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THE IDEA OF A GREATER (UNITED) CROATIA BY PAVAO RITTER VITEZOVIĆ: AN EARLY-MODERN MODEL OF THE NATIONAL IDENTITY AND CREATION OF THE NATIONAL STATE OF THE CROATO-SLAVS

Pavao Ritterio Vitezovičiaus Didžiosios (Jungtinės) Kroatijos idėja:
ankstyvasis modernus nacionalinės tapatybės modelis
ir nacionalinės kroatų-slavų valstybės kūrimas

SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas kroatų didiko publicisto ir istoriko Pavao Ritterio Vitezovičiaus (1652–1713) „Didžiosios Kroatijos“ modelis. Daugelis istorikų tyrinėjo Vitezovičiaus politines mintis ir jo išplėtotą vieningos Pietų Slavų valstybės, kaip platesnio vieningo Slavų pasaulio dalies, ideologinę sistemą. Pasak vyraujančio mokslininkų požiūrio, Vitezovičius buvo „jugoslavizmo“ (suvienytos Pietų Slavų tautinės valstybės) ir netgi vieningo slavizmo, vieningo slavų kultūrinio ir politinio abipusiškumo idėjos pirmtakas. Jo amžininkų tekstuose siūlomas alternatyvus būdas apibrėžti modernių Pietų Slavų etninių valstybių sienas. Vitezovičius siekė kurti kroatų nacionalinę valstybę remiantis pastangomis konsoliduoti kroatų „etnines teritorijas“ ir „etnolingvistines linijas“. Šios tapatybės sampratos analizė atskleidžia, kaip buvo suprastos numatytos ankstyvosios modernios kroatų etninės valstybės sienos. Ji apima plačias teritorijas nuo Adrijos jūros iki Maskvos ir nuo Baltijos jūros iki Juodosios jūros. Vitezovičiaus požiūris į lietuvius ir Lenkijos-Lietuvos Sąjungą liudija, kad argumentas, kuriuo grindžiami jo reikalavimai Kroatijos tautinei valstybei, paremtas etnolingvistine giminyste.

KEY WORDS: Croatia, Croats, Slavs, Lithuania, Lithuanians, national identity, Balkans.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: Kroatija, kroatai, slavai, Lietuva, lietuviai, tautinė tapatybė, Balkanai.

SUMMARY

The paper will examine the model for the creation of a 'Greater Croatia' designed by the Croatian nobleman, publicist and historian Pavao Ritter Vitezović (1652–1713). Many historians have viewed Vitezović's political thought and his developed ideological framework of a united South Slavic state as part of a wider pan-Slavic world. According to the prevailing notion, Vitezović was a precursor of the idea of 'Yugoslavism' (a united Southern Slav nation state) and even 'Pan-Slavism', a pan-Slavic cultural and political reciprocity. Yet a closer look at Vitezović and his contemporaries' writings suggests an alternative model for outlining the borders of modern ethnic states among the Southern Slavs. Vitezović argued for the creation of a Croat national state, based on the integration of the Croat 'ethnic territories' and their consolidation along ethno-linguistic lines. The analysis of Vitezović's understanding of nationhood explains how the borders of an envisioned early modern Croat ethnic state had been perceived as including vast territories from the Adriatic Sea to Moscow and from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. In this respect Vitezović's views on the Lithuanians and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth will show that the argument used to substantiate his claims for a Croatian nation state was based on an ethno-linguistic kinship.

Contemporary historiography and the Slavonic studies upon the question of ethnolinguistic origin of the Croats and the Serbs more and more incline on the side of those authors who support the linguistic theory of the Indo-Sarmatian (the Iranian) origins of proto-Croats and proto-Serbs. According to this contemporary explanation, "Croats" and "Serbs" were the people of the Iranian (the Sarmatian) origin, who migrated into the Balkans in the 7th century and subjected the Slavs there. However, in the course of time, they became totally Slavized (like proto-Turkic Bulgars who were settled on the Balkans between the Danube River and the Balkan Range), but gave their own ethnic name to the Balkan Slavic subjects. At least from the beginning of the 9th century both "Croats" and "Serbs" are clearly a Slavic people. For those authors, linguists proved that words *Croat* and *Serb* are not of the Slavic language at all. They believe that name "Croat" is similar to the Iranian-Sarmatian place name "Choroathos", on the lower Don River, or that name "Croat" originated in the Iranian

"Chrovatos", a prominent chieftain who gave his own personal name to the tribe (people) ruled by him.

