From the time of their settlement, Slavs in Dalmatia were subjects of the Byzantine empire. The Frankish-Byzantine war at the beginning of the ninth century meant a change, bringing a large part of Dalmatia under Frankish rule. These lands had been first put under control of the marchgrave of Friuli, and after 828 were subdued directly to the kingdom of Italy. The weakening of Frankish control enabled the Croats to gain an almost independent position. Attempts made by emperor Basil I to regain control over Croatia proved to be unsuccessful. After 888 Croatia became even formally independent. This was followed by efforts of Croatian rulers and bishops to reunite the Church of Dalmatia and Croatia. The goal was achieved in 928 by sacrificing the Croatian bishopric. Towards the end of the century relations to Byzantium were intensified and finally Stephen I Držislav was crowned king of Croatia and Dalmatia with a crown given to him by the Byzantine emperor.

1. THE PEACE TREATY OF 812

To go deeper into the problem of overlordship in the former Roman province of Dalmatia after the Slav settlement and prior to the Frankish-Byzantine war would exceed the goal of this article. The lack of sources for almost two centuries prevents us from making anything more than vague presumptions about this early period. Still, I would like to point out that, in my opinion, the Byzantine emperors kept at least a formal sovereignty over the coastal towns and the Slavs and Romans living in their vicinity, at least after 641. The sovereignty over the Slavs was the result of a supposed federation treaty, made in the time of Heraclius or his immediate successors, as I tried to argue in my book, following the thesis of Ferdo Šišić.1

The war between Charles the Great and Byzantium brought considerable territorial gains to the Frankish ruler. Dux Paulinus and bishop Donatus of Zadar delivered Dalmatia to Charles in 805/806, and in the division of the empire in 806 Pipin was given Italy, without explicitly mentioning Dalmatia, Venice or Istria.2 According to the treaty of Aachen made in 812, the province of Dalmatia was split so that only the coastal towns and the islands were left to Constantinople, whereas the Franks obtained the rest of the province, together with Istria, occupied by their troops some decades ago.3 From 815 we have the first news about Slavic representatives coming from the newly gained territories to Paderborn.4

In 817 a Byzantine delegation came to Louis the Pious in order to settle the dispute about the borders in Dalmatia, arising between the Slavic and Roman Dalmatians.5 The use of the ethnic name Dalmatians for subjects of both empires living in the former Roman province shows that at that time the idea of a unified Dalmatia still existed, in spite of the fact that it was divided into its Slavic (Frankish) and Roman (Byzantine) parts.6 It also seems that there was no local Slavic ruler, for the only official in charge of the region mentioned (and summoned before Louis) was Cudaloh, the duke (dux) of Friuli.7

In that same year emperor Louis carried out the Ordinatio imperii according to which the Slavs east of Bavaria were given to his son Louis, whereas the emperor kept Italy with the Slavic-Avar border region, which obviously included Dalmatia.8 A year later we learn about the first presumably Slavic officials in the region. One was Borna, dux in Dalmatia, and the other was Ljudetif, dux (or rector) Pannoniae inferioris.9 We shall leave aside Ljudetif, for the problem of Lower Pannonia is a separate question, and shall turn our attention to Borna and Dalmatia.10

2. FROM DUX DALMATIAE ATQUE LIBURNIAE TO DUX CROATORUM

After possibly being first mentioned as dux Guduscannorum,12 Borna appears several more times in Frankish sources. In 819 he was already dux Dalmatiae, fighting a battle against Ljudetif on the river Kupa, which was the border between Dalmatia and Pannonia.13 During the battle his Guduscani abandoned him, and he was saved thanks to his personal guards, called praetoriani by the Frankish chronicler. After leaving the battlefield, inspite of the defeat, he managed to subdue the Guduscani once again.14

Next year the emperor sent him an army as aid against Ljudetif, but neither Einhard nor Vita Hludovici mention a title in connection with Borna’s name.15 Nevertheless, he must have used the title of dux Dalmatiae atque Liburniae, because Einhard ascribes this title to him one year later, mentioning his death before February 821.16 Finally, Einhard refers to the deceased once again in 823, giving him just the title of dux.17

Borna is the first Slavic ruler in Dalmatia who developed his power under the auspices of the marchgrave of Friuli. He was obviously installed by the Franks, because that is the only way we can explain his title dux Dalmatiae, which is of territorial, and not of ethnic origin.18 Besides, his successor and nephew (grandson?), Vladislav, could assume his
position only after being confirmed by Louis the Pious. It seems that Einhard uses the title dux to describe two different types of Slavic officials. On one hand, the duke is a high official responsible for a whole province or regnum, as in the case of dux Dalmatiae. On the other, a duke is a ruler of a much smaller unit: Einhard mentions the ducuses of the Sorabi, who held, as it was believed, a large part of Dalmatia. That means, that there were several dukes in just one part of a province. Moreover, it is said that Ljudevít killed one of them and took his town. It seems that such a duke ruled only over this one town or one pagus, resembling the Frankish comes who ruled over a county consisting of a civitas and its surrounding territory (the counties were adedpeted to the older system of pagus and civitas, and were divided into centenae or vicariates, remaining us of the Slavonic župani and satnici).

