

## TWO PUBLIC INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE GREEK COLONY OF TANAIS AT THE MOUTH OF THE DON RIVER ON THE SEA OF AZOV

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### Introduction

More than ten male personal names are engraved on two marble tablets, which were in the time of their inception placed in the city-square or *forum* of the Hellenic settlement of *Tanais*. Among the names are of those of three men: Horoúathos, Horoáthos, and Horóathos (Χορούαθ[ος], Χοροάθος, Χορόαθος), which convincingly recall the Croatian national name. *Tanais* was located at the mouth of the Tanais River, today the Don River, across from today's town of Azov on the northeast rim of the Sea of Azov. This former Greek settlement protrudes out toward the northeast. In antiquity it played center stage in the meeting of Asia and Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Russian archeologist Pavel Mihajlovič Leontjev (1822-1874) discovered the fragments of these inscriptions, along with a number of others, in September 1853. Today they are housed with other monuments from *Tanais* in the lapidary of the Hermitage Museum in Russia's St. Petersburg. Due to the efforts of Croatia's ambassador to the Russian Federation, Hidajet Bišćević, their plaster impressions were delivered to Zagreb.<sup>2</sup> They were initially stored in the basement of Zagreb's School Museum, then sent to the monastery of Herzegovina's Franciscan Province in Dubrava, Zagreb,<sup>3</sup> and finally placed in the atrium of the palace of *Matica Hrvatska* in Zagreb.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Herman Bengston, *Griechische Geschichte. Von den Anfängen bis in die Römische Kaiserzeit*. Siebten Auflage. (München: Verlag C. H. Beck München, 1986), 74.

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Biondić, "Hrvati do stoljeća sedmog," *Hrvatski domobran*, Nr. 4-5 (2000), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> T. Držić, "Uz prvo predstavljanje tanajske ploče u Hrvatskoj ponuđena i knjiga fra Silvija Grubišića, koja je u bivšoj Jugoslaviji bila krimen. Knjiga o hrvatskom praiskonu," *Večernji list*, 30 October 2001, p. 17; "Predstavljene Tanajske ploče," *Glas koncila*, 4 November 2001, 26; Husein Kadić, "Grubišićeva knjiga svjetlo dana ugledala u New Yorku," *Večernji list*, 18 November 2001, p. 45; Marijan Majstorović, "Ploče s najstarijim hrvatskim imenom," *Hrvatsko slovo. Tjednik za kulturu*, VII/344 (2001), p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Ivan Biondić, "Tanajske ploče – europska osobnica Hrvata," *Hrvatsko slovo. Tjednik za kulturu*, IX/425 (2003), pp. 16-17.; Marijan Majstorović, "Dvostruka potvrda iranske teorije," *Hrvatsko slovo. Tjednik za kulturu*, IX/427 (2003), p. 2222.

## I. A Survey of Modern Historiography

If we make an exception of Stjepan Krizin Sakač (1890-1973), a Croatian Jesuit, professor of Eastern church history at the Papal Oriental Institute in Rome, and founder of the theory of the Iranian origin of the Croats; Dominik Mandić (1889-1973), a leading Croatian historian in exile after the Second World War; and Radoslav Katičić, a prominent Croatian philologist and professor of Slavic studies at Vienna University, not a single other Croatian scholar penetrated the essence or content of these two sources, despite of the fact that they have been available to the public for the last century and a half. The majority of scholars wrote about them in a superficial and sometimes malicious manner. Ferdo Šišić (1869-1940), a professor of Croatian medieval history at Zagreb's Faculty of Philosophy, off-handedly mentioned these two sources in his synthesis of Croatian history: "In the end Pogodin called attention to the personal name, Χοροάθος, Χορούαθος, on two inscriptions that were found in Tanais from the second or third century A.D."<sup>5</sup> Cultural historian Josip Horvat (1896-1968) similarly presented the Tanaisian inscriptions in his 1,000 year anniversary synthesis of Croatian culture: "On the shore of the Sea of Azov, in the city of Tanais, where there is now the town of Azov, Russian archeologists found in the inscriptions from the second and third century A.D. the personal name Horoathos and Horouathos."<sup>6</sup> In contrast to both Šišić and Horvat, Sakač writes about the Tanaisian inscriptions in a careful analysis:

[...] the content of the Tanaisian inscription from the year 220 clearly discerns that Horoat was an Iranian and that his entire family was Iranian. His father was called Sandarzius, his brother Voraspes, and these are Iranian names. The city of Tanais had in the second and third century A.D. a dual populace, the indigenous Irano-Sarmatians and the foreign Greeks, and two administrations, Greek and Iranian. At the head of the Greek administration was the "hellenarchos," the leader of the Hellenes, Greek colonist-merchants. And at the head of the Iranians were four archons, amongst who are mentioned Horoat and Voraspes, the sons of Sandarzius. The Greeks had their part of the city along of the harbor and the Iranians had theirs. Among the Iranians, Horoat's family must have been very respected, since he and his brother formed half of the city's high administration! And in all likelihood that same archon, Horoat, was a patron of the religious brotherhood that was mentioned twenty to thirty years earlier on the older Tanaisian

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<sup>5</sup> Ferdo Šišić, *Povijest Hrvata u vrijeme narodnih vladara* (Zagreb: Izdano troškom naklade školskih knjiga. Tisak zaklade tiskare 'Narodnih novina', 1925), pp. 237-238; the same in Ferdo Šišić, *Povijest Hrvata u vrijeme narodnih vladara* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1990), pp. 237-238.

<sup>6</sup> Josip Horvat, *Kultura Hrvata kroz 1000 godina*, II. edition (Zagreb: Tipografija d. d., 1939), p. 31; the same in Josip Horvat, *Kultura Hrvata kroz 1000 godina. Prvi svezak* (Zagreb: Globus, 1980), p. 37.

tablet, which was written during the reign of the great Bosporan king Sauromat (175-211). And the name of the city itself, Tanais, is Iranian.<sup>7</sup>