Some scholars argue that the Iranian name "Croat" can be found as a personal name in the inscriptions from Tanais from the 2nd and 3rd centuries, or that words "haurvatar" means in Iranian – "cattle-breeder", and "huurvatha" – "friend". In addition, there are two Greek inscriptions in the area of the Azov Sea around the mouth of the Don River related to the personal names – "Horóathos" and "Horúathos", which are considered to be of the Iranian-Sarmatian origin. Around the time of Jesus Christ, there was the Iranian-Sarmatian tribe on the lower Don River that was known to the Greek geographers as "Serboi". In the 10th century one Arab geographer noted a "Sarban" tribe in the Caucasus. These two tribes are clearly not of the Slavic origin.

As a matter of fact, many ethnic Slavs have participated in the armies led by the Iranian-Sarmatian "Croats" and "Serbs" and have migrated to the Balkans with their Iranian-Sarmatian military leaders

and lords. Assimilation, i.e. Slavization, of the Iranian-Sarmatian “Croats” and “Serbs” started already beyond the Carpathian Mountains. The Iranian-Sarmatian “Croats” and “Serbs” have been relatively few in number, but as warrior horsemen they became greatly superior over conquered Slavs. They came to the Balkans in the second wave of the Slavic settlement on the peninsula where they met and subjugated already settled Slavic tribes from the first wave of migration to the Balkans. The newcomers, led by the Iranian-Sarmatian “Croats” and “Serbs”, provided a general name for all Slavs under their sway, which are known today as the ethnic Croats and Serbs. In the other words, since the Slavs were the vast majority, and as the Iranian-Sarmatian “Croats” and “Serbs” intermarried

and mixed with them, in the course of time the conquerors came to speak Slavic too and ultimately the Slavic language they came to speak and which had been spoken by the earlier arriving Slavs (from the first migration) came to be named after the Iranian-Sarmatian newcomers (from the second migration to the Balkans). Finally, this process of assimilation was identical with that one of the Turkic Bulgars who conquered the Slavic tribes on the territory of the present-day North Bulgaria. They came to be Slavized in the course of time, but provided the ethnic name for the Slavic people, language, and state established in Bulgaria (Gregoire 1944–1945: 88–118; Conte 1986: 300; Fine 1994: 49–59, 305–307; Macan 1992: 15; Ćorović 1993: 49–50; compare with Davies 1981: 45).

IMPORTANCE AND INFLUENCE OF VITEZOVIĆ'S IDEOLOGICAL CONCEPT

P. R. Vitezović's works had a great impact on development of the South Slavic national ideologies, national consciousness and nationalism. Paradoxically but true, Vitezović influenced at the great degree the 18th century Serbian and Bulgarian national movements. His heraldic manual under the title *Stemmatographia, sive Armorum Illyricorum delineatio, descriptio et restitution* (Vienna, 1701), in which coats of arms of all “Illyrian” (i.e., according to him, Croatian) historical provinces were presented, was translated into the Slavonic-Serbian language, adapted and expanded in the mid-18th century by the Serbian patriot of the Bulgarian ethnic origin from the South Hungary, Hristifor Žefarović (1700–1753). Nonetheless, pre-

viously to Vitezović, the examples of coats of arms of Illyria (i.e. the Balkans) were available in Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* (Basel, 1544) and revised by the Italian version in 1575. A very idea of the Illyrian (i.e. the Balkan or the South Slavic) unity could be found exactly in the Münster's *Cosmographia*, where the lands of Carinthia, Carniola, Croatia, Slavonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are described as the Illyrian provinces.