At that time we still miss the Croats in contemporary sources. When representatives of all eastern Slavs met with the emperor at Attigny, there were Abodrites, Sorabs, Wilzi, Bohemians, Moravians, Praedenceneti, and Avars, but no Croats. It is obvious that only those Slavic nations were listed, which lived along the Elbe and the Danube, leaving out those in Dalmatia and Pannonia Inferior. This could be explained in the way that only the representatives of those peoples who recognized the suzerainty of the emperor but did not live within the borders of the empire were invited. The Slavs in Dalmatia are therefore to be seen as part of the empire proper, as in fact even Einhard puts it in his Vita Caroli Magni.

In 828 the ducatus of Friuli was divided into four parts ruled by counts (comites). There were many different suggestions for how these parts should be identified, and some authors see Liburnia, or Istria and Liburnia, as one of these counties. I see no reason why one of the counties could not have been Dalmatia with Liburnia, for there is no evidence of Dalmatia getting out of the empire in the meantime, and we must assume that the province, even after 828, had to be integrated in the organization of the southeastern bordering region of the Frankish lands.

Few conclusions can be driven from the scarce data reaching us from the following years. The Venetian chronicle of John the Deacon mentions a war between the Venetians and the Slavic princeps Mislav, for whom we know, from other sources, that he was predecessor to the Croatian duke Trpinimir. In a charter, probably from 852, Mislav was titled dux, but this tells us little, since we can not be sure whether this was meant in the way the title was used in Italy or among the Franks. We could presume, Croatia belonging to the kingdom of Italy, that the Croatian duke was actually a comes in the Frankish system. It was otherwise a common practice to use such different titles as dux, comes, princeps or marchio to describe the same office, as for instance in the case of Eberhard of Friuli, a contemporary of Mislav who had, as I believe, the same position as the Dalmatian duke. On the other hand, the fact that John the Deacon gives the title of princeps not only to Mislav, but also to some later Dalmatian Slavic/Croatian rulers, suggests their rather independent position, at least from the point of view of the Venetian chronicler.

The Pactum Lotharii from 840, a treaty between Lothar I and Venice against the Slavs, does not mean that the Dalmatian Slavs turned hostile to the king. It is more probable that those against whom the treaty was made were Narentanian Slavs, pirates, whose expeditions reached as far as Venice and the western Adriatic coast. Though Dalmatian Slavs under Mislav also caused trouble to Venice, hostilities ceased after a peace-treaty in 839, so the Pactum could not refer to them.

We have considerably more data about Mislav’s heir to the throne, Trpinimir. In his charter, usually dated 852, Trpinimir calls himself iuuatus munere divino dux Choratorium and twice simply dux. This is the first mention of the Croatian name and, though I would not undertake the attempt to summarize different opinions on the Croatian ethnography, I would like to stress the importance of the new theories, according to which the name of the Croats indeed came into use only in the first half of the 9th c., and was not used to describe one of the peoples settling down in Dalmatia at the beginning of the 7th c. So Trpinimir’s title contains two equally important informations. One is the new title of the Dalmatian dux, who identifies himself as the ruler of an ethnicity and not of a territory (which is some kind of a setback, compared to the situation during the more intensive Frankish sovereignty over Dalmatia). The other is the fact that he describes his power as coming from God, and not being dependent of Lothair’s will. Both changes must indicate a new position of the Dalmatian dux within the empire. By stressing the divine origin of his power and by relying on his ethnic/social group rather than on the Frankish system, Trpinimir pointed out his independent position. On the other hand, he dated his charter also by the reign of the king of Franks in Italy. We could interpret this datation as a signal to possible Byzantine attempts at regaining their old province of Dalmatia (Trpinimir fought a war with the Greeks!), or as a sign of subordination to Lothair as king of the Franks and Italy, which is more probable. Making use of conflicts which broke out among the Carolingians, Trpinimir, with the help of the Croatian warior class, gained a more or less independent position, but he did not fully reject the superstructure of the Frankish realm.