Miroslav Krleža (1893-1981), a prominent pro-communist writer and lexicographer from Zagreb, mocked Sakač's interpretation of the Tanaisian inscriptions and his theory of the Persian origin of the Croats as historical lunacy.<sup>8</sup> Until the collapse of Yugoslav Communism, every debate regarding these sources or the Iranian theory of Croatian origin was dangerous. Nada Klaić (1920-1988), a professor of Croatian medieval history at Zagreb's Faculty of Philosophy, did not show even the slightest interest in the Tanaisian inscriptions. She mentions them only en route to criticizing the Iranian-Kavkazian theory of Croatian ethno-genesis, not letting pass the opportunity to demonstrate her modest familiarity with geography.<sup>12</sup> Historian and lexicographer Trpimir Macan showed more consideration toward the sources. Regarding the Tanaisian inscriptions, Macan, discussing the name and origin of the Croats in his overview of Croatian history, says: "We Croats do not know the meaning or origin of the Croat name. The name appears for the first time in the second and third century in Azov, at the mouth of the Don River, on two Greek inscriptions, as the personal names Horoathos and Horuathos, which are believed to be of Iranian origin."<sup>13</sup> Even if the Tanaisian inscriptions are only mentioned in passing in the encyclopedic entry, more specifically, in the section dealing with the origin of the Croatian name, the Slovenian historian Bogo Grafenauer (1916-1995) writes of them: "Pogodin's advanced notification (1901) of Horóathos or Horúathos, the name of the archon in Tanais from the second and third century, which he explained from the Slavic Хърватъ, opened the way for an Iranian etymology."<sup>14</sup> Grafenauer did not significantly change his judgment of the Tanaisian inscriptions in the second edition of the Yugoslav Encyclopedia.<sup>15</sup> Grafenauer's definition of the Tanaisian inscriptions and of the person with the Croatian name mentioned on them were adopted in the Croatian Lexicon: "M. P. Pogodin (1901) was the first to call attention to the name Horóathos or Horúathos, the name of the archon in Tanais (Azov) from the second and third century. He was also the first to open the way

<sup>7</sup> Stjepan Krizin Sakač, *Hrvati do stoljeća VII. Izabrani radovi o hrvatskoj etnogenezi (I. dio)* (Zagreb: Darko Sagrak, 2000), pp. 47-48.

<sup>8</sup> Miroslav Krleža, *Pijana novembarska noć 1918 i drugi zapisi* (Sarajevo: Oslobođenje, 1973), pp. 217-218.

<sup>12</sup> Nada Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata u ranom srednjem vijeku*, II. edition (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1975), p. 61.

<sup>13</sup> Trpimir Macan, *Povijest hrvatskog naroda* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1971), p. 14; Trpimir Macan, *Povijest Hrvatskog naroda*, II. edition (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske – Školska knjiga, 1992), p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije, 4., Hil - Jugos.* (Zagreb: Izdanje i naklada Leksikografskog zavoda FNRJ, MCMLX), s. v. "Hrvati. I. Ime", by Bogo Grafenauer, p. 37.

<sup>15</sup> *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije, 5., Hrv - Janj.* (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod 'Miroslav Krleža', 1988), s. v. "Hrvati, južnoslavenski narod u SFRJ. I. Ime.", by Bogo Grafenauer, p. 1.

to an Iranian theory.”<sup>16</sup> This Grafenauer-like-evaluation of the Tanaisian inscriptions shows that the author did not even lay an eye on them. For it is not only the question of the archon, but of the other two male members of the priestly association with totally identical names. Jaroslav Šidak (1903-1986), a professor of Croatian modern history at Zagreb’s Faculty of Philosophy, judges the Tanaisian inscriptions in his encyclopedic synthesis of Croatian history to 1914 as Grafenauer did, but further restricting the Croats to Slavic characteristics: “Their [the Croats] tribal name appeared, to be sure, at the turn of the second century at the mouth of the Don in two Greek inscriptions as a personal name of Iranian origin, but the Slavic characteristics of the Croats at the time of their immigration is beyond doubt.”<sup>17</sup> This same qualification of the Tanaisian inscriptions was carried over into the second edition of Šidak’s encyclopedic text.<sup>18</sup>

After the appearance of several of my own papers on these sources,<sup>20</sup> Gordan Ravančić, a young historian from Zagreb, turned to them with the aim of disputing the Iranian theory of the origin of the Croats, emphasizing how it is “rather difficult to draw any kind of direct connection between those people from late antiquity (probably of Iranian origin) and today’s Croats in the area where they now live.” And, Ravančić continues: “with a total reconstruction and translation of the text, that theory is brought into question.”<sup>21</sup> As far as I know, no one until now has succeeded in reconstructing the older Tanaisian inscription in its entirety. Without finding the missing fragments of the text it is hard to believe that anyone will succeed. But besides this, Ravančić confuses the theory of the origin of the Croat name with the theory of Croatian ethno-genesis, which is of course not identical, even though Irano-Sarmatian elements in Croatian ethno-genesis cannot be entirely excluded. In any case, ethno-genesis is a complicated and long-term process, which, when the Croats are in question, neither begins nor unfolds, nor terminates, exclusively in the area where the Croats live today. The same author in another work offers a slightly different judgment of these sources.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Hrvatski leksikon I. svezak. A-K.* (Zagreb: Naklada leksikon d. o. o., 1996), s. v. “Hrvati”, p. 454.

<sup>17</sup> *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije, 4., Hil - Jugos.* (Zagreb: Izdanje i naklada Leksikografskog zavoda FNRJ, MCMLX), s. v. “Hrvati. Etnogeneza hrvatskog naroda”, p. 40.

<sup>18</sup> *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije 5. Hrv-Janj.* (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod ‘Miroslav Krleža’, 1988), p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> Ante Škegro, “Javni natpisi s dviju mramornih ploča iz grčkog grada Tanaisa na ušću Dona u Azovsko more,” *Povijesni prilozi*, 21 (Zagreb, 2001), pp. 253-271; also, “Najstariji spomen hrvatskog imena (Javni natpisi s dviju mramornih ploča iz Tanaisa na Azovskom moru)”, *Obavijesti. Hrvatsko arheološko društvo*, XXXIV/2 (Zagreb: 2002), pp. 90-101; also, “Najstariji ‘popis’ Hrvata. (Javni natpisi s dviju mramornih ploča iz Tanaisa na Azovskom moru)” *Bosna franciscana*, X/16 (Sarajevo: 2002), pp. 134-144.

<sup>21</sup> Gordan Ravančić, “Tanaiske ploče – najstariji ‘popis’ Hrvata?,” *Meridijani: časopis za zemljopis, povijest, ekologiju i putovanja*, 10 (2003) 72, pp. 60-61.

<sup>22</sup> Hrvoje Petrić and Gordan Ravančić, *Povijest 2. Udžbenik iz povijesti za 2. razred gimnazije* (Zagreb: Meridijani. Izdavačka kuća, 2003), p. 46.