P. R. Vitezović used, in addition to S. Münster's *Cosmographia*, as a basis for his own armorial manual, a heraldic work of the Herzegovinian nobleman and admiral in the Spanish navy service, Petar Ohmučević (known in Spain as Don Pedro) from 1596. Ohmučević's version of

united Pan-Illyrian Empire of Stefan Dušan Almighty (a Serbian ruler from 1331 to 1355) was illustrated by coats of arms of the following "Illyrian" lands: Macedonia, Bosnia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Rascia and Littoral. Ohmučević's armorial manual was used and extended by Mavro Orbin from Dubrovnik in his famous work where coats of arms of Bulgaria, Slavonia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Dalmatia, Serbia, Croatia, Rascia and Littoral were considered as historical provinces of the South Slavic Empire of Stefan Dušan who was the most famous, mighty and glorified South Slavic ruler as the Emperor of Serbia from 1346 to 1355 (Banac 1993: 218–225).¹² Nevertheless, in Vitezović's interpretation, all of these coats of arms were heraldic insignias of the Croatian historical and ethnolinguistic provinces. These insignias were followed in Vitezović's armorial work by the next arms of the Croatian lands: Bohemia, Muscovy, Poland-Lithuanian Republic, Ukraine, Carinthia, Carniola, Istria, Moldavia, Transylvania, Wallachia, Lower and Upper Austria, Prussia, Venice, Hungary, Albania, Celta, Crete, Dacia, Dardania, Epirus, Greece, Japodia, Liburnia, Mysia, Pannonia, Romania, Scythia, Baltic Slavonia, Thessaly, Odrysia, Thrace, and Triballia. The real purpose of Vitezović's armorial was to demonstrate his idea of Pan-Croatianism, according to which, all Slavs were the ethnolinguistic Croats and subsequently a Greater Croatia (but no longer the Illyrian Empire of Stefan Dušan) had to be established under the Habsburg sceptre.

However, while Münster's and Ohmučević's Illyrian heraldic manuals

were for Vitezović the Croatian, for Žefarović the same Münster's and Ohmučević's Illyrian coats of arms were the Serbian. Subsequently, Žefarović's *Stemmatographia* (Στεμματογραφία) (Vienna, 1741) of coats of arms of all "Serbian" historical-state lands which had to belong to revived Serbian Empire of Stefan Dušan, contributed to the growth of both Serbian national awareness and nationalism. Žefarović presented a triumphant mighty emperor Dušan surrounded by 24 Balkan coats of arms that represented united Serbian Empire (i.e. the Balkan Empire). The message was that all the lands of Dušan's crown (but in fact the whole Balkans) should be politically united into a single (Serbian) state. The shorter version of the *Στεμματογραφία* circulated among the Austrian and Ottoman Serbs at the beginning of the 19th century having a strong impact on the idea of restoration of the Serbian mediæval state during the time of the First Serbian Uprising against the Turks (1803–1813) and after that as well (Ćorović 1993: 556; Mladićević 1994: 54–59).

The 19th and 20th centuries state and national coats of arms of Croatia and Croats and Serbia and Serbs were modelled according to Vitezović-Žefarović drawings. Žefarović's *Στεμματογραφία*, which was based on Vitezović's *Stemmatographia...*, became one of the most influential ideological and programmatic "lighthouses" for the Serbs in their struggle for the national unification. Vitezović created in his *Stemmatographia...*, according to the drawing of Mavro Orbin, coat of arms of Bulgaria, and invented completely new coat of arms of Romania. Shortly, Vitezović's "Illyrian" heraldry

became one of the most influential contributors to the iconography of the Balkan nationalism. Both Vitezović's and Žefarović's heraldic manuscripts were the sources of national identities for the succeeding Croatian and Serbian generations (Banac 1991b; Banac 1993). Žefarović's collection of "Illyrian" (i.e., the Serbian) coat of arms clearly conveyed the notion that adherence to the Orthodox Christianity made for the Serbs a nationhood and suggesting that the Serbian historical-national task was to unite all the lands of old *Illyricum* under a single coat of arms of Serbia.

