which took its name from the prince Trpimir in the years 845-864. We are not able to determine even the approximate date of birth of Tomislav. We know, however, that he took over the power in the Principality of Croatia, ie Dalmatian, in 910. Probably he was the grandson of the founder of the Trpimir I dynasty. About the period of Tomislav's reign, information is provided only by four sources. These are *The History of Salonitan* of Split Thomas Archdeacon, *De Administrando Imperio* Constantine Porphyrogenists, *History of the Kingdom of Slavs*, whereas the *History of the Kingdom of Slavs* should be treated with more caution than other materials referred to here.

The History of Salonitan by Thomas Archdeacon was written in 1266 in Split. This is one of the most valuable documents regarding the past of the Croatian state. The first copy of the document appeared in 1666, in Latin. The next editions, already translated and commented on by historians, appeared in 1867 and 1997 in the Russian version, again in Latin in 1894, in the Italian version in 1939, the English edition was published in 2006, while the most important for us Croatian editions were published successively in 1960 and 2003. The text contained in the Chronicle describes

the history of Split from the time of Roman rule until 1266. It is a very reliable source, confirmed by documents of the metropolitan church metropolis and papal correspondence, as well as royal privileges granted not only to the church or the city, but also for the entire Dalmatian area. The author himself, according to Kerubin Šegvić, may have belonged to the members of the Pride of Split, which, in his opinion, explains the achievement of a high position in ecclesiastical structures. Probably he was born in 1200 or 1201, but died on May 8, 1268, which suggests a record of a tombstone placed in the Franciscan church in Split. We also know that during the pontificate of Archbishop Bernard, and probably due to his intercession, he went to study in Bologna, where he was educated in theology and law. Around 1227 he returned to Split, where, as a cleric, he was a notary public, and three years later he was elevated to archdiocese status.

The work of Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenes *De Administrando Imperio* was created between 948 and 952, and contrary to the generally accepted title, it is not the instruction of ruling the state, but a description of the peoples, lands and customs prevailing in the lands surrounding the empire. The title known today was given by the seventeenth-century editor Mauristius. This is one of the most important sources for the early medieval history of the Balkans. Constantine clearly drew from the works of Herodotus and Strabo, but the main source of information for him were the merchants and diplomats visiting Constantinople, from whom he obtained information about the lands surrounding the empire. The sources used by Constantine and their lack of verification during the creation of the work led to many mistakes and denials. The most common include mutually exclusive dating, and frequent errors when naming rulers, as in the case of the recognition of Attyla as the ruler of Hungarians. The resulting errors also indicate the original idea of creating two separate works, and writing individual chapters at different times, and then putting them together in not always matching order. This is evidenced by chapters 1-8 and 10-12 dealing with the Peches and Turks, and between chapter 9 inserted between them, combining with the content of 13 and containing tips on acquiring allies.

The history of the Kingdom of the Slavs, also called the *Pope Duklanin Chronicle*, was probably built around 1160-1170 in the territory of the Dukla Principality, today's Montenegro. The indication of the author of the journal is also quite inconvenient. It is generally accepted that he could have been a bishop in the Dukla Bar area. The work itself has considerable disadvantages, such as distortions or fabrications. Historiography chronicle signed up permanently thanks to his first edition in the Italian language by dubrovnik benedict Maur Orbini in 1601. The first critical

edition of this work, however, appeared only in 1874, and its editorial team was Ivan Črnić. Differences between individual editorial offices are a problem. The Croatian editorial office is the most interesting chronicle for us. This text is not only the oldest preserved manuscript of the Latin of the sixteenth century, but contains only 23 chapters that are a fairly free translation of the Latin original, and is also enriched with the legend of the death of King Zvonimir. He devoted more attention to authorship and criticism of the chronicle in the introduction to the Polish edition of Jan Leśny.

From the above-mentioned sources, we learn that at the very beginning of his reign, Tomislav had to face a new threat to his duchy, that is, Hungarians, who arrived in central Europe at the beginning of the century, aspired to the title of power from 907. It was the Hungarians who led to the total collapse of the second Croatian state - the Duchy of Croatia - Pannonian or Posavian. It was with them that Tomislav had to fight as the first of uncomfortable neighbors. As Pop Duklanin reports: *Regnante Thomislavo Ungarinorum rex nomine Attila promovit exercitum, ut debellaret eum. Rex autem Thomislavus, fortis iuvenis et robustus bellator, plurima bella cum eo commisit et semper eum in fugam convertit.* The author probably distorted the name of the Hungarian Arpad here, thus creating Attyla. A large part of the Croatian historians with Dragutin Pavličević in the forefront combines this with the Battle of Drava and the mastery of Slavonia, which probably occurred in 914. Then, on the tide of victory, he combined both Croatian principals into one state organism, and Drava became forever the border between Croatia and Hungary. The next step in Tomislav's foreign policy was to regulate the status of the towns and islands on the Dalmatian coast, which despite being on Croatian territory were subordinate to the Byzantine emperor. Byzantium, which at that time had serious problems with the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon, needed a strong ally who could help fight the threat. The nearest and strongest of the neighbors available and willing to help was the Croatian prince Tomislav, who, however, did not intend to turn his neck behind the Byzantines without any benefits. He negotiated with Roman Lekapen, who was in power at Constantinople, to give him all the Dalmatian cities and islands. On behalf of the emperor, Lekapen granted Tomislav in 923 the authority over the Dalmatian property belonging to the Byzantines so far, and the resulting possibility of collecting taxes from cities and islands. In this way, the entire Croatian territory was consolidated for the first time under the rule of the Croatian ruler. A year after the nomination and the division of the Croatian-Byzantine armies of the Bulgarian troops, the Tsar attacked and seized Serbia. Tomislav, however, showed his great heart and gave shelter to Serbian prince Zaharija and Zahlumian prince Michael, who were forced to flee from the Bulgarian threat.

Wanting to take revenge on the Croatian ruler for his great audacity, Simeon sent a large army under the command of Alogobothur in 926 against Tomislav. Croatian troops adopted the battle, according to tradition on May 27, 926, and achieved a spectacular victory. During the battle, the commander-in-chief of the Bulgarian troops also died. According to the description of Porphyrogenet left to us by Constantine, such a success should not come as a surprise. At that time, the Croats had at their disposal a force of one hundred thousand infantry, sixty thousand cavalry, eighty great ships, and a hundred small ones, which is unusual for Balkan conditions. Another extremely important event from the time of Tomislav's rule were synods in Split. Their purpose was to regulate the question of the dominant religion in the state. Admittedly, Croatia was christened during the reign of Emperor Heraclius I and Pope John IV around 640, eventually receiving baptism at the hands of Roman envoys, however the closeness of the Byzantine religious center and the mission of the salonian brothers led to the creation of two equally strong Christian trends. The growing tension between the Slavic Bishopric in Nin and the old metropolitan city of Rome subordinated to Rome forced Tomislav to make some decisions that would affect the future fate of the country. The synod was also called in 925 in the seat of the Dalmatian metropolis, or the cathedral of Split. At the synod, besides all Croatian bishops, including the bishopric of Nin, bishop Gregory, and the most important secular dignitaries of the state, there were also papal envoys, as well as Zahlumian, prince Michael, and prince Tomislav. The basic difficulty was the choice the prince had to make. On the one hand, he was able to support his own Slavic bishopric in Nin, thus giving authority over the church to the Patriarch of Constantinople, on the other, he could remain faithful to Rome and the oldest metropolis in the Balkans, giving up completely the use of Slavonic language in the church. The final decision of the synod, however, turned out to be surprising for everyone gathered. Tomislav made a decision to liquidate the bishopric in Nin and subordinate its territory to the Metropolis of Split, as Pope's envoys and Metropolitan Jan II suggested. However, in order not to lose the Slav clergy completely and not to discourage the faithful who do not know Latin, he agreed to their sacraments, but with the proviso that they can do it only when there is no priest in the parish who knows Latin. It meant nothing more or less than the current order of things. During the synods, or, as Tadeusz Wasilewski wants, right in front of them, the papal envoys handed Tomislav letters from his holiness, John X. These letters are important because they were a contribution to the discussion on the royal title of Tomislav. Three years later, in 928, a second synod was convened in Split, which was intended to approve the decision from three years ago and to resolve the matter without the office of Bishop

Gregory. According to the will of the Pope, Gregory took the bishopric in Skradin. Also this year, Tomislav I Trpimirowic died.

And here, in fact, the story of Tomislav ends almost nine centuries. In 1848 during the Spring of Nations, Croatia is part of the Kingdom of Hungary. At the same time, the Croatian sabor is divided. Some of the politicians with the Croatian ban Josip Jelačić, at the forefront, sought closer approximation with the capital of the empire, Vienna, and what is related to obtaining independence as the third component of the Empire. The other part of the politicians with canon and historian Franjo Rački actively supported Budapest, wanting to negotiate autonomy for the homeland in this way. An additional problem was the redistribution of Croatia. Dalmatia as a spoil of war in the Venetian Republic and the rule of Napoleon became the property of Austria, and Panonia and Slavonia were incorporated into Hungary. Two years after the revolution, one of the faithful Jelačić generals and at the same time an outstanding historian, Ivan Kukuljević-Sakcinski, founded the first periodical devoted to the history of Croatia: *Arhiv za povijesnicu jugoslavensku*. In the pages of this magazine, he reminded the nation of a partially forgotten figure, King Tomislav. As one of the first Croatian historians and politicians, he noticed that the nation needs a new symbol. The figure of King Dmitri Zvonimir was blamed for the disintegration of the state and the alleged curse, which is only mentioned by pope Duklanin, and in addition only in one of his numerous editions. The silhouette of King Piotr Krešimir IV was used during the unsuccessful conspiracy of Zrinski and Frankopan. It was necessary to reach deeper into history, obligatorily after the ruler. It's best for someone strong, who can win wars and play great international politics in his favor. In addition, for someone who had a good relationship with the church, he conquered the Hungarians and, most importantly, united the divided country. Of all Croatian masters, only Tomislav I Trpimirović was fit for this purpose. The articles that praise Tomislav and the comments on two papal letters from 925 appearing more frequently in the journal, drew the attention of other historians to the semi-legendary monarch. Already in 1871, Franjo Rački, in his work on the transformation of the Croatian principality into the kingdom, recognizes that the first Croatian, and most importantly, Slavic ruler who abandoned the princely title to the royal was Tomislav, which is undeniable, due to the use of a foreign law firm, in this case, the papal title, royal title in relation to the ruler of Croatia. However, one of the most beautiful examples of tribute to Tomislav was a fragment from the *History of Croatia* published in 1882 by Tadija Smičiklas sounding: *After the memorable act of coronation, when Tomislav spread the majesty of his power over Croatia, we believe that he also created a strong*