The inscriptions from Tanais attracted the attention of certain participants at a symposium held in Zagreb in 1994 dedicated to Croatian ethnogenesis. One participant, Andrija-Željko Lovrić, states in his contribution:

...and the silenced Syrian bishop *Zacharias Rhetor* (15), who testified in writing that there lived, all the way to 559 A.D., in the plains of the steppes along the northern shores of the Sea of Azov, an Aryan equestrian people, the HRWTS. That logically proceeds from the already familiar inscription of the mayor *Horouathos*, found in the harbor of *Tanais*, near today's Rostov, on the *Sea of Azov*, from the second-third century. All this put together means that the pre-Slavic Croats of late antiquity (*Horouathos-Hrwts*) lived along the *Sea of Azov* for five centuries, that is, from the second to the sixth century; and already by the eighth century, the Croats were an independent and state-building nation along the Adriatic.<sup>23</sup>

Regarding these sources, Mato Marčinko states in his contribution to the symposium:

The Black Sea Croats who migrated from Zakavkaz and old Iran began to rule the Bosporan state between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov; from 175 to 211 that state was ruled by the great king Tiberius Julius Croat (in Greek, *Sauromat*), who is mentioned, along with the archon *Horúathos* (*Horvat*), on the Tanaisian memorial tablet from the second-third century A.D.<sup>24</sup>

M. P. Pogodin opened the path toward an Iranian interpretation of the Croatian name (see A. Š.) in calling attention to the personal name *Horvat* (*Horóathos* or *Horúathos*), which was found on two memorial tablets from the second-third century in Tanais (today Azov) on the Sea of Azov.<sup>25</sup>

The Tanaisian inscriptions also attracted the attention of some authors at the international symposium of the old-Iranian origin of the Croats held in Zagreb in 1998. The majority of judgments regarding the sources offered on this occasion were uncritical and made without ever laying an eye on them.

A transcription of the larger Tanaisian inscription in Greek capitals (*Latyshev*, number 445; *CIRB* 1277) and with a Croatian translation

<sup>23</sup> Andrija-Željko Lovrić, "Znanstvena dokumentiranost protudokaza o antičkom pred-slavenskom podrijetlu Hrvata." *Tko su i odakle Hrvati. Revizija etnogeneze. Who are and whence came Croats. A Revision of Ethnogenesis*, II. edition (Zagreb: Znanstveno društvo za proučavanje podrijetla Hrvata, 1994), p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Mato Marčinko, "Od prahrvatskoga doba do VII. st. poslije Krista," *Tko su i odakle Hrvati. Revizija etnogeneze. Who are and whence came Croats. A Revision of Ethnogenesis*, II. edition (Zagreb: Znanstveno društvo za proučavanje podrijetla Hrvata, 1994), p. 41.

<sup>25</sup> Mato Marčinko, "Tragovima hrvatskoga imena," *Tko su i odakle Hrvati. Revizija etnogeneze. Who are and whence came Croats. A Revision of Ethnogenesis*, II. edition (Zagreb: Znanstveno društvo za proučavanje podrijetla Hrvata, 1994), p. 76

was appended to Mihovil Lovrić's work. In this translation the would-be *Croatian Sabor*, that is, the *Assembly of Croats* in Tanais was also pointed out.<sup>31</sup> In the supplement signed by Mihovil Lovrić, Stjepan Murgić, Marijan Horvat-Mileković, Mladen Rac, Andrija-Željko Lovrić, and Stipan Budimir, the Tanaisian inscriptions are written about in a similar manner:

Even on the two Greek tablets from the ancient harbor of Tanais on the Sea of Azov, where the undisputable early Croatian etymon, *Horoathos* or *Horouathos*, is mentioned three times, there is not, among the thirty persons listed, one with a Slavic name, rather they are non-Slavic, that is, the names are primarily Indo-Iranian, with a handful of Greek names. Indeed, the unmistakably named mayor, Croat, was not yet a Slav, having a typical Persian name: "*Horoathos Sandarsios archon Tanaiton*" (Croat Sandarz, the mayor of Tanais).<sup>32</sup>

The Tanaisian inscriptions awoke greater interest in more recent historical publications. Father Silvije Grubišić (1910-1985), the translator of the Old-Testament from the original into Croatian, commented on the inscriptions in his book *Od pradomovine do domovine*:

In Tanais was found the name of the head of the city: Horouathos. The Russian B. Latišev made the discovery at the end of the last century. Drop the last two letters "os," the Greek linguistic form of the Latin "us," and what do you get? Pronounce the the letter *u* as *v*, since that is how they spoke in antiquity, and what do you get - our old name: Horovat, the form very similar to the one used by Croats in the Zagreb region: Horvat. How many Croats were in Tanais in that period, it is unknown. But that is not important, for our story at least. What is important to know is that they were there. There must have been a good number of them, for whom would think of installing a Croat as the head of the city?<sup>45</sup>

In the context of the debates on the origin and the meaning of the names *Croat* and *Serb*, the Montenegrin Slavist Vojislav P. Nikčević has on a few occasions commented on them, though clearly without ever seeing

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<sup>31</sup> Prof. Mihovil Lovrić, Krk 1897-1976 (izvod iz neobjavljene monografije): "Prvi dokumenti Prahrvata na Starom istoku i rane doselidbe Indoarijaca na Jadranu. First Croatian documents in Old Orient and early Indo-Iranian migrations to Adriatic," *Staroiransko podrijetlo Hrvata. The Old-Irarnian Origin of Croats. Zbornik simpozija Zagreb, 24. lipnja 1998.* (Zagreb & Teherân: Kulturni centar pri Veleposlanstvu I. R. Iran u Zagrebu & Naklada Zlatko Tomičić, Karlovac, 1999), pp. 104-105.

<sup>32</sup> Mihovil Lovrić et al., "Zagonetka ranih Praslavena i važnost Iranohrvata za njihovo zajedništvo. Enigmatic early Proto-Slavs and importance of Iranian Croats in their unifying," *Staroiransko podrijetlo Hrvata. The Old-Irarnian Origin of Croats. Zbornik simpozija Zagreb, 24. lipnja 1998.* (Zagreb & Teherân: Kulturni centar pri Veleposlanstvu I. R. Iran u Zagrebu & Naklada Zlatko Tomičić, Karlovac, 1999), p. 168.

<sup>45</sup> Silvije Grubišić, *Od pradomovine do domovine. Hrvatska pripovijest od 520. godine prije Krista do 1976. poslije Krista*, II. edition (Slavonski Brod: Tisak, Grafik Color, 2000), p. 119.

them.<sup>46</sup> Regarding the Tanaisian inscriptions, Mijo N. Ćurić writes in his book on the old-Iranian origin of the Croats: “However, from the gravestone monuments in Tanais (today Azov in the southern Ukraine) from the second century A.D., probably from the year 175, 211, and 220 A.D. we can read HOROUATHON HOROATHU HOROATHOS, and after the century: HOROVATHOS HROBATOS.”<sup>48</sup>

