

Frano Radić on the 150th Anniversary of his Birth

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FRANO RADIĆ was born in Bol on the island of Brač on 24 August 1857, to his father Juraj, a sailor and landowner, and his mother Margita, who was from the respected seafaring Nikolorić family of Brač. The Radić family had the nickname Intra, and Frano was known as 'Keko'.

He completed his primary schooling in Bol, and he attended the classics gymnasium first in Zadar and then in Split. A love of monuments was imparted in him by Ivan Dević, a canon who, as Radić himself said, "dealt with antiquities and history". Radić was a boarder with Dević during his schooling in Split. During vacations in Bol, he spent time with Dominican friar Angelo Bojanić (1828-1889), the pastor in Bol for many years, who engaged in numismatics, collected and analyzed the cultural treasures of Bol and its environs and who, in 1876/1877, wrote his "Historical and Statistical Studies of Bol".

After his matriculation, which he completed with the highest marks, he set off for Vienna to study architecture. He was compelled to discontinue his studies due to a lack of finances.

Following the advice of Mihovil Pavlinović (1831-1887), a national deputy in the Viennese parliament and the most ardent advocate of Dalmatia's unification with trans-Velebit Croatia, he became a teacher in the public secondary school in Makarska in 1878.

After working in Makarska for three years, he passed the so-called vocational instructor examination in Zadar.

In 1881, a vocational course on stonemasonry and naval architecture was launched at the Public Secondary School Annex in Korčula. In that same year Frano Radić was appointed "theory instructor of the vocational naval architecture and stonemasonry course". He was transferred to the town of Korčula, where he remained for 24 years. Here he served as a vocational instructor who organized the first trade school in Dalmatia specializing in the theory and practice of naval architecture and stonemasonry. The purpose of the school was to educate skilled and valued stonemasons and shipbuilders. He also wrote two manuals for his

pupils: one dealing with the theory of naval architecture, and the other with the theory of stonemasonry. His pupils thrived as top-flight masters at the shipyards in Istanbul and Buenos Aires, and two renowned sculptors, Frano Kršinić (1897-1982) and Pero Pallavicini (1886-1958), were also his pupils.

Alongside his teaching duties, in 1885 Radić managed to translate E. Netoliczky's text on physics and chemistry (*Fizika i lučba*) from German for classroom use in public schools, which was used for thirty years in Croatian public schools.

As of 1905, he worked as vocational instructor in the women's normal school in Dubrovnik. He taught physics, Italian and natural history. His new job so preoccupied him that he no longer had time for archaeology, and he became increasingly interested in the natural sciences.

Up to the end of this life, he wrote only two more works in the fields of archaeology and art history.

He retired in 1914 due to failing eyesight, and returned to his native Bol, where he lived for another 19 years. He lived on the riva in the ground floor of a house that leaned on its west side against the Vusio Manor (*kaštel*). After the Second World War, the Vusio Manor and Radić's house were refurbished into the Hotel Kaštil. In the interceding years in Bol, his first wife Anđelina, née Ostojić, died in 1920, as did his second wife Kata, of the Elezović family, in 1930, so that he remained alone, almost entirely blind and very hard of hearing. His daughters or others read him books and newspapers. In 1955, Dominican friar Anselm Radić (b. 1913) vividly recalled Frano Radić, to whom he read books and newspapers.

He died on 13 April 1933 at the age of 76, bequeathing his library and his natural history and coin collections to the primary school in Bol. Only about twenty books from this legacy have been preserved to this day. He was interred in the Elezović family tomb alongside his second wife.

In 1980, the Museum of Croatian Archaeological Monuments installed a memorial plaque on his final resting place.

The most important, most fertile and most interesting period of his life was tied to his residence in the town of Korčula, when he also took an interest in archaeology and art history over and above his regular work-related duties. This was the era when the national consciousness in Dalmatia was burgeoning, and when numerous archaeological discoveries augmented the pages of Croatian history. Most archaeological research was conducted by amateurs who also published the results of their work, although many renowned Croatian archaeologists were active at the time: Šime Ljubić (1822-1896), Frane Bulić (1846-1934) and Luka Jelić (1863-1922).

Frano Radić was both persistent and industrious, and his knowledge of Latin, Greek and the Classical heritage was self-taught. His love for archaeological monuments already emerged during his secondary school days in Split, and he frequented the local museum and became acquainted with archaeologists M. Glavinić (1833-1898) and J. Alačević (1826-1904). He took study trips to Rome, Naples, Aquileia, Como and Venice, and he toured the museums in Vienna and Prague.