Nevertheless, P. R. Vitezović ideologically mostly influenced development of the Croatian nationalism particularly in the 18th and the 19th centuries. His armorial and ideological Pan-Croatianism was a historical construction and a political program. During these two hundred years, his ideological influence extremely benefited to the Croatian resistance against the Hungarian claims on historical-state rights over the provinces of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia. At the turn of the 19th century Vitezović's writings were in great demand by the Croats and were reprinted in many occasions. During the whole 19th century, Vitezović's *Croatia rediviva*... was playing a role of "a Bible of the Croatian national policy" and nationalism too (Šišić 1934: 46; Banac 1993). For example, several the most significant and influential 19th-century Croatian politicians (some of them the leaders of the Croatian national revival movement – the *Illyrian Movement*) as Ljudevit Gaj (1809–1872), Ivan Derkos (1808–1834), Janko Drašković (1777–1856), Ante Starčević (1823–1896) and

Eugen Kvaternik (1825–1871) were rather familiar with Vitezović's work, which crucially influenced their ideology of a Pan-Croatianism. For Gaj, Starčević and Kvaternik ("fathers of the Croatian nation"), the names of the South Slavic nations were only synonyms for the common ethnic name of the Croats (Gaj 1835: 1; Gaj 1965: 299–301; Starčević 1971; Kvaternik 1971). Further, for Derkos and Drašković, the Orthodox Serbs from Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia and the Military Border were only ethnolinguistic Croats (Derkos 1832; Drašković 1832).

The insignia (coat of arms) of the *Illyrian Movement*, invented by Lj. Gaj, was a Morning Star that was inspired by Vitezović's work as well. Ljudevit Gaj still sincerely believed in the Illyrian proto-homeland of all Slavs and moreover found "evidence" for this hypothesis in the large number of the Czech, Polish, and Russian coats of arms. For him simply the "Illyrian" (i.e., the Croatian) Morning Star became "only common coat of arms of all our (i.e., the Slavonic-Croatian) tribes and lands" (Gaj 1863, 194). A. Starčević and E. Kvaternik, the founders of the most nationalistic the Croatian Party of Rights, denied the legitimacy of any other term and name of the Balkan Slavs than the "Croat" one. In the other words, all South Slavs were *speciums* of Croatian *gens*. In conclusion, the modern Croatian national-political ideology of Gaj, Starčević and Kvaternik was directly derived from Vitezović's Croatocentric terminology, ideology and viewpoints of the Balkan and world affairs.

P. R. Vitezović's conception of linguistic nationhood that the language was the pivotal national identifier, significantly

influenced the South Slavic Romanticist's linguistically based definitions of nationhood. This new approach had a considerable impact to the South Slavic national ideologists especially during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century.¹³ Ultimately, Vitezović's idea of Lithuanians' (as "Slavic" people) Balkan origin based on ethnolinguistic determination of the nation was shared by famous Lithuanian 19th–20th century linguist and national worker Jonas Basanavičius, who claimed after many years of scientific investigation and comparison of contemporary Lithuanian and old Thracian languages that the Lithuanian ancestors migrated from the West Balkan province of Thrace (being of ancient Thracians' origin) to the Baltic littoral (Basanavičius 1898, 8–15, 21, 34–35, 74). Still, the Balkan

region of Thrace was a part of Vitezović's *Croatia rediuvia* or united Croatia populated by ethnolinguistic Croats from the time of Antique onward.

It can be given a final conclusion that P. R. Vitezović by following the main idea of the medieval and Renaissance South Slavic writers upon the Slavic matters, who apotheosised Slavism, transformed the message of one of them, Vinko Pribojević, that historical task of the Slavic nation was to rule the world ("*ut totius orbis habenas regeret*" (Pribojević 1951, 78) into the new futurological anticipation that ethnolinguistic Croats had a historical destiny to rule the globe. Shortly, while Pribojević was speaking in the favour of world Slavic Empire, Vitezović introduced a concept of ethnolinguistic ecumenical Croatian state.

CONCLUSION

Pavao Ritter Vitezović (1652–1713), an aristocrat of the German origin of the Dalmatian city of Senj, was the first South Slavic national ideologist who extended the Croatian ethnic name not only to all Balkan Slavs, but rather to all Slavs. Using several different mediaeval historical sources upon the Slavic settlement on the Balkan Peninsula and many of the South Slavic literal and historical works that recorded a popular tradition about the Balkan-Illyrian origin of all Slavic people, Vitezović concluded that legendary Slavic progenitors – brothers Czech, Lech and Rus' – should be understood as the persons of the Croat ethnolinguistic origin. Identifying the brothers as the Croats, Vitezović concluded that in fact the entire Slavic population in the

world descended from the Croat origin.