His status can be well-illustrated from the writings of Gotzschalk, who stayed at Trpinimir’s court in 846/847. Göttschalk calls Trpinimir a king (rex Scutorum), and mentions that his subjects called him regnum. If we add to this the title dominus, given twice to Trpinimir by the anonymous scribe who entered his name in the Gospel of Cividale, the territorium regale mentioned in Trpinimir’s charter from 852 and the oldest preserved stone inscription bearing the name and title (dux) of a Croatian/Dalmatian ruler, we must conclude that his position was one of a king, similar to the rulers of Benevent, Spoleto or Brittany. The comparison with Benevent is very interesting, because Archis II, though earlier than Trpinimir, was honored in the same way: he was a duke who took over royal rights within his patria not ex usiose of the emperor, but suo arbitrio. Wolfram interprets Archis’ title dominus as an expression of the concrete royal power over the Lombards in Benevent, closely connected to the ethnic origin of Archis’ power.

If we could prove that Trpinimir really ordered his effigy to be made in the church of St. George in Putall, our picture of a Croatian king bearing the title dux would be completed.

3. FROM DUX CROATORUM TO REX DALMATIAE ET CROATIAE

There is no mention of a crown being in use in ninthcentury Croatia, but in 1075 two older crowns were mentioned as being kept in the Benedictine monastery in Vrana. One of them was most probably the crown sent by the Byzantine emperor Basil II to Stephen I Držislav, but we know
nothing about the other one. Therefore, it is not impossible that it was already in use in the ninth century, though it is generally believed, without any real evidence, that Tomislav was the first king to be crowned in about 925.47

At that time even the function of the duke seems to be more clear. In Trpinšćir’s charter there is a list of counts (župani), local officials governing a county or pagus,48 but also forming the court of the dux. This corresponds with the Frankish system, established in the mid-ninth century, of introducing a duke between the counts and the royal palace. The office of the count gradually tended to remain in the family.49 Several counties formed a regnum. In the 9th c. we have several regna which were reigned not by a king, but by dukes. During the late Carolingian period all in all eighteen regna were mentioned in the sources.50

Trpinšćir’s successor, Domagoj, came from another lineage, but that did not influence his position considerably. Although he had come to power by force, expelling Trpinšćir’s sons from the country, pope Nicholas I granted him the title of dux gloriōsus in a letter otherwise regarding the problem of Slavic pirates under Domagoj’s command.51 Dux gloriōsus is a title reserved only for independent rulers, and corresponds well with the title Scavorum princeps given to Domagoj by John the Deacon.52 In 871 Domagoj took part in the expedition of Louis II against the Arabs in Bari.53 The opportunity was used by Byzantium to raid the Croatian coast, allegedly in retaliation for the capture of papal envoys returning from Constantinople. In reality, most probably, Basil I, giving refuge to Trpinšćir’s son Zdeslav, tried to bring him back to the Croatian throne, in order to put Dalmatia again under Byzantine control. Three years later we learn from a letter of pope John VIII about a conspiracy against Domagoj, which the duke put down in blood.54 This event was certainly a continuation of Byzantine policy, which finally reached its goal two years after Domagoj’s death, when Basil managed to bring Zdeslav to his father’s throne.55

Though this change was surely a turning point in Croatian politics towards Byzantium and the Franks, with Zdeslav seeking protection from the eastern emperor, it meant little for the position of the Croatian ruler within the international system of power. Pope John VIII called Zdeslav gloriōsus comes Scavorum and gloria tua, whereas John the Deacon speaks of Scavorum ducatus.56

The Byzantine intermezzo was a short one, and after only one year a certain Branimir, whose origin we do not know, killed Zdeslav and became ruler of the Croats and Slavs.57 It seems that at first he recognized the Frankish suzerainty, for in the chronicle of Thomas, the Archdeacon of Split, from the 13th c., there is a mention of Marinus, the archbishop of Split, who lived in the time of king Charles and Branimir, duke of the Slavs.58 Such a piece of information could originate only from a charter mentioning both rulers. Indeed, although there are no charters preserved from Branimir’s time, we can find a reminiscence on one of them in a charter issued by the Hungarian king Geyza II in 1158.59 Branimir is there mentioned as dux Scavororum.

Branimir came to the throne in 879, the same year as did Charles the Fat. He immediately wrote to the pope asking him for blessing. John VIII answered soon, stating that he blessed Branimir, his dilectus filius, and his people.60 In other letters written in 879-880 John VIII uses princeps, excellentissimus vir, gloriōsus comes.61 This is usually interpreted by Croatian historians as a proof of some kind of an “international recognition” of Croatia, but we should be more careful making such a statement.62 We saw already that even Branimir’s predecessors were treated as independent rulers, even though they still recognized the kings of Italy as their sovereigns. There is no reason to believe that Branimir did anything more than renew the relations between the Croatian and Frankish rulers the way they had been before Zdeslav took over the power in the country.