Although he had to discontinue his architecture studies in Vienna during his second year, he mastered the fundamentals of technical draftsmanship and earned a reputation as an exemplary sketch artist whose services were often used by Fr. Lujo Marun. From his letters, we know that Marun asked him to draw the earrings excavated near Knin, and that he also invited him to Knin to draw the discoveries from Kapitul along the Krka River. He travelled much, toured the field, researched and sketched numerous medieval churches in Dalmatia for his articles, and for the articles of other researchers.

Already prior to the launch of *Starohrvatska prosvjeta*, Radić began to study small Early Croatian churches, wherein his two-year study of architecture was greatly beneficial. In his assiduous examination and description of small churches throughout Dalmatia and their stone furnishings, he proved himself a noteworthy researcher and writer. He gathered so many materials on these sacral buildings that it enabled other scholars to write their own studies: Miloje M. Vasić (1869-1956), *Arhitektura i skulptura u Dalmaciji od početka IX do početka XV veka* [Architecture and Sculpture in Dalmatia from the Early 9th to Early 15th Centuries], Belgrade 1922; Josef Strzygovski (1862-1941), *O razvitku starohrvatske umjetnosti*, Zagreb [On the Development of Early Croatian Art], 1927; and Ljubo Karaman (1886-1971) *Iz kolijevke hrvatske*

prošlosti [From the Cradle of Croatian History], Zagreb 1930. One cannot assert now that Radić's descriptions and dating were always accurate, but at that time they served their purpose.

In 1891, Radić was elected an alternate member to the research correspondent of the Knin Society of Antiquities, and after Bulić and Jelić resigned at the session held on the occasion of the opening of the First Museum of Croatian Antiquates on 24 August 1893, he was made the Society's chief correspondent, which on that occasion changed its name to the Croatian Society of Antiquities.

At the seventh general assembly of the Croatian Society of Antiquities held in Knin on 15 May 1894, the Research Committee was supplemented with several very gifted amateurs: Frano Radić, Petar Kaer, Vid Vuletić-Vukasović and others. It was also concluded that the scholarly journal *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* would be launched, which would be published quarterly, and Frano Radić was elected its editor-in-chief and research correspondent.

The journal's founder was Fr. Lujo Marun (1857-1939), who had dedicated his entire life to discovering and excavating Early Croatian archaeological sites throughout the territory of Dalmatia. His excavations marked the beginnings of Early Croatian archaeology.

At the beginning of 1895, the first issue of *Prosvjeta* appeared under the editorship of Frano Radić. This was the first scholarly bulletin in Croatia and among the South Slavs in general dedicated exclusively to topics in the field of national archaeology.

In its initial run, only two articles in *Prosvjeta* were written by scholars: Šime Ljubić, historian and archaeologist, already retired at the time, and, together with Marun, Karlo Patsch, who was a secondary school teacher at the time. The remaining articles were generally written by talented amateurs, often simply lay scholars, who were either clergymen or teachers by occupation.

Radić corresponded mostly with Šime Ljubić, who encouraged him in his work, and Frano Bulić acknowledged his contributions to the editing of *Starohrvatska prosvjeta*, which under his editorial guidance published an abundance of materials from the field of Croatian archaeology in Dalmatia.

Over a twenty-year period, from 1884 to 1904, Frano Radić wrote 125 articles in the fields of art history and archaeology.

Radić's articles on the monuments of the Knin Museum, with which he first began familiarizing the

Croatian and then foreign public (and which were so energetically and tirelessly excavated by Marun), are crucial to the beginnings of Croatia's national archaeology.

He participated in archaeological research only in Podgrade/Asseria, six kilometres east of Benkovac, where Early Croatian graves were also found above a Liburnian-Roman hillfort.

The circumstances under which Radić worked were not easy. He lived in a small town on an island, isolated from the major Dalmatian centres and, in particular, the Dalmatian interior in terms of transportation, far from the centres of scholarship, libraries and museums, and from the very Museum of Croatian Monuments. Thus, he did not attend the third general assembly of the Society held in Knin on 3 November 1889, because there was no steamship line from Korčula to Split. The ship only travelled on Sundays and Mondays. He first had to attend to his duties as a teacher, and only then could he dedicate any attention to the journal. He also had a family, with four children and a modest income, so that his great achievements can only be attributed to his great commitment and immense energy. This was acknowledged by Tadija Smičiklas in a letter dated 7 May 1898: "I believe that together with work at school and your being so far from the wider world makes it difficult to edit *Starohrvatska prosvjeta*. When I realize that you're not receiving any significant assistance, then it seems almost impossible".

Lujo Marun saw in Radić a diligent worker and like thinker in their views and opinions of plans tied to the research, study, collection and preservation of the Early Croatian archaeological heritage. So he attempted to convince Radić to move to Knin, where he would act as the Society's secretary and get a teaching job.

The first series of *Prosvjeta* was published in Knin from 1895 to late 1904, printed in Zagreb, and edited in Korčula. In these first ten years, eight volumes consisting of 22 issues were published.

The reason the halt in its publication was that, besides a shortage of funds, it also had no permanent contributors, so most articles were written by Radić. He was even undersigned as the sole author in issues 3 and 4 in 1901.

In the new series of *Prosvjeta* in 1927, Lujo Marun wrote: "After the withdrawal of the valued and never justly credited Mr. Frano Radić from editing *SHP*, the administration vainly sought far and wide to find a worthy successor".

Besides educational work, in the town of Korčula Frano Radić, together with Vid Vuletić-Vukasović, de-

veloped the very vigorous collection, research, study and publication of the island's rich and diverse monumental heritage. He wrote for the scholarly journals of the time (Split's *Buletino*, Zagreb's *Vjesnik hrvatskoga arheološkog društva*, Sarajevo's *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja*, etc.) and in newspapers about the monuments from all epochs and cultures on the island of Korčula, from prehistory to the Early Middle Ages, and to later periods, not limiting his emphasis to architecture, but also dealing with painting, sculpture and arts and crafts.

He is also credited with the establishment of the Native or Homeland Museum in the town of Korčula in 1885.

Radić's transfer from Korčula to the Women's Normal School in 1905 saddened Marun. In a letter dated 3 December 1905, he wrote:

"I have a dark premonition that you shall part ways with our Society for good, and like some black coward, losing all my friends one by one, I am now compelled to lament your departure too early... but my sorrow doubles at the very thought of the death of our dear *Starohrvatska prosvjeta*".

Perhaps his polemic with Bulić over the marble relief portraying a ruler on a throne accompanied by two attendants from the baptistery of the cathedral in Split is the most interesting of his criticisms and polemics, because this medieval monument was subject to differing interpretations even later. Bulić wrote on several occasions of the portrayal of Christ in glory, as the main sitting figure in the relief on the baptistery, and this discussion was also held at the conference in Split. Radić claimed that this was a portrayal of a Croatian king. Experts had already accepted Radić's view at the time of the conference. Today it is believed that the relief on the baptistery depicts the Croatian King Petar Krešimir IV (1056-1074).

The Croatian Society of Antiquities sent Radić to the Second International Congress of Early Christian Archaeology in Rome in 1900, where he delivered a lecture on grave finds from the Early Croatian cemetery in Koljane, near Vrlika.

Art historian and conservator Ljubo Karaman wrote on the journal *Kolijevka*:

"Radić dealt with Early Croatian monuments over the decades with intensity, and with enviable perseverance and patriotic zeal he sought distinct lines and independent aspects in Early Croatian sculpture that would set it apart from its counterpart in Italy, and ultimately he was only able to distinguish a few alleged variants of Early Croatian sculptural art".

According to a description of his cousin, Frano Radić was of medium height, always dressed in black, in a long majestic waistcoat, with a high starched, wide black collar, and heavily-framed gold eyeglasses. His posture was very straight, his speech severe, serious and ornate, and he never smiled, or only wore an ironic smirk – he seemed to be the personification of omniscience.

His views were firmly Catholic. He joined the Franciscan Secular Third Order, advocating and applying to his life and public work the Franciscan precepts of honesty, humility and social justice. He was a member of the oldest Korčula Fraternity of All Saints.

As a vocational instructor in the Public School in Korčula, and then in the Women's Normal School in Dubrovnik, he also dealt with educational and even literary work, writing literary reviews, poems, criticisms, and travel pieces in periodicals such as *Slovinac* in Dubrovnik, the Zagreb-based *Vijenac*, *Javor* and

Bršljan (Novi Sad), *Bosanska vila* (Sarajevo) and *Glas Hercegovaca* (Mostar).

He also wrote about the importance of public schools, the improvement of the curricula for these schools, the status of teachers and teaching methods in the journals *Hrvatski učitelj* of Zagreb, *Gospodarski poučnik* of Šibenik, and *Zora* and *Narodni list* of Zadar.

The most valuable contribution made by Frano Radić in his rich and creative life was his leadership of *Starohrvatska prosvjeta*. According to academy member Stjepan Gunjača, the first series of *Prosvjeta*, although it bore the designation of amateur analysis of archaeological, historical and topographic problems, was important because these problems finally began to be highlighted, because it published archaeological materials and particularly because it registered numerous topographic data.