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Pregledni članak
Review

CROATIA - PAST AND PRESENT LOCATION, POSITION, TERRITORY, BORDERS, REGIONS

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Considering its surface Croatia is among the most composite European states in physico-geographical sense as well as by its social inheritance. Because of the location on the contact of various cultural circles Croatia's territory has passed through many changes throughout the history and has unique shape and many different regions.

Hrvatska - prošlost i sadašnjost; smještaj, položaj, teritorij, granice, regije

S obzirom na pripadajuću površinu Hrvatska je i u prirodno-geografskom smislu i po društvenom nasljeđu jedna od najsloženijih europskih država. Položaj na dodiru različitih civilizacijskih krugova uzrok je brojnim teritorijalnim promjenama u prošlosti, neobičnom obliku današnjeg teritorija te regionalnoj raščlanjenosti.

1. Geographic Location and Position of Croatia

The Republic of Croatia, in Europe, is located in such a way that its territory includes several differing natural-geographic units. Similar to its locational complexity, Croatia's positional complexity is determined by the influence of and contact with various ethnic, cultural, economic and political European entities.

1.1. Location

Due to its locational complexity Croatia is composed of three large natural-geographic regions (Rogić, 1978). These are the lowlands in the

north, the coastal belt in the south and the highland-montane area that is located between the latter two. The territory of Croatia only includes parts of these three regions, as all three stretch over the borders of other European states. The northern, primarily lowland area, is part of the Pannonian Plain, the Adriatic coastal belt is part of the Mediterranean, while the highland-montane area is a part of the Dinaric Alps. The boundary between the littoral and the highlands is narrow, as there is almost no transitional area bet-

ween them. However, there is quite a large transitional belt between the lowlands and the montane area, which is often categorized separately and called the Peri-Pannonian region. Not far from Croatia's northwestern border another major region can be found, namely, the Alps. These mountains are important to Croatia's location because their transitional, sub-alpine belt almost touches Croatia's borders (figure 1).

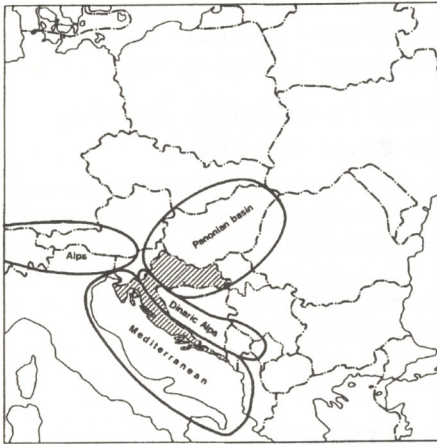


Fig. 1. Physical-geography units
Sl. 1. *Prirodno-geografske cjeline*

Because of its territorial shape, Croatia reaches deeply into both the Pannonian and Mediterranean regions, while the connecting, Dinaric section is the narrowest. The Pannonian section includes about 55% of Croatia's surface area, the littoral/Mediterranean section covers about 31%, and the highland-montane section accounts for about 14%.

1.2. Position

An important determinant for Croatia's position, in the past as well as in the present, is its contact with differing cultural, political and economic, or more concisely, civilizational spheres (figure 2). These spheres have throughout history interacted and also conflicted on the territory of Croatia (Pavić, 1976).

On the basis of historical events, three cultural-civilizational spheres of influence can be recognized. From the west and south Croatia was subject to the influence of the European Mediterranean. This is an expressly Catholic civilizational sphere, with a primarily Latin ethnic character, which reached Croatia through Italy. The Central European civilizational sphere is to the north of Croatia. It is also primarily Catholic, but there is a strong Protestant and Jewish presence, and it influenced Croatia

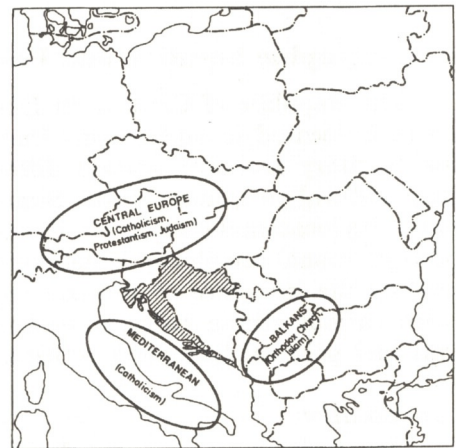


Fig. 2. Cultural circles
Sl. 2. *Kulturni krugovi*

through contacts with Germanic peoples (Germans, Austrians) as well as Hungarians. The third cultural-civilizational sphere is the Balkans. It is characterized by Eastern Orthodoxy, but also by Islam, brought to Europe by the Turks. The ethnic character of this sphere where it has contact with Croatia is Serbian (figure 3).