The great change, I would like to argue, happened in 888. It was the year when Charles the Fat died and the empire definitely fell apart. A number of smaller kingdoms appeared all over the former empire.63 There is no strong evidence that Branimir used this situation to gain complete and formal independency. I do not even believe such a step had to be undertaken. Each grade of sovereignty was achieved by small, informal steps, usually with a strong symbolic value.64 The relics of Branimir’s step towards complete independency are to be looked for, in my opinion, in what is left of an inscription from the church in Gornji Muć, a place situated almost in the centre of Croatia’s heartland. The inscription is incomplete, but we can clearly read Branimir’s name and the year 888, the sixth indication.65 This is one of the few dated inscriptions from Croatia, and certainly one of the best quality. We do not know the reason for its execution, but I believe that an inscription of such quality and significance was ordered in relation to a very important event. It can hardly be a coincidence that the first dated inscription from Croatia bears the year 888, the year of the final collapse of the empire and the birth of a number of autonomous realms.66

The charter of Branimir’s successor, Muncimir, from 892 offers new evidence of the growing prestige of the Croatian ruler.67 In it Muncimir calls himself divino munere iuvavit croatorum dux, just as did his father Trpinšćir forty years before. The scribe added his formula: domino meo Municmio gloriōso duce. Three years later, Muncimir’s name and title, together with the year 895, were carved in a stone inscription in St. Luke’s church in Uzdolje. Muncimir was called princeps, once again giving proof of his independency.68

In this place we should pay attention to some ecclesiastical problems closely connected to the question of political organization in what used to be Roman Dalmatia. There is, again, no possibility to go into a detailed prehistory of the problem. For two centuries after Slavs settled in Dalmatia, the very reduced number of Dalmatian bishops, clustered along the coast and on the islands, was in charge of all the Christians who survived in the interior of the province.69 Though the Slavs remained mainly pagan, there was no political border between them and the Byzantine towns, so that there was no obstacle for the integration of the remaining Christians into the coastal bishoprics. Things did not immediately change even after 812. Like in Istria, whose bishops remained under the jurisdiction of the patriarch in Grado, the Christians within the Frankish part of Dalmatia were still cared for by Byzantine Dalmatian clergy.70 It was only after the schism of Potius that things changed. Dalmatian bishops, including the archbishop of Split, stood on Potius’ side, while the Croatian duke remained loyal to the pope. Therefore a new bishopric was established in Nin, covering at least theoretically, all of Croatia. This was also an important step in stressing the independent position of the Croatian rulers.71

This was a big change in the traditional system of ecclesiastical organization in the former province of Dalmatia. In Late Antiquity the province was organized, with the metropolitan church of Salona at its head. After Salona became
victim of barbaric raids and social and economic changes in the 6th and 7th c., the archbishops’ see was moved to nearby Split. The archbishops of Split called themselves archbishops of Salona, stressing the continuity of their primacy in the province. The establishment of the Nin bishopric, in about 864, meant the split and collapse of the ecclesiastical province.

The first attempt at a new unification was made by Theodosius, bishop of Nin, in the time of Branimir. We learn about it from the letters of pope Stephen VI, which are usually dated 886-888. I believe they should be dated in 888, the whole action of the bishop being a part of Branimir’s policy of building up a fully-independent kingdom. After the death of the archbishop of Split, Marinus, Theodosius tried (and almost surely succeeded) to get the position of the archbishop of Salona for himself. I think that he actually never moved from Nin to Split, as it is usually thought, but only took the title of the Salonian archbishop in order to reunite the province, by placing its new centre in Nin and using the old tradition of the Salonian church. Pope Stephen mentions his work on the rebuilding of churches, which fell victim to barbaric rage. I believe that this was not meant in the way that Theodosius was erecting or mending buildings, but rather bringing into life extinguished bishoprics of which we learn a few decades later, at the council of Split in 928.

In this way we can explain the argument arising between Aldefreda, the bishop of Nin, and the archbishop of Split in the time of Muncimir in 892. Aldefreda argued that Trpimir had given in 852 the church of St. George on Putalj only temporarily to the archbishop of Split, as long as he performed his duty. Peter, the archbishop of Split, claimed the church was a gift from Trpimir to his predecessors. Muncimir decided in favour of the archbishop. It seems to me that we should try to explain this event in the following way: there is no doubt that Trpimir gave the church to the archbishop of Salona, what was in his time the title of the archbishop of Split. In 888, however, the bishop of Nin claimed the title of the archbishop of Salona and, as it seems, got it confirmed by pope Stephen VI. All the rights originating from this title belonged now to the bishop of Nin and so did the possession of the church of St. George. After the death of Theodosius and the enthronement of Muncimir, son of Trpimir, Theodosius’ idea of the unification of the province was abandoned and the authority of the bishop of Nin became reduced to the territory of Croatia, while the archbishop of Split could not regain the title of archbishop of Salona. Therefore Aldefreda, the bishop of Nin, claimed the church of St. George in vain.