state. Thus, all the tribal differences had to expire before the majesty and power of the new king. From now on, under the name of Croatia as a kingdom, all lands from the Danube, Drava and Drina to the Adriatic Sea had to be understood, Croatia became one integrated state; henceforth the relations between the king and the ban on the sabor had been established, which was no worse than the Franconian spring gathering under the open sky, when the whole nation stood like one army. More and more works on the Middle Ages began to focus on Tomislav. The forging of a new legend began, after almost nine centuries. Behold, the only true confirmation of the coronation was the word *rex*, appearing in the address of the papal letter. Historians are no longer asking a cardinal question when and how the crown was handed - since in the case of Dmitar Zvonimir we have a full description of the coronation, only the title was enough, which was questioned in Venetian Chronicle written by John Deacon. In addition, more and more emphasis was put on the beating of the Hungarians over the Drava and unification of the state. Tomislav's figure came under that roof as a symbol of the former glory and strength of the state. The problem of coronation has become exceptionally lively among Croatian historians. There were voices acknowledging the *rex* title in the letters of Jan X for confirmation of coronation, as well as those that said that the gesture of the royal croatian ruler was the handing over of the management of the cities and islands by Roman Lekapen. Quite interesting seems to be the thesis put forward by the Franciscan Oton Knezović in a massively published *Croatian History from the earliest times until 1918*. Well, he went there to say that Tomislav, seeing his strength after the destruction of Hungarians and Bulgarians, and independence from Byzantium, decided to take the title of king for himself, which he did, and the Pope confirmed with the letter of 925. In this case, one may also consider Wasilewski's just explanation, suggesting that Latin *rex* did not necessarily mean in the Slavic states a crowned ruler, and a ruler stronger and more efficient than the others in the region, and a prince who with his strength and power was able to obtain and maintain position and authority, and shape local politics. The thesis of Neven Budak is also worth mentioning, saying that in correspondence, the papal law office always addressed the addressee with the title which he himself used, while the correspondence emanating from Constantinople always included the title of the local ruler translated or moved to the hierarchy used in the empire. That's how a Slavic *kralj* would become an *archon*.

A breakthrough came in 1925 when the Croats, despite being incorporated into the Kingdom of Serbs-Croats-Slovenes, celebrated the 1000th anniversary of coronation and great statehood. A great job was given for this occasion, in which the most important Croatian historians, *Zbornik*

Kralja Tomislava, were engaged. On this occasion, numerous marches and gatherings in memory of the king took place in all major cities. However, they were boycotted by the then representative of the Serbian dynasty, Alexander I Karađorđević, and the gendarmerie units sent by him repeatedly used force against the demonstrating Croats¹. Once again, in great politics, Tomislav was used during the Second World War, when the Ustasha movement took over power in the areas close to the former Tomislav state. Being in close alliance with Italy Mussolini, Poglavnik Ante Pavelić, he cast the Italian prince Aimone di Spoleto on the Croatian throne, who symbolically took the name of Tomislav II. The times of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia also abounded in the work of praising the early medieval monarch. Here, among the historians, Nada Klaić and Ivo Goldstein were the leaders. During the War of Independence in 1991-1995, Tomislav again became a symbol of unification. Not only did his name become the name of one of the Croatian special units, but also in agreement with the Croats living in Bosnia, the name of the town of Duvno was changed to Tomislavgrad, which was explained by the legend of Tomislav's coronation, which was to take place in these fields.

Today, Tomislav's legend is still alive. Despite considerable criticism of historians, often undermining coronation and making a ruler, it is in the general consciousness of the nation that he is the first king of Croatia. The monarch who united the two independent duchies defeated the Hungarians and Bulgarians, partially destroyed the territorial inclinations of the Venetians and shed the Byzantine rule. In addition, the streets and squares named after him are in every city, town and village in the country, and the image is decorated with a banknote with the highest face value of 1000 kuna, and the most important order of Croatia - the Grand Order of King Tomislav with the Star. He was also devoted to the horse riding monument issued in 1925, situated in Zagreb opposite the entrance to the main railway station. All this proves that Tomislav was - and still is - needed by the Croats as a symbol of their independence and a long-lost position in the Balkan world, which they have struggled to rebuild for over a quarter of a century.