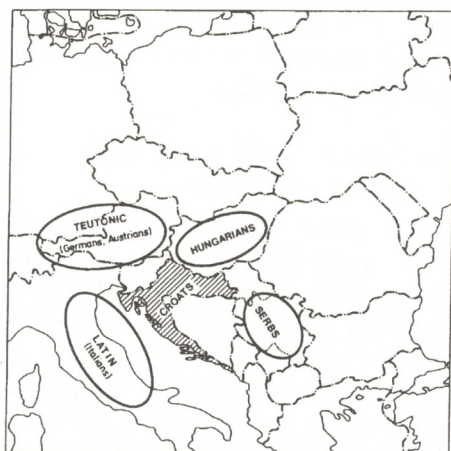


Fig. 3. Ethnic encirclement
Sl. 3. Narodnosno okruženje

The first two civilizational spheres are part of the European West, while the third is part of the European East, so that Croatia is currently defined as a country on the border of two European cultural civilizational poles. However, Croatia is undeniably a part of the Western sphere, because as a state, it was formed and always developed not only under the influence, but also as a constituent part, of Western Europe. In addition to this, the civilizati-

onal boundary was established before the arrival of the Croats and the beginnings of the Croatian state. Its outlying position is the reason Croatia was also influenced by the East. Since contact between the East and West throughout history more frequently took the form of conflicts and only exceptionally as mutual enrichment and enlightenment, Croatia's borderline position was generally a hindrance rather than a catalyst for development (Pavić, 1976).

Heterogenous influences and experiences were enhanced by Croatia's various political affiliations, or those of its individual sections, throughout history. The Croatian littoral was in a political union with Venice, one of the Italian state centers, for a long time. northern Croatia (and in the 19th century all of Croatia) was for a long time a part of Central European states with Germans and Hungarians. The influences of the Balkan sphere were due to the proximity of the Ottoman Empire, and during the 20th century in the Yugoslav state. The influences of the first two spheres were long-lasting, and owing to political union, Croatia not only gained, but made its own contributions to this community. State union with the Balkan (Southeastern European) sphere was realized only in the 20th century and since these contacts were less intense, it is understandable that the influence of this sphere on Croatia was of a considerably lesser nature (Banac, 1984).

A position in a place where differing, and often conflicting, worlds brought about varying influences and

experiences which did not always have a positive effect on Croatia's development and integrity. For a long period a military border created by the Habsburgs ran through Croatia (Rogić, 1991), a situation that did not promote stable conditions for development. In addition, Croatia was periodically the object of conquest by neighboring countries.

However, these differing influences did not destroy the integrity of Croatia. Its different sections were in a constant state of flux and any losses to the population were always regained, and their desire for unification made them an indivisible whole. The elongation of its two foreparts (lowlands and coastal belt) are particularly significant. The northern lowlands are deeply embedded in the European Pannonian region and attached to the Central European cultural tradition. The southern littoral is a constituent part of the European Mediterranean and is marked by the culture of that civilizational sphere. The central, highland-montane area, where Croatia's territory is at its narrowest, connects the two wider foreparts. This narrow connecting area, having the smallest surface area, is inferior to the Adriatic and Pannonian areas in terms of local economic potential. However, it is the most important and sensitive part for traffic and the integrity of Croatia (Roglić, 1978).

The variety of its natural features and civilizational heritage is a factor in its economic and regional heterogeneity. Indigenous potential as well as relatively early industria-

lization and its proximity to former centres of economic and political power have made the Pannonian section the most important in terms of production. Even so, a considerable level of development is not lacking on the Adriatic, which is traditionally directed towards maritime trade, and more recently towards tourism. That these two sections are complementary would not be possible without the connecting area, which thus has an intermediate function in that it is vital for traffic.