Ivan Biondić, a professor of the Zagreb Pedagogical Academy, considered these sources on more occasions.<sup>49</sup> With the right to criticize the judgments of individual authors on these sources, Biondić himself falls into the trap of their incorrect representation. In other words, he points out that they were discovered at the end, as opposed to the middle, of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, he argues that what is in question are *stelae* taken from public buildings, and that the inscriptions on them begin with the invocation *God the Almighty, who gives blessings*,<sup>50</sup> which, of course, does not correspond to the truth. *Stelae* are in general tablets of gravestone monuments. These inscriptions, discovered in 1853, are not of a gravestone but rather a public character. Neither one of the inscriptions begins with *God the Almighty, Give blessings*. The older inscription begins with utterance *God the Supreme! May it be with fortune!* and the younger begins with *May it be with fortune!*, just as the Hellenic inscription from third century Lumbard on Hvar begins, on which marked the establishment of a new Hellenic colony on the land of the Illyrian Ardians.<sup>51</sup>

In challenging the Iranian theory of the origin of the Croats,<sup>52</sup> the Slavist Stjepan Pantelić calls the Tanaisian inscriptions the “Don tablets,” and instead of dating them between the end of the second century and the first quarter of the third century A.D., he dates them at the fifth century.<sup>53</sup> Besides that, he does not know the time or the circumstances of their discovery, nor their content.<sup>54</sup> Taking pains to precisely give an adequate translation in Croatian and interpretation of these sources, he produces an unfaithful translation of the inscription from 220 A.D.,<sup>55</sup> despite having on the previous page an illustration of some of the fragments and the inscriptions from the second

<sup>46</sup> Vojislav P. Nikčević, “Porijeklo i značenje imena Hrvat i Srbin,” *Dubrovnik: časopis za kulturu* 6 (1987), p. 8; Vojislav Nikčević, *Kroatističke studije* (Zagreb: Erasmus naklada, 2002), pp. 29, 98.

<sup>48</sup> Mijo N. Ćuruć, *Staroiransko podrijetlo Hrvata* (Zagreb: Nezavisna autorska naklada, 1991), p. 131.

<sup>49</sup> Ivan Biondić, *Magna fraus. (Velika obmana). Slom ideologije Otvorenog društva* (Zagreb: Vlastita autorska naklada & AMAC-RB Mreža & Hrvatski forum, 2002), pp. 99-102.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 100, 101, Not. 493.

<sup>51</sup> Josip Brunšmid, *Natpisi i novac grčkih gradova u Dalmaciji* (Split: Književni krug, 1998), p. 19.

<sup>52</sup> Stjepan Pantelić, “Zablude o iranskom podrijetlu Hrvata,” *Zadarska smotra: časopis za kulturu, znanost i umjetnost*, XLIX/1-3 (2000), pp. 127-145.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.142.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

half of the second century.<sup>56</sup> From this translation of the sources, the same author concludes how “*Horoathos* is called in the inscription a great civil servant of Tanais,” which of course does not require comment. The same author answers the question: who were the Tanaisians? Ostensibly calling on the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus from the second half of the fourth century A.D., he concludes “the Alans, who were in contact with the Greutungima, were called by the name Tanaisians (*Halanorum regionibus, quos Greuthungis confines Tanaitas consuetudo nominavit*).”<sup>57</sup> For Pantelić that quotation was in fact “of invaluable importance” in settling the question “who was *Horoathos*, who was named on the market-place tablet... in Azov as a great civil servant of the Tanaisians.” At the foundation of his translation of the “Don tablets,” Pantelić concludes, “that *Horoathos* might have belonged to the Tanaisians, and from the statements of Ammianus Marcellinus, they might have been Alans or Massagetae.”<sup>58</sup> It is needless to point out how it is unclear to Pantelić that his “Tanaisians” were an uneven populace in the Hellenic city, or that there were three men, and not one, named *Horoathos*, or that they were the archons. But for Pantelić that is not as important as proving that we are dealing with the Alans.<sup>59</sup> What is most important for him is to “prove” that actually his “research shows that neither *Horoathos*, nor the Alans, nor any other Alanian tribe have any relation with the Croats.”<sup>60</sup>

## Public and Not Gravestone Monuments

The Tanaisian inscriptions are presented in the works of some Croatian authors in a totally incorrect light. Their qualification as gravestone monuments directs us to the conclusion that those who made such comments did not lay an eye on these sources, despite the fact since 1890 they have been accessible in high-quality and widely distributed scholarly publications,<sup>61</sup> or that two publications of a similar character were published anew after seventy-five years.<sup>62</sup> Russian scholars have freshly evaluated, supplemented, and once again interpreted these inscriptions.<sup>63</sup> Mladen Lorković (1909-

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>57</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum lib. 31/3*, 2 (Berlin: Seyfarth, W., 1971).

<sup>58</sup> Stjepan Pantelić, “Zablude o iranskom podrijetlu Hrvata,” p. 134.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 134-137.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>61</sup> *Inscriptiones Regni Bosporani graecae et latinae. Inscriptiones antiquae orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini graecae et latinae. Volumen Secundum.* (Petropoli: edidit Basilius Latyschev, 1890), p. 237, nr. 430; pp. 261-262, nr. 445.

<sup>62</sup> *Inscriptiones Regni Bosporani graecae et latinae. Inscriptiones antiquae Orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini graecae et latinae.* Edidit Basilius Latyschev. *Volumen Secundum.* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965), pp. 237-238, nr. 430; pp. 261-263, nr. 445.

<sup>63</sup> *Корпус Боспорских надписей. Академия наук СССР. Институт истории ленинградское отделение. Институт археологии ленинградское отделение. Corpus*



1945), in his 1939 synthesis of Croatian history, was one of the first to qualify them as gravestone monuments:

We encounter the first mention of the Croatian name in inscriptions from second and third century Tanais, in Asian Sarmatia, at the mouth of the Don on the Sea of Azov, where today stands the city of Azov. Tanais was in the period of the Roman imperium a Hellenic settlement with an active market. There crossed the trade of a number of neighboring peoples. In that city two grave monuments were saved with the name "Horoath" and "Horouath." Scholars agreed that those two "Horvats" were members of the Croatian nation or tribe, who came into the Greek colony of Tanais and who received their name from their nation.<sup>64</sup>

Dominik Mandić in an earlier work also qualified them as gravestone monuments. Along with that, he attributed their discovery to B. Latyshev instead of to Pavel Mihajlovič.<sup>65</sup> In addition to downplaying their significance, Franjo Šanjek, a professor of Church history at Zagreb's Catholic Theological Faculty, indicated on two occasions that the Tanaisian inscriptions were gravestone monuments: "In Tanais at the mouth of the Don River on the Lake of Azov, graves with the Greek inscription HOROATHOS or HORVATHOS, the oldest insinuation of the name CROAT, were discovered."<sup>66</sup> In subsequent publications, this author scarcely changed his judgment of these sources: "In Tanais at the mouth of the Don River on the Lake of Azov, graves with the Greek inscription HOROATHOS and HOROVATHOS, the oldest indication of the name CROAT, were discovered."<sup>67</sup> The Zagreb historian Ivo Perić also defined the Tanaisian inscriptions as gravestone tablets.<sup>68</sup>

Ivo Goldstein, a professor of the Middle Ages at Zagreb's Faculty of Philosophy, somewhat arbitrarily expresses himself on these sources: "The names 'Horoathos' and 'Horovathos,' were written on two gravestone tablets from the second and third century, which were discovered in the former Tanais (today Azov)."<sup>69</sup> Goldstein does not differentiate between gravestone and public inscriptions, and he does not notice the mentioning of

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*inscriptionum Regni Bosporani (CIRB)*. Academia scientiarum URSS. MCMLXV (Москва & Ленинград: Издательство "Наука", 1965), pp. 736-737, nr. 1245; pp. 763-765, nr. 1277.