During the last stage of the Great Vienna War (1683–1699), between the Christian Alliance against the Ottoman Sultanate, when the struggle between Venice and the Habsburgs for division of the South Slavic lands emerged, Vitezović wrote a memorandum to the Habsburg Emperor in order to refute any Venetian claim on the territory of the "Croatian" historical lands. His work about *limites totius Croatiae* ("the borders of whole Croatia") demonstrated the borders of a Greater Croatia, which was divided into two parts: *Croatia Septentrionalis* (the North Croatia) northward from the Danube River, composed by Bohemia, Moravia, Lusatia, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania and Russia, and *Croa-*

tia Meridionalis that was the Balkan Peninsula with Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Albania, Epirus, Thessaly, Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Thrace. The Balkan Croatia was further subdivided into *Croatia Alba* (the White Croatia) and *Croatia Rubea* (the Red Croatia). A trans-Danubian Croatia was subdivided into *Sarmatia*: Poland, Lithuania and Russia, and *Venedia*: Bohemia, Moravia, and Lusatia. Shortly, the 17th-century Croatian usage of the terms “Illyrian” and “Croat” as the synonyms, Vitezović simply extended to all Slavs understanding them as the people of the Croat origin. In the other words, every Slavic nation was seen as *specium* of the Croatian *gens*.

The ideology of Pan-Croatianism created by Pavao Ritter Vitezović, who developed the ancient theory upon derivation of all Slavs from the Croats, was a historical construction and a political program as a protest against long-time fragmentation of Croatian historical and ethnic territories, but it was at the same time politics against territorial pretensions on the Croatian historical-ethnic space by the Republic of St. Marco. Finally, Vitezović attempted by his writings to obtain the Habsburg political-military support for the creation of united or Greater Croatia, i.e. *Croatia rediviva*. P. R. Vitezović's arguments were both historical and ethnolinguistic that helped him to appropriate a vast territory of Europe, from the Adriatic and Black Sea to Ural and the Baltic Sea, to the Croatdom. Surely, he did not envisage any kind of a united South Slavic state under the name of Yugoslavia or so, but he only designed a united Pan-

Croatian political community paving the ideological road for the Habsburg expansionistic policy at the Balkans and the Central Europe in the coming future.

P. R. Vitezović considered the whole territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as the Croato-Slavic land primarily due to the fact that his knowledge about Poland and Lithuania for the most part came from the writings of pro-Polish and pro-Slavic authors who saw Lithuania as the Slavic territory. Lithuania at that time was very much Polonized through the spreading of the Polish language and culture. In addition, Vitezović's apprehension of Lithuania as the Croato-Slavic land came from the facts that the Slavic languages, among the others, were languages of the official correspondence within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and what is more important, that majority of Lithuania's population was of the ethnic Slavic origin. Subsequently, according to his Croatocentric doctrine, a “Slavic” Grand Duchy of Lithuania was actually populated by ethnolinguistic Croats and belonged to a united and Greater *Croatia rediviva*.

Finally, we can agree with Simpson Catherine Anne that for Vitezović the value of the past was equal to that of the present, i.e. the past and the present are juxtaposed and intertwined, and that he occasionally subordinated the present to the past in the light of his national and political ideals (Simpson 1991: 94–107). It explains why in Vitezović's historiographic discourse there is no clear distinction between the past and the present. Also, Blažević Zdenka was right that “both function as argumentative axes around which the functional and trans-

temporal Croatia as a discursive articulation of Vitezović's worldview is being build" (Blažević 2000: 230). Clearly, Vitezović's "metahistoric" Croatia as

"temporalised narrative space" produced by historical discourse" (Velčić 1991: 111) would not be made to fit the geographic boundaries of its contemporary toponym.

Endnotes

¹² For the Serbs, Emperor Dušan was a representative of the national statehoodness, glory and power. At the time of the Ottoman occupation, the Serbian national dream and political ideolo-

gy was framed within the idea to re-establish the Empire of Stefan Dušan (Stanojević 2015: 50–58).

¹³ See, for instance in (Banac 1983, 448–474; Sotirović 2000, 7–24).

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