1.3. Transportational Position and Significance

In terms of transportation the Republic of Croatia is an expressly transit-oriented state (Roglić, 1978). Croatia's territory intersects with a number of significant international transport routes, some of which have Croatian ports as their final destinations. The most important international transport corridors are:

- a) Vienna-Zagreb-Split
- b) Budapest-Zagreb-Rijeka
- c) The Sava Valley: from the tunnel through Karavanke in Slovenia all along the Sava Valley to Serbia, Macedonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece.
- d) Bosnia and the Neretva valleys: Budapest-Pecsuh-Osijek-Sarajevo-Mostar-Ploče
- e) The Adriatic (Italy-Albania-Greece)

It is important to add to the above the secondary Drava Valley traffic corridor, which also connects Cen-

Fig. 4. Main transportaion corridors

Sl. 4. Glavni prometni koridori



tral and Southeastern Europe. The shipping and ferry-boat lines between Croatia and Italy are significant as well. Croatia also borders on a significant European inland waterway, the Danube river. Although Croatian territory only contains a short length of the Danube river, this does not take away from Croatia's potential importance in contributing to trade on the Danube.

The exceptional transportation-/transit convenience of Croatia is also important for land-locked countries such as Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Bosnia-Herzegovina can also be added to this group of countries, for although it has a small outlet to the sea, it has no transportation value. Croatian ports are thus very important for these countries as they make optimal participation in international markets possible.

In terms of traffic, Bosnia-Herzegovina is quite important for Croatia, for these two countries do in effect form a geo-transportational whole (Klemenčić/Topalović, 1993). Ties between individual parts of Croatia are most conveniently realized across Bosnian territory, while Bosnia-Herzegovina not only gains access to the sea over Croatia (towards which it gravitates), but also ties with more developed Central and Western European countries. The transportation unity of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia is most obvious on the Bosna-Neretva traffic corridor, while Bosnia's access to the remaining major traffic routes such as the Sava Valley or the Adriatic are most conveniently realized through Croatia (figure 4).

Because of its place in the European traffic network, but also because of its complementary regional po-

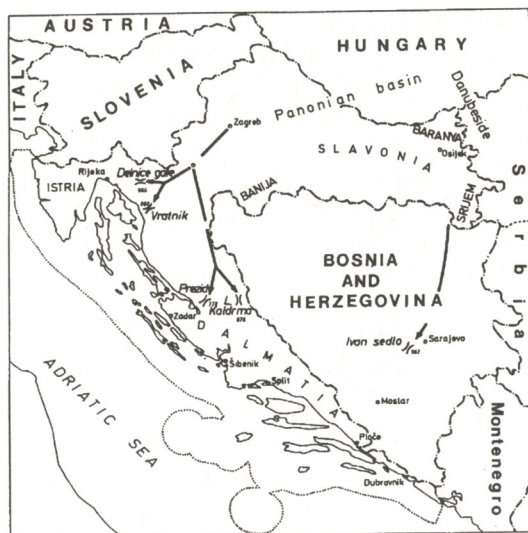


Fig. 5 Main passes between Pannonian basin and Adriatic coast

Sl. 5. Glavni prijevoji između Panonske nizine i Jadranskog mora

sition and the shape of its territory, the most vital transportation routes for Croatia are those that connect the Adriatic with the Pannonian region. Utilization of these routes opens Croatian ports to the wider and extensive European continental hinterland and makes possible the fullest development of the Pannonian, Dinaric and Adriatic sections of Croatia. It also strengthens the mutual dependence of Bosnia- Herzegovina and Croatia.

Croatia's most important traffic hub is Zagreb, the capital city. A number of traffic routes meet and cross at this point. It is in this part of Croatia that the Pannonian and the Central Danube Valleys are closest to the Northern Adriatic and thus the Mediterranean. Also, in the area from Zagreb over Karlovac to the Adriatic Sea, the Dinaric knot begins to broaden towards the Alps, so that this highland pass is at its

narrowest and lowest, making it easier to cross. Because of this, this highland pass is sometimes called the »Croatian Threshold« or the »Croatian Gate« and is considered a key European transit point (Roglić, 1978). There are a number of relatively low passes over it, and they are the most convenient crossing points from the Pannonian Plain to the Adriatic Sea. The most favorable passes to the Northern Adriatic are the Delnice »gate« and Vratnik, on the northern face of Velebit mountain. Prezid, on the southern part of Velebit mountain, and especially Lička Kaldrma, with a detour through the Butišnica Valley, are the best routes towards the somewhat more distant Central Adriatic (figure 5).