<sup>64</sup> Mladen Lorković, *Narod i zemlja Hrvata* (Zagreb: DoNeHa, 1996), p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> Dominik Mandić, "Dolazak Hrvata na Jadran. Summarium: Chroatorum adventus ad litora Maris Hadriatici," *Rasprave i prilozi iz stare hrvatske povijesti* (Rim: Hrvatski povijesni institut, 1963), pp. 58-59.

<sup>66</sup> Franjo Šanjek, *Crkva i kršćanstvo u Hrvata. 1. Srednji vijek*. (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1988), p. 423; Franjo Šanjek, *Crkva i kršćanstvo u Hrvata. Srednji vijek. Drugo prerađeno i dopunjeno izdanje*. (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1993), p. 423.

<sup>67</sup> Franjo Šanjek, *Kršćanstvo na hrvatskom prostoru. Pregled religiozne povijesti Hrvata (7.-20.)*. *Drugoprerađeno i dopunjeno izdanje*. (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1996), p. 3.\*

<sup>68</sup> Ivo Perić, *Povjest Hrvata*. (Zagreb: CTT – Centar za transfer tehnologije, 1997), 16.

<sup>69</sup> Ivo Goldstein, *Hrvatski rani srednji vijek*. (Zagreb: Novi liber & Zavod za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 1995), p. 24.

three males with names that are very similar to the Croatian national name (Χορούαθ[ος], Χορούαθος, Χορούαθος). In another publication, Goldstein completely ignores these sources:

It was claimed that the name Croat comes from the Indo-European root *ar*, from which the word Aryan was produced, and that from the form Huri there emerged in Mesopotamia the oldest known form of the Croatian name, Huravat; and from the form Hari there emerged on the Iranian plateau, Harahvat and Harvat, which mean “prolific waters,” “rich in waters, rivers.” Certainly everything must be reduced to a few general statements: it appears that the word *Croat* derives from the region east of Zakarpac, where a nucleus of Slavic tribes once stayed, and that the word originally derives from an Irano-Kavkasian cultural center; originally it might have been a personal name, toponym, or common noun.<sup>70</sup>

In his monograph on the Republic of Croatia, Goldstein reduces everything to an imagined tradition of contact between Slavic Croats and non-Slavs, probably Iranians, in the region of the Kavkaz.<sup>71</sup>

Vladimir Koščak in his paper on the Iranian theory of the origin of the Croats also does not differentiate between gravestone and public inscriptions. In addition, he wrongly dates the discovery of these sources.<sup>72</sup>

For the Zagreb sociologist Emil Heršak the Tanaisian inscriptions are a foggy and enigmatic idea filled with assumptions.<sup>73</sup>

Zagreb historian Josip Lučić (1924-1994), writing about the origin and arrival of the Croats, qualifies the Tanaisian inscriptions as gravestone monuments: “In the second and third century A.D. the Croats (see A. Š.) lived at the mouth of the Don near the city of Tanais (today Azov). Two gravestone inscriptions confirm that hypothesis: CHOROATHOS and HOROVATOS from the year 175-211, and HORVAT, that is, CROAT from the the year 220.”<sup>74</sup> Husein Kadić, who in spite of the fact that he has in his work the Greek texts of the Tanaisian inscriptions,<sup>75</sup> qualifies them as gravestone monuments.<sup>76</sup> In his paper Kadić arbitrarily tried to break through to the sense of these two sources:

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<sup>70</sup> Ivo Goldstein, *Hrvatska povijest*. (Zagreb: Novi liber, 2003), p. 35.

<sup>71</sup> Ivo Goldstein, *Croatia. A History* (London: Hurst & Company, 1999), p. 13.

<sup>72</sup> Vladimir Koščak, “Iranska teorija o podrijetlu Hrvata. Iranian Theory of the Croatians’ Origin,” *Etnogeneza Hrvata. Ethnogeny of the Croats* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice Hrvatske & Zavod za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 1995), pp. 110, 233.

<sup>73</sup> Emil Heršak, “Etničnost u prošlosti (Ethnicity in the Past),” *Etničnost i povijest*. (Ed. Emil Heršak) (Zagreb: Institut za migracije i narodnosti & Naklada Jesenski i Turk & Hrvatsko sociološko društvo, 1999), p. 30.

<sup>74</sup> *Hrvatski povijesni zemljovid* (Zagreb: Kartografija & Učila & Školska knjiga, 1994), p. 56.

<sup>75</sup> Husein Kadić, “Chaman – Kuban – Tanais (odrednice hrvatskog identiteta),” *Marulić: hrvatska književna revija*, 5 (2000), pp. 967-970, Phot. 1-4.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 949.

The Tanaisian inscriptions complement each other. In the first case Horouathos from the older inscription (second century A.D.) was closely connected (as a member, as a patron, as the “father of the assembly”) to the brotherhood (“synod”), that is, to the council (meeting, assembly, board) members and the admirers of the uniform socio-religious activity of their city; some kind of Sabor for a great portion of the free Greco-Iranian inhabitants (Asian) of the city of Tanais at the mouth of the Don River, a Sabor in which they created their own breed of economic, religious, cultural, and military-political elites.<sup>77</sup>

## II. An Analysis of the Inscriptions

The larger and older inscription (inventory number in the Hermitage: TH 325)<sup>78</sup> originates from the time when king Tiberius Julius Sauromat (175-211 A.D.) ruled the Bosporan Kingdom (*Regnum Bospori*),<sup>79</sup> which covered the area around the Sea of Azov and the Crimean peninsula. This marble tablet (0.92 x 0.73 x 0.09), engraved in Greek monumental capitals, probably sustained heavy damage even before the archeologist Leontjev excavat-



*Bosporus - Tanais, Sea of Azov and Crimea in the Antiquity*

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 957.

<sup>78</sup> *Inscriptiones Regni Bosporani graecae et latinae* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965), nr. 445; Корпус Боспорских надписей, nr. 1277.