We know nothing about the way Muncimir came to the throne, but we can assume, since he was the brother of Zdeslav, that Byzantium played a role in the comeback of the Trpimirć family dynasty. Relations between Croatia and the eastern empire became more close in the course of the Bulgarian wars, during which the Croatian rulers stood firmly on the side of the Byzantine emperors. This resulted, in the 920s, with the nomination of Tomislav as the administrator of the Byzantine province of Dalmatia, and the informal union of Dalmatia and Croatia. The synods in Split in 925 and 928 strengthened this union by finally realizing Theodosius’ idea of the renewal of the ecclesiastical province. Only this time it was the archbishop of Split who was to become metropolitan of the province, and not the bishop of Nin, though Gregory of Nin tried hard to achieve the title. The final result was the abolition of the Nin bishopric and the establishment of the foundation prior to its foundation in the 860s.

But the ecclesiastical organization did not only resemble the situation before the Frankish conquest of Dalmatia/Croatia. In the course of the tenth century, Croatia came more and more under the influence of Byzantium. Finally the Croatian king Stephen I Držislav got the title of a Roman patricius and eparch, together with the symbols of royal power. He and his successors were entitled to carry the title of kings of Dalmatia and Croatia, using a territorial definition for the first time after the first half of the ninth century. The reign of emperor Basil II was the culmination of the renewed Byzantine influence in Croatia.

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1 I would like to thank the Max-Planck-Institut in Göttingen, whose wonderful library I used, also for writing this article, during my stay there in 1996.
5 F. RACKEL, Documenta historiae chronicae periodum antiquam illustrantia (Zagreb: JAZU 1877), p. 314-316; F. SIŠIĆ, Povijest Hrvata, p. 310. P. RICHE, Les Carolingiens. Une famille qui fit l’Europe (quoted after the German edition: Die Karolinger. Eine Familie formt Europa /dtv: München 1995, p. 156), is not precise enough, saying that Byzantium was left in control of Dalmatia. In fact, only a small coastal part of the province was left to the eastern empire, whereas the Franks got the larger part. Therefore Einhard is right when praising Charlemagne also for the conquest of this province: P. RICHE, Die Karolinger, p. 115.
6 F. RACKEL, Documenta, p. 316-317.
9 One of the most influential and indeed excellent books on the Carolingians is the one by R. MCKITTERICK, The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, p. 751-987 (London and New York: Longman 1993). Unfortunately, when writing about Dalmatia (p. 129), R. MCKITTERICK quotes neither primary, nor secondary literature, making a number of mistakes (e.g.: when proclaiming Ljudevit ruler of Dalmatian Slavs, Vojnomir chieftain of the Croatians who accepted baptism, Borna and Ljudevit affirming their loyalty to Louis the Pious in 814).

2 F. RACI, Documenta, p. 320.


4 About the possibility that Borna, on this occasion, was just called dux without being brought into direct connection with the Guduskei, see the article by M. ANČIĆ in this volume. Anyway, the Guduskei were Borna’s subjects, as later events will show.


7 F. RACI, Documenta, p. 324.

8 F. RACI, Documenta, p. 325.

9 F. RACI, Documenta, p. 326.

10 In the same time Louis proved his abilities as a ruler by ordering native rulers not only to the Slavs on the fringes of his empire, but also to the Bretons: R. MCKITTERICK, The Frankish Kingdoms, p. 127-128.

11 F. ŠIŚIĆ, Povijest Hrvata, p. 318.

12 F. RACI, Documenta, p. 328. Peripheral regions of the empire (Provence, Saxonia, Brittany, Bavaria etc.) were politically and administratively organized into small regna, from which the duchies later developed. These areas kept their territorial and non-Frankish integrity, and were ruled by either one of the king’s sons or a local magistrate installed by the king: R. MCKITTERICK, The Frankish Kingdoms, p. 96-97.

13 F. RACI, Documenta, p. 329. Another similarity of comites/counts and Jupani was the custom of the local magistrate to be appointed count in his district, whereby some of them served also in the royal household. Through the count the king transmitted his will to his subjects: R. MCKITTERICK, The Frankish Kingdoms, p. 87. According to REGNIO PRUM, ducaus could also mean the power of a marcher count: R. MCKITTERICK, The Frankish Kingdoms, p. 252.

14 F. RACI, Documenta, p. 327.

15 On the Praedencenchi BOWLUS, Franks, p. 93-94.

16 H. KRAHWINKLER, Friedl, p. 190, interprets the relation of Borna’s Slavs to the empire as a recognition of nominal overlordship, comparable to the relation between the Bavarians and Caranthanians. R. MCKITTERICK, The Frankish Kingdoms, p. 129, believes Dalmatia to have been a Frankish march under the secular jurisdiction of the marchgrave or duke of Friuli. F. ŠIŚIĆ, Povijest Hrvata, p. 307, thought that the Croatians had the duties of military service and presenting yearly gifts, but were otherwise free.