The biggest transportation shortcoming of Croatia is inadequate construction and the condition of its roads and railroads. Transportation potential has not been followed up

with modern roads by far. Because of this the modernization of the transportation network is a developmental imperative. The construction of highway networks is above all vital, especially routes heading to the coast. The construction of a high-speed lowland railroad through the Kupa Valley to Rijeka, Croatia's largest port, is also a necessity.

The construction of roads in Croatia has a long tradition. The first modern roads which utilized the »Croatian Threshold« pass were already laid down in the 18th century (Karolina, Jozefina). However, road construction and later railroad construction in Croatia were traditionally a subject of interest for other, foreign centers of power. In more recent history Croatia was never able to construct transportation routes in accordance with its own interests. For example, after World War II in Yugoslavia, the development of the Sava-Morava Valley transportation route was given precedence. While this may have been the primary Yugoslav corridor, it was not the primary Croatian corridor. Only now that Croatia has attained independence can these past omissions be corrected.

2. Territorial Changes and Borders

2.1. Territorial Changes

Historically the Croatian name was first mentioned in reference to upper Visla (»White Croatia«), in today's Poland and northern Czech Republic. At this time the area of to-

day's was still organized in the ancient Roman province of Illyricum (Macan, 1992). Croats migrated to their present homeland at the start of the 7th century. The Croatian name was initially associated with the territory and population south of Gvozd and from the Raša river in Istria to the Cetina river. It was in this territory that the first Croatian state was formed. With time, the southern Croatian state united with another, which was formed north of Gvozd mountain. The united Croatia included Bosnia as well as the Neretva principality, so that in the 10th century the Croatian kingdom extended over all lands from the Drava river to the sea. In this way the Croatian name was also expanded.

After Croatia lost its independence at the start of the 12th century, individual Croatian regions began to be called by their regional names (Dalmatia, Slavonia, Bosnia) and the Croatian name was territorially confined and limited to a north-western region, where it was maintained. During the national renaissance in the 19th century, the awareness of a common heritage and affiliation of the Croatian people was definitely strengthened, so that the Croatian national name was accepted in all lands inhabited by Croats. It was not only accepted in the Triune Kingdom (Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia) but in Istria, Baranya, Bačka (in Vojvodina) and Bosnia-Herzegovina as well. In the state sense the Croatian name did not include all of these lands even if the Croats aspi-