<sup>79</sup> А. А. Масленников, *Население Боспорского госдарства в первъих веках н. э.* (Москва: Академия наук СССР & Институт археологии & Наука, 1990), pass.

ed it. Thirty-two lines from thirty fragments were saved from the inscription. In spite of that, scholars have, with a great number of similar inscriptions from Tanais and other Hellenic places at their disposal, reconstructed a great deal of the text from the inscription. The inscription, as has already been emphasized, is of a public and not a gravestone quality. It mentions, apart from the king, the synod, or devotional assembly, the leadership of the devotional assembly, and its regular members, which were slightly less than forty. An analysis of this inscription, as well as the younger inscription, is formed from the reconstruction and supplement in the publication *Корпус Боспорских надписей. Академия наук СССР. Институт истории ленинградское отделение. Институт археологии ленинградское отделение. Corpus inscriptionum Regni Bosporani (CIRB)* (Academia scientiarum URSS. MCMLXV. Издательство “Наука”. Москва - Ленинград, 1965., p. 736-737, nr. 1245; 763-765, nr. 1277).

The inscription begins with an invocation to the supreme god. In all likelihood the god in question is the Greek god *Zeus*, who corresponds to the Roman god *Jupiter*. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that the expression  $\Theta\epsilon\acute{\omega} \upsilon\psi\iota\sigma\tau\omega$  was used, which would be, when translated into Latin, uttered as *Optimo Maximo*, which is how Jupiter is most often addressed in Latin inscriptions (*Iuppiter Optimus Maximus*). The next exclamation, *Let it be with fortune*, makes apparent that what is in question is not a gravestone monument. Engraved in the second line is the name of the Bosporan king, *Tiberius Julius Sauromat*, who ruled at the time when this monument from *Tanais* was erected.<sup>80</sup> In the third line the king's position in relation to the Roman Emperor and the people of Rome is engraved; the vassalage status of the Bosporan king and the kingdom itself toward the Roman Empire was at issue. But because of the fact that the Roman Emperor who ruled at the time of the monument's erection was not written into the monument, this inscription cannot be precisely dated. Three Roman Emperors could have been referred to here: Marcus Aurelius (161-180), his son and heir Commodus (180-193), or Septimus Severus (193-211). The third line of the inscription ends with the mentioning of the devotional assembly of *Tanais*. In the fourth line the chief priest of this devotional meeting, Julius Ralhad, the leader of this devotional assembly, is mentioned. The fourth line ends with the mentioning of the father of the devotional assembly,  $\text{Horou}\acute{\alpha}\theta\omicron\varsigma$  (Χορούαθος), who is referred to name in the fifth line. The synagogue *Ardarak* is also mentioned in the fifth line. In the sixth line of the inscription the noble *Diaion*, a distinguished resident of *Tanais*, is mentioned. In the seventh line the name of a person was engraved who is said to be very noble, and this certainly related to his social position in the city of *Tanais*. Yet because of the damage to the inscription, the person's name is unknown. *Demetrius Apolonius*, the leader of the youths and the gym-

<sup>80</sup> On the Bosporan ruler see: A. A. Масленников, *Население Боспорского государства в первых веках н. э.* (Москва: Академия наук СССР & Институт археологии & Наука, 1990), pp.161-170.

nasium instructor Bazilid, the son of Teonik, who is also mentioned in the smaller inscription as the hellenarch, are engraved in the eighth line.<sup>81</sup> A certain Ato, the son of Heraclius, is mentioned in the ninth line, and in the next line of the inscription he is mentioned as a friend of the devotional assembly. From the tenth to thirty-first line the names of the members of the devotional assembly are engraved. More than thirty-five male names were preserved on the inscription. However, considering the fragmentary quality of this monument, it is apparent that there were undoubtedly more. Amongst them an unknown male who is said to be the son of Horoáthos (Χοροάθου) is cited. The inscription ends with the date, from which is saved only the appellation of the Greek-Macedonian month, which corresponds to either July or August.<sup>82</sup>

## Translation

God the Supreme. May it be with fortune!

In the time of the reign of king Tiberius Julius Sauromat,

a friend of the pious Emperor and a friend of the people of Rome. The devotional assembly

with the priest Julius, the son of Ralhad, at the head, and the father of the devotional assembly

Horuat[a, the son of ---]o[---], and the gathered devotional assembly, with Ardarak,

the son of [S]inegd, and the noble Diaion, the son of Kerdonak (?) and

the very noble [---]ion, the son of Forgabak, and the lead-

er of the youth Demetrius, the son of Apolonius, and the gymnasium instructor Ba-

zilid, the son of Teonik, and Ato, the son of Heraclius, a friend

of the devotional assembly. And the remaining members: Ardarak, the son of Zia-

[---]on, Demetrius, the son of [---]on, Liman, the son of Fidin

[Mi]dah?, the son of [---]an, Asklepijad. the son of Valerius,

[--g?]odan, the son of Demetrius, Menestrat, the son of Likisk,

[the son of -----]ikah, Diofant, the son of Dei, Poplij

[the son of -----]din, Heraclius, the son of Epigon, Iardo[-

<sup>81</sup> *Inscriptiones Regni Bosporani graecae et latinae*, nr. 430; *Корпус Боспорских надписей*, nr. 1245.

<sup>82</sup> The author most graciously thanks Mr. Dinark Lokmer, a professor of classic languages at the Archbishop's Classical Gymnasium in Zagreb, for work he invested in translating these two inscriptions. The author also thanks Dr. Ivan Biondić, an extraordinary professor at Zagreb's Pedagogical Academy, for allowing the publication of the photographs of these inscriptions, as well as, the photographer Fredy Fijačk from Zagreb for filming the parts of these monuments.

-----], the son of Demetris, Afrodizius, the son of Hrise-  
rot, [Fal]da[ra]n, the son of Apolonius, Philip  
[the son of -----]n, Kalus, the son of Atenius, Kofarno  
[the son of -----] [T]rifon, the son of Andromen,  
o [-----], the son of Horoath, Teotim, the son of Psiha-  
rion, [-----]dibal, the son of Far[nak], Euios, the son of Ro-  
don, [Hera]clius, the son of At[i, ----- the son of Aris]-  
tod [em, S]imah, the son of Sa[-----],  
kos[-----]  
filo[-----]  
orano[--- Zorthi?]n, the son of Be[lik?],  
Radam[ist?], the son of [---], the son of [Fadinam]  
Mir[on?], the son of [-----], the son of Mastu[s-----]  
po[-----]os, the son of Ardarak, [----]  
Fid[a, the son of -----]n, Hari[ton, the son of -----], [A]-  
rathi[----, the son of -----]  
In [the year and month] Lo[u] [---]

The smaller inscription (1.053 x 0.71 x 0.08; inventory number in the Hermitage: TH 297)<sup>83</sup> is dated the year 517, according to the calculation of time used in the Bosporan kingdom, or the year 220 A.D., according to our contemporary calculation of time. This inscription is younger than the previous one,<sup>84</sup> which is apparent from the fact that Reskuporid, the son of Sauromat is mentioned on it. Sauromat, who was mentioned in the previous inscription under his full name (*Tiberios Julios Sauromat*), is indicated as a friend of the Romans and their Emperor. On this inscription he carries the title *great king*. The inscription sustained a considerably less amount of damage than the previous inscription. It is broken into four parts. In contrast to the previous inscription, it is relatively readable, but because of the poor Greek in which it was written, it is in some places difficult to understand. This difficulty can be understood in the context of the fact that the stone-carver, who engraved the text on this marble tablet, was not skilled in Greek grammar or that the composer of the text was of a similar education. In other words, the Greeks of the Bosporan Kingdom, because of their too great distance from the homeland and because of the fact that they resided amidst a barbarian multitude, with whom they were in contact for centuries and with whom they mingled, they were no longer in a posi-

<sup>83</sup> *Inscriptiones Regni Bosporani graecae et latinae*, nr. 430; *Корпус Боспорских надписей*, nr. 1245.

<sup>84</sup> *Inscriptiones Regni Bosporani graecae et latinae*, nr. 445; *Корпус Боспорских надписей*, nr. 1277.

tion to correctly speak their mother tongue.<sup>85</sup> Today the Croatian colonies of the Italian province of Molise, the Romanian region of Karaševska, the Burgenland Croats of Austria and Hungary, the Croats in Albania, and others are in a similar situation.

The text of this inscription is of a public and not a gravestone quality. On it are engraved twenty lines in Greek monumental capitals. It begins with the exclamation *May it be with fortune!* In the second line it is mentioned that that monument was erected in the time of the reign of king *Reskuporid*. In the third line it is clear that the individual in question is the son of king *Sauromat*, who carries the title *great king*. In the fourth and fifth lines the king Reskuporid's emissary, Zenon, the son of Fanej is mentioned. Cited in the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth lines, along with the names of their fathers, are the four leaders of the city of Tanais at the time when this monument was erected (Hofarno, Babos, Niblobor, and Horoathos). In the ninth and tenth lines two more males with the names of their fathers (Hofrazmo and Bazilid) are mentioned, of which the latter was the hellenarch - the per-



Tanais -B - The Tanais Tablet

<sup>85</sup> Radoslav Katičić, "Boristenu u pohode," *Forum. Mjesečnik Razreda za književnost Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti*, Godište XXXVIII, knjiga LXXI., broj 10-12. (Zagreb: October - December, 1999), p. 1256.

son who was concerned with participation in the Olympic games in *Tanais*. The eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth lines of the inscription reveal the motivation behind the erection of this monument: the renovation of the central square in the city of *Tanais* - otherwise the most well known commercial settlement on the Black Sea in the Greco-Roman era.<sup>86</sup> Here it is emphasized that the decision was made after the city council was called, which implies the conclusion that individuals in the Greco-Roman era were not able to conduct public projects arbitrarily. The task of renovating the square was given to the hellenarch Bazilid, who points out that he renovated the square for the common people of the city and for the foreign merchants, of which there were undoubtedly a sizable amount. In other words, all of public life, in which commerce occupied a prominent place, was in fact played out in the Greco-Roman world in the city square. In the fourteenth line it is stated that the renovation of the square was executed under the supervision of Zenon, the son of Fanej. In the fifteenth and sixteenth lines yet two more male names with those of their fathers (Farnoksart and Faldaran) are mentioned. In the seventeenth line the architect Dionfant, who most likely led the construction of the renovated city square, is mentioned. Mentioned in the eighteenth and nineteenth lines, along with the names of their fathers, are two more males (Aurelius and Nauk), whose role in this event is unclear. The final line gives the date, the year 517, according to the Bosporan calculation of time, or the year 220 A.D., according to our calculation of time.

## Translation

May it be with fortune!  
 In the time of king Reskuporid, the son of  
 the great king Sauromat, and  
 Zenon, the son of Fanej, emissary of king  
 Reskuporid, and [in the time of] Ho-  
 farna, the son of Sandariz, Babos, the son of Baio-  
 rasp, Niblobor, the son of Dosimoksar-  
 thos, Horoathos, the son of Sandarz, the archons  
 of the Tanaisians, Hofranzmo, the son of Forga-  
 bak, Bazilid, the son of Teonik, the he-  
 llenarch. Prepared by the council  
 at their own expense once again renovate [the square]  
 for the city and for the merchants, through the supervision of Zenon, the  
 son of Fan-  
 ej, Farnoksart, the son of Taurej,

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<sup>86</sup> Chr(isto) D(anoff), "Bosporanum regnum." *Der Kleine Pauly. Lexikon der Antike, Erster Band* (Stuttgart: Alfred Druckenmüller Verlag, MCMLXIV), p. 931.



Faldaran, the son of Apolonius, and  
 the architect Diofant, the son of Ne-  
 opol and Aurelius, the son of Antonin,  
 Nauak, the son of Meuak.  
 the year 517.

## Conclusion

As it is apparent from the previous older inscription, the names of two males, which undoubtedly recall the Croatian national name, are engraved among others in the inscription.<sup>87</sup> On line 5 the male, who was acknowledged on the inscription as the father of the devotional assembly, was called Horoúathos (Χορούαθος). As for the man mentioned on line 20, whose name is unknown because of the damaged condition of the tablet, he is cited as the son of Horoáthos (Χοροάθου). The totally identical form of the name Horoáthos (Χοροάθος) is also chiseled on the younger inscription.<sup>88</sup> The last of the four men on this monument were identified as the archons of the *Tanaisians*.

According to the judgment of Radoslav Katičić, these are personal names and not national ones,<sup>89</sup> in which, nonetheless, we recognize an indirect trace of the Croatian national name, which is of Iranian origin:

Inscriptions from the second and third century A.D., with the personal name *Horoatos*, *Horuatos* were found precisely in the area where the Iranian nomads moved, in the Greek settlement of Tanais (today Azov at the mouth of the Don River). In that was recognized the name of the Croats. And it was believed that this appellation for the people became a personal name in Tanais, which on its own is not unusual. The linguistic environment in which this non-Greek name appeared and its phonetic form suggests that one can think of it as Iranian. No one has yet challenged this view. To see in the personal name an indirect trace of the Croatian national name is a serious and, in principle, convincing hypothesis. Neither more nor less than that. There is not therefore total certainty in the matter.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Inscriptiones Regni Bosporani graecae et latinae, nr. 445; *Корпус Боспорских надписей*, nr. 1277.

<sup>88</sup> Inscriptiones Regni Bosporani graecae et latinae, nr. 430; *Корпус Боспорских надписей*, nr. 1245.

<sup>89</sup> Radoslav Katičić, "Ploča bogoštovnog zbora a ne hrvatskoga parlamenta. Zar doista grčki tekstovi o crnomorskim Hrvatima u kasnoj antiki?" *Hrvatsko slovo. tjednik za kulturu*, V/212 (Zagreb: 14 May 1999), p. 133.

<sup>90</sup> Radoslav Katičić, "O podrijetlu Hrvata," *Hrvatska i Europa. Kultura, znanost i umjetnost. Svezak I. Srednji vijek (VII-XII. stoljeće). Rano doba hrvatske kulture* (Zagreb: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti & AGM, 1997), p. 160.

Katičić cites Trubačev's judgment according to which the Croatian name "derives from the Iranian *har-vat*, meaning, "with whom there are women, womens," which would be the Iranian phonetic form that in Indian is pronounced as *sar-mat* with the unchanging Indo-Iranian *s* and the alternating Indo-Iranian suffix *-ma(n)t-/va(n)t-*."<sup>91</sup> In a different place Katičić concludes, "The personal name *Khorúathos*, *Khoróathos* is so similar to the Croatian national name that it is rather believable." Katičić points out,

If that is so, then that is the national name which became personal, which is certainly not a rarity; and the people who carried the name found themselves in Tanais, in fact, as respectable citizens. Experts agree that the name is most likely Iranian. This means at least that there was a people of that name who existed somewhere in the hinterland of Tanais, where, in antiquity, there dwelled in the steppes nomads who spoke an Iranian language. Maybe - exactly that, maybe - Croats have their name from those people, if they did in fact exist. Nothing more and nothing less.<sup>92</sup>

In yet another place the same scholar states, "in Tanais inscriptions from a earlier time were found which announced to the citizens of that city the personal name Horuathos or Horoathos. One can convincingly assume that that is the name of a Croat, that indeed those citizens were called by the name of the barbarian people who lived somewhere in the steppes of the hinterland of Tanais. That would then be like our surname Hrvatin."<sup>93</sup> On the origin of this name Katičić concludes:

Of all the proposed etymology for the Croatian name, the Iranian one is the least unbelievable. From the personal names on the Greek inscriptions from the city of Tanais at the mouth of the Don River one can recognize the name of the Croats and make the very convincing hypothesis that it is of Iranian, in fact, Sarmatian origin. As for the question of how the name derives from Iranian, there still is not a certain answer. None of the proposed explanations can be accepted without a doubt. In recent times, the Croatian name was derived from the name or title of the Avar chiefs and prelates.<sup>94</sup>

From the contents of the texts on these two inscriptions, three persons, who lived at the end of the second and beginning of the third century in the

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>92</sup> Radoslav Katičić, "Zar doista grčki tekstovi o crnomorskim Hrvatima u kasnoj antici?" *Obavijesti: Hrvatsko arheološko društvo*, XXXI/2., (1999.), p. 134.

<sup>93</sup> Radoslav Katičić, "Boristenu u pohode," *Forum. Mjesečnik Razreda za književnost Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti*, Godište XXXVIII, knjiga LXXI., broj 10-12. (Zagreb: October - December, 1999), p. 1253.

<sup>94</sup> Radoslav Katičić, *Litterarum studia. Književnost i naobrazba ranoga hrvatskog srednjovjekovlja* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1998), pp. 225-226.

<sup>95</sup> *Inscriptiones Regni Bosporani graecae et latinae*, nr. 445; *Корпус Боспорских надписей*, nr. 1277.

area of the city of Tanais, undoubtedly carried the name that is more than close to the Croatian national name. The two men from the first tablet<sup>95</sup> were members of the monthly devotional assembly. *Horúathos* from the fifth line of this inscription is presented as the father of the devotional assembly, and the man whose identity remains unknown because of the damage to the monument, who was the son of *Horóathos*, was a regular member of that same devotional assembly. Only *Horóathos* from the second monument<sup>96</sup> was one of the four leaders (archons) of the city of Tanais. Moreover, from the contents of these two inscriptions it is clear that the *Croatian Kingdom* is not mentioned on them; they do not speak of the *Croatian State Sabor*, but of a priestly college; and there is not a word regarding any President or Prime Minister of the *Croatian State Sabor*. In addition, from these sources the conclusion cannot be drawn that sessions of the *Croatian State Sabor* were held for a full eighteen centuries - from Tanais on the Sea of Azov to today's *Croatian State Sabor* in Zagreb. The names of the three men from these two inscriptions are very important pieces of information on Croatian ethno-genesis and especially for the genesis of the Croatian national name, which, in more recent times, some native<sup>97</sup> and foreign authors have judged to be of Iranian descent.<sup>98</sup> In any case these two inscriptions from *Tanais* are the oldest sources that bring to us three personal names that are very similar to the Croatian national name. With some qualification, one could call these inscriptions the oldest registration of the Croats. In the end it is necessary to stress the need for the judicial treatment of the two inscriptions from the Greek settlement of Tanais at the mouth of the Don River with other sources from Croatia's oldest history. No more nor less than that.

*Translated by Ivan Runac*

<sup>96</sup> Inscriptiones Regni Bosporani graecae et latinae, nr. 430; *Корпус Боспорских надписей*, nr. 1245.

<sup>97</sup> Vladimir Koščak, "Iranska teorija o podrijetlu Hrvata. Iranian Theory of the Croats' Origin," *Etnogeneza Hrvata. Ethnogeny of the Croats* (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice Hrvatske & Zavod za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 1995), p. 113.

<sup>98</sup> Ludwig Steindorff, *Kroatien. Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Regensburg & München: Verlag Friedrich Pustet Regensburg Südosteuropa & Gesellschaft München, 2001), pp. 24-25.

## **Zwei öffentliche Inschriften aus der griechischen Kolonie Tanais an der Mündung des Flusses Don ins Azowsche Meer**

### Zusammenfassung

Dieser Beitrag analysiert zwei öffentliche Inschriften aus Fragmenten zweier Mramortafeln, die in der einstigen griechischen Niederlassung im nordöstlichen Gebiet des Azowschen Meers, bzw. an der Mündung Dons im Jahre 1853 entdeckt worden sind. Des Weiteren wird die in der kroatischen Geschichtsschreibung gängige Meinung korrigiert, es handle sich um Grabschriften und nicht um öffentliche Inschriften. Ergriffen wird die Meinung von Radoslav Katičić, bei den Personennamen der drei Männer (Χορούαθ[οζ], Χορούαθοζ, Χορούαθοζ) aus diesen Inschriften, die dem kroatischen Volksnamen ähnlich sind, könnte es sich aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach um den Namen des Volkes handeln, welches in der zweiten Hälfte des 2. und in der ersten Hälfte des 3. Jh. nach Chr. das nördliche Gebiet ums Schwarze Meer besiedelte und am Azowschem Meer und in der südrussischen Steppe lebte.