17 Review of different opinions in H. KRAHWINKLER, Friedl, p. 194-196.

18 F. RACI, Documenta, p. 3-4, 335.

19 Codex diplomaticus Regni Croaticae, Dalmatiae et Slavorum (further: CD), vol. I (Zagreb: JAZU 1967), p. 3-8. On the attempt to date the charter a decade earlier, see L. MARGETIĆ, Bilješke u vezi s zastankom hrvatske države u 9. stoljeću, in: N. BUDAK (ed.), Etremogenza Hrvata (Zagreb 1996), p. 145-146. One of his arguments was that Lothar after 840 never returned to Italy, and therefore could after that year not be mentioned in the charter as ruling Italy. But, Lothar was also in Italy in 847. Besides, a large part of his charters issued after 840, and especially after 843, are dedicated to recipients in Italy, H. ZIELINSKI, Ein unbeschriebener italienizier Kaiser Lothars I. im Jahre 847, in: Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken 70 (1996), p. 1-22.


21 H. KRAHWINKLER, Friedl, p. 245-246.

22 L. MARGETIĆ, Bilješke, p. 146-147, argues that Mislaw used the weekend position in Dalmatia of both Byzantium and the Franks after 829 to establish an independent dynasty. Though we could generally agree with Margetić, one must not forget that the empire, after a temporary crisis, regained its strength during the last years of Louis the Pious’ reign: J. L. NELSON, The Frankish World 750-860 (London and Rio Grande: Hambledon Press 1996), p. 37-50. On the meaning of the title princeps E. GARMIS-CORNIDES, Die langobardischen Fürstenstitel (774-1077), in: H. WOLFRAM (ed.), Ititulatio II, p. 341-452. It is noteworthy mentioning that in two lands on the fringes of the empire, namely in Benevent and Brittany, local rulers, using the title princeps, took over royal rights and even crowned themselves, without becoming “real” kings. E. GARMIS-CORNIDES, Die langobardischen Fürstenstitel, p. 357-363. This should be kept in mind when discussing the position of the Croatian rulers in the ninth century.


25 F. ŠIŚIĆ, Povijest Hrvata, p. 327. We should also mention the Poema of Fanta that the original text of this agreement dates back to 805 or immediately after 810. A. FANTA, Die Verträge der Kaiser mit Venedig bis zum Jahre 893, in: Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung, Ergänzungsband 1 (1885), p. 74. Šišić thought that the treaty between Venice and Mislaw was maybe a result of Lothar’s mediation.

26 See footnote 27.


28 This could indicate that he was anointed, as were some other dukes of his time or earlier. K. BRUNNER, Oppositionelle Gruppen im Karolingereich (Wien-Köln-Graz 1979), p. 53; E. GARMIS-CORNIDES, Langobardische Fürstenstitel, p. 361, 362, 370, 382, 383.

29 After checking the entire text of Gottschalk (D. C. LAMBOT, ed., Oeuvres théologique et grammaticale de Godescul d’Orbais, Specilgiens sacrum Lovaniense, vol. 20 (Louvain 1945)), who informs us about Tripimir’s war against the Greeks, I must give up my earlier suggestion in: N. BUDAK, Prva stoljeća, p. 73, that the famous theologian, by using the name “Greeks”, could have meant the Venetians, and not the Byzantines.
It is not possible to go in this paper into detail about the position of early medieval kings. Therefore, let us just note a few facts. There is evidence about the first crowning of a (Frankish) king only from 838, and the first anointing from 848. Even in the tenth century it was not necessary for a king to be crowned in order to perform his duties. During the ninth century there certainly was no unified inauguration ritual for kings. Moreover, even in the tenth century the situation was not clear - Widukind calls Otto I both *dux* and *rex*: J. NELSON, *Inauguration rituals*, in: P. H. SAWYER and I. WOOD (eds.), *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds: University Press 1977, 1979), p. 55-62.


All traces of an allegedly existing document, mentioning mosaics, representing members of the ruling dynasty in the church of St. George, are lost. Archaeological excavations of the church revealed no remains either of wall mosaics or frescoes (I thank Tomič Burić cordially for this information).


14. CDI, p. 139-141.


17. R. MCKITTERICK, *The Frankish Kingdoms*, p. 87-88. The *dux* or duchy, in contrast to the counties, was not a fixed region until the end of the Carolingian period - in the ninth century it was understood as a command temporarily entrusted to a person who had a number of counts under him, and whose functions were primarily in the military domain.


22. CDI, p. 10.


27. CDI, II, p. 87.


30. The benediction was first used by John VIII in 878. In Troyes, he blessed Louis Stammerer, from whom he expected help. The idea of blessing was important at that time, though new, but its real meaning developed only later: W. ULLMANN, *The Carolingian Renaissance and the Idea of Kingship* (London: Methuen & Co. 1969), p. 99-100.


32. The Carolingian state can be well compared with the development in Brittany in the times of Nominoa, when there was a gradual development towards, rather than a sudden development of, kingship. W. DAVIES, *On the distribution of political power in Brittany in the mid-nineteenth century*, in: M. T. GIBSON and J. L. NELSON (eds), *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom* (Oxford 1981), p. 87-105.


Bizantski je protunapad vratio pod vlast istočnog carstva dalmatinske gradove i otoka, što je potvrđeno mirom u Aachenu 812. g. Time je dotad barem teoretski jedinstvena Dalmacija podijeljena na dva dijela: bizantski i franacki.

Franacki je dio Dalmacije podvrgnut Furlanskoj markgrofoviji, što je razvidno iz spora oko granica između oba dijela nekada jedinstvene provincije, a do kojega je došlo 817. g. Bizantsko je poslanstvo došlo pred Ludovika Pobožnog, kako bi postavilo pitanje razgraničenja u Dalmaciji. No, spor nije mogao biti odmah riješen, jer furlanski markgraf Kadalo, koji je bio zadužen za dalmatinske granice, nije bio nazočan. Čini se da u tom trenutku još nije bilo domaćeg, hrvatskog/slavenskog upravitelja u Dalmaciji, jer se nitko u toj funkciji ne spominje u raspravi oko granica.

Iste je godine car proveo Ordinatio imperii, kojom je Dalmacija, zajedno s avaro-slavenskim graničnim područjem, ostala vezana uz Italiju. Vjerojatno zbog stabiliziranja prilika u pokrajini, a možda i zbog laksog provođenja nove podjele, javljaju se od slijedeće godine u Dalmaciji i savsko-dravskom međurječju domaći upravitelji s titulom dux. Da je riječ o domaćim ljudima postavljenim od Franaka, a ne o gentilnim vodama, vidi se iz njihovih titula, čija je izvorište u teritorijalnom, a ne gentilnom uređenju. O ulozi franackog vadara u procesu imenovanja kneza Dalmacije i Liburnije sjedište slučaj Vladislava, koji je vlast preuzeo nakon što je bio izabran od naroda, ali tek po pristanku kralja.

O uključenosti Dalmacije u franacko carstvo sjedišci i činjenica da su se na saboru u Attignju našli predstavnici raznih slavenskih naroda koji su živjeli uz istočne franacke granice, ali se među njima ne spominju ni Hrvati, niti Dalmatinci. To bi značilo da su oni živjeli unutar granica carstva, a ne izvan njih.

828. dolazi do znatnih promjena u ustroju carstva na jugoistoku. Nakon neuspješne obrane savsko-dravskog međurečja od Bugara, Furlanska je markgrofovija ukinuta i podijeljena na četiri dijela. O tome koji su to dijelovi bili, postoji u znanosti niz različitih mišljenja, ali nijedno nije uzmilo u obzir Dalmaciju kao jednu od osamostaljenih cjelina. Kako, međutim, Dalmacija i dalje ostaje unutar carstva, odnosno Italjskog kraljevstva, gotovo je nemoguće zaslužiti da uprava ona ne bi bila jednom od novih graničnih jedinica.

S raspadom Furlanske markgrofovije dolazi zasigurno do slabljena utjecaja Franaka na Dalmaciju. Istovremeno, dalmatinski gradovi izmiću kontroli Bizanta, te nastaje potreba dalmatinsko-liburnskih knezova za jačim oslonom na Franke. U takvim okolnostima započinje proces osamostaljivanja provincije na čije čelo dolazi domaća, gentilna dinastija. To je vrijeme kada se napokon javlja ime Hrvata, nositelja moći gentilne dinastije.

Potpuno je afirmacija hrvatska vlast stekla u vrijeme Trpimira. Iako i u dalje priznavao suverenitet kralja Italije, Trpimir je na suvremenike ostavljao dojam potpuno samostalnog vladara. Najbolje se to vidi iz njegovih titula, zabilježenih u izvorima različita podrijetla. Iz naslova rex, dominus i dux može se zaključiti da je kralj položaj bio kraljevski, jer analogni primjeri sa Zapada potvrđuju da su kraljevi ovisni od Francima nosili iste titule (u Beneventu, Spoleto, Bretagni). S druge strane, Trpimir okuplja oko sebe župane, što odgovara praksi Franaka, u kojih se sredinom 9. st. između grofova (comes) i kraljevske palače postavlja dux. On bi upravljao oblastima označenom kao regnum, a kakvih je u kasnokarolinškom razdoblju u izvorima nabrojeno ukupno osamnaest.

Domagoj je u odnosu na Franke zadržao isti položaj kakav je imao njegov prethodnik. Titula gloriosus dux, kojom ga časti papa, namijenjena je samostalnim vladarima, ali se suverenitet kralja Italije očitovalo u Domagojevu sudje-
lovanju u opsadi Barija. Zavjera protiv Domagoja, a koja je
eravna ugušena, vjerovatno je bila prvi pokušaj Bizanta da
ponovno stekne vlast nad Hrvatskom (Dalmacijom). Nakon
dolaska bizantske flote u Jadran i uspostave (obnove?) te-
matskog uređenja, Bizant je svakako postao važnijim činite-
jem na Jadranu no što su to bili oslabljeni Franci. Pa ipak,
uspjeh postignut nametanjem Zdeslava za hrvatskog vla-
dara bio je kratkotrajan. Njegovim uhojstvom Branimir nasta-
vla politiku svojih prethodnika i ostaje još neko vrijeme
vezan uz frančačkog vladara Karla Debelog.

Papin blagoslov iz 879. ne može se tumačiti kao "među-
narodno priznanje" onovremene Hrvatske. Papa je blago-
slov uveo u politički ritual tek nešto prije toga, u kontaktu s
Ludovikom Mucavim, i u drugačijem značenju. Osim toga,
pape su hrvatske vladare i prije toga označavali titulama
namijenjenim samostalnim vladarima.

Do prekida s Francima ipak je moralo doći upravo u vrijem
jene Branimira, ako ni zbog čega drugoga, a onda zbog toga
što se carstvo 888., nakon smrti Karla Debelog, definitivno
raspalo. U tom se kontekstu možda smije naslućivati razlog
nastanku natpisa iz Gornjeg Muća. Natpis kvalitetom svoje
izrade svjedoči o važnosti, a godina njegova klesanja poka
ja se s godinom raspada carstva, kada na njegovim ruševina
ima niču neovisna kraljevstva.

Razvoj crkvenih odnosa prati samo u određenoj mjeri
političke prilike. Od vremena obnove crkvene hijerarhije u
Dalmaciji sredinom 7. st., dalmatinski su biskupi bili nad-
ležni za čitavo područje provincije, bez obziра na to koliko
je daleko u uniutrašnjost stvarno dosizao njihov utjecaj. To
se nije promijenilo niti nakon 812. g., iako je došlo do po-
ličke podjele Dalmacije. Kao što je bizantski patrijarh u
Gradu bio nadležan za Istru, tako su i bizantski dalmatinski
biskupi bili nadležni za frančačke podanike u Dalmaciji.

U vrijeme Focijeve službe raspada se dotad jedinstva crk-
vena provincija. Dalmatinski biskupi pristaju uz carigradskog
patrijarha, a za Hrvatsku se osniva nova biskupija sa sjedištem
u Ninu. Do prvih pokušaja obnove provincije dolazi u vrijeme
ninskog biskupa Teodozija, a možda i u svezi s potpunim
osamostaljivanjem Branimirove Hrvatske. Čini se da bi Teo-
dozijevo nastojanja oko stjecanja salonitanske nadbiskupije
trebalo interpretirati drugačije no što se to dosad činilo. Teo-
dozije je postao salonitanski nadbiskupom zadržavši svoje
sjedište u Ninu, a ne otišao u Split. Funkcija salonitanskog
nadbiskupa značila je vodeći položaj u jedinstvenoj crkvenoj
provinciji, a ne funkciju splitskog prelata. Na temelju toga je
Teodosijev nasljednik Aldefreda tražio crkvu Sv. Jurja na
Putalju, jer ju je Trpimir darovao salonitanskom nadbiskupu,
koju je funkciju preuzeo hrvatski biskup.

Na taj se način može tumačiti i nastojanje ninskog bis-
kupa Grgura da bude izabran za metropolitou ponovno uje-
dinjene hrvatsko-dalmatinske Crkve.

Stjecanjem potpune političke neovisnosti, proširiva-
njem vlasti hrvatskih kraljeva na sjever i ujedinjenjem crk-
vene provincije okončani su integracijski procesi započeti
u prethodnim desetljećima. S druge strane, vezivanje hrvat-
skih vladara uz Bizant tijekom ratova s Bugarima dovest
će Hrvatsku u tješnju vezu s Carigradom, što će simbolično
kulminirati krunidom Stjepana I Držislava krunom
dobivenom iz Bizanta. Vladavina Ivana I i Bazilija II bit će
razdoblje obnovljenog bizantskog utjecaja u Hrvatskoj.