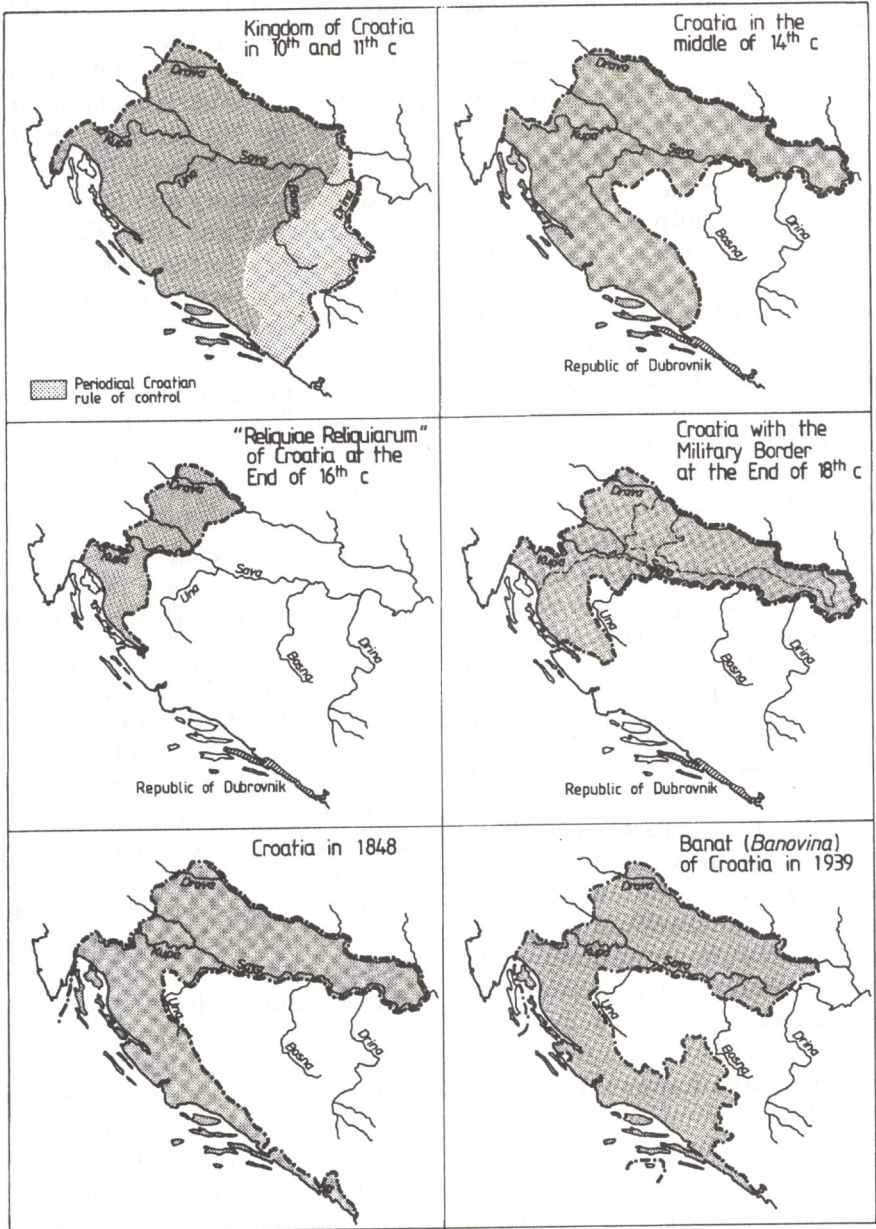


Fig. 6 Territorial changes
Sl. 6. Teritorijalne promjene

red to unity. It was permanently established in the Triune Kingdom in the 19th century and in the Republic of Croatia in the second half of the 20th century. Bosnia-Herzegovina, even if it can be historically and nationally counted as partially Croatian lands, were in the 20th century constituted as a separate state in which Croats are a constituent people. However, they share sovereignty with Serbs and Muslims.

Territorially, the first Croatian state in the 10th and 11th centuries covered all of the areas from the Adriatic Sea in the south to the Drava and Danube rivers in the north, while the Sutla, Kupa and Raša rivers formed the western, and the Drina river the eastern, borders. In the eastern outlying areas Croatian authority and influence was only temporary (Macan, 1992).

After losing full independence and joining Hungary in a state union, Croatian territory was narrowed considerably, and some of its individual parts broke off to form separate states. In the 12th through the 14th centuries Bosnia strengthened and expanded, while in the far south the city of Dubrovnik began to develop as an independent republic. The Venetian Republic expanded its authority to include Istria and certain coastal cities.

The reduction of Croatian state territory continued, especially after the Turks invaded Europe. In the 15th century Bosnia fell to the Turks, and gradually parts of Croatia did as well. The expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the contracti-

on of Croatia continued into the 16th century, so that at the end of that century Croatia was confined to the smallest area that it ever occupied, and this was noted throughout history («the remnants of the remnants»).

The beginning of the 17th century saw the reconquest of Croatian territory that was under Ottoman rule. In the Peace of Karlowitz (Srijemski Karlovci) in 1699 Croatia regained Slavonia, a part of Srijem, Banija and a larger part of Lika. With the Peace of Požarevac in 1718 the remainder of Srijem was reincorporated, and after the Peace of Svištov in 1791 the Una river valley in Lika was also regained. At the same time, up until its peak in 1718, the Venetian Republic expanded its rule in the littoral regions. At this point the territorial formation of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia was complete.

In the 19th century the Croatian national movement strengthened the idea of Croatian unity and spurred attempts for territorial unification. This was manifested with the proclamation of the unity, under the governance of Josip Jelačić, in 1848. Unity was then realized for a short time. A part of Croatia, along the border with the Ottoman occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina, was up until 1881 under military administration, and called the Military Frontier. That this frontier was officially a part of Croatian territory was never questioned.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina and some outlying parts of Croatia extensive population changes took place during

Ottoman rule. While a part of the autochthonous Croatian population retreated further into Croatian or Austrian lands, a large number of Orthodox Christians from the east were settled in the depopulated areas. In the 19th century they generally became part of the Serbian national body. A part of the autochthonous Bosnian population, who took on the Islamic faith with the arrival of the Turks, developed a specific culture, and in the 20th century they evolved into a separate Muslim nationality. In this way, Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 20th century became a state with three nationalities in which the remaining Croats were a constituent people, but not the only one. Territorially, Bosnia-Herzegovina was formed as a geo-political unit during Ottoman rule, and these same borders were maintained during Austro-Hungarian administration and in the Yugoslav federation.

After the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Croatia was the focal point of the short-lived State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (October 26-December 1, 1918). Besides Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia was also a part of this state. After the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs joined the kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro in a common state, the Croats came under direct Serbian hegemony. In the centralized Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later Yugoslavia, the national and state individuality of its constituent nations were suppressed in the name of a forced unity imposed by Serbia. Regional districts were formed in an

attempt to break down Croatia's integrity. Even so, in 1939 the Banovina (Banate, Province) of Croatia was founded, in which Croatian lands were included, as well as parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Independent State of Croatia, which was proclaimed in 1941 under German and Italian patronage, included Croatia and all of Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, the largest and most valuable part of the littoral was ceded to Italy.

After World War II Croatia was established with its present borders and territory based on the principles of the Croatian Anti-fascist Movement. It includes the former Triune Kingdom (Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia), although without a large part of Srijem that was ceded to Serbia, and also without the coastal belt from the Bay of Kotor to Spič (Sutomora) which was ceded to Montenegro. Croatia did gain Baranya, a part of Hungary that was ceded to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1920, as well as Istria, Rijeka, Cres, Lošinj, Zadar, Lastovo and Palagruža, all Croatian places that were ceded to Italy in 1920.

Bosnia-Herzegovina, also partially a state of the Croatian people, was constituted as a member of the Yugoslav federation as well. Besides in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a considerable number of Croats also lived around the Bay of Kotor and in Bačka (Vojvodina) after the republican borders were drawn.

When all of the historical changes are taken into account, it can be seen that the northern and western

borders of Croatia are old and stable (Klemenčić, 1991). The only recent change is the inclusion of Istria into Croatia, which was not the case earlier in history. Today's eastern borders are a result of reductions and territorial losses that began in the Middle Ages with the gradual independence of Bosnia, and continued with Ottoman conquest. In the 18th century, with the reincorporation of Slavonia and the expansion of Dalmatia under Venice, Croatia succeeded in regaining some territory, but the original extent was never again achieved. Croatia suffered through territorial losses in the Yugoslav federation, having lost outlying regions to Serbia and Montenegro, so that it is correct to conclude that the present territory is the result of relatively large and repeated territorial reductions and small, laborious gains.

2.2. Borders and Territorial Extent

The total length of Croatia's continental borders is 2,028 kilometers. The largest border is that with Bosnia-Herzegovina (932 km, 46% of the total continental borders), then Slovenia (501 km, 24.7%), Hungary (329 km, 16.2%), Serbia (241 km, 11.9%), and Montenegro (25 km, 1.22%), the shortest (figure 7).

The majority of Croatia's borders are marked by major natural or geographic features. Usually these are rivers, whether the borderline is drawn from the flow of the river itself or from the river bed. The Drava and Mura rivers form the border with Hungary, the Danube with Ser-

bia, the Sava, Una, Glina and Korana with Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sutla, Bregana, Kupa, Čabranka and Dragonja with Slovenia. Some border areas are marked by mountain massifs. The Plješivica, Dinara and Kamešnica are mountains on the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina, and a part of the Croatian-Slovenian border are marked by Žumberak mountain. A smaller portion of the borders have no noticeable physical features, such as a part of the Croatian-Hungarian border in Baranya, and the Croatian-Serbian border in Srijem.

On the sea, Croatia borders with Italy. Croatia has full sovereignty, except for the right of innocent passage for foreign vessels, over a maritime belt 12 nautical miles wide. This belt is measured from a straight baseline (an imaginary line that connects the farthest protrusions of an island or the mainland if there are no islands in blocking it). Internal waters are located inside of this line, while outside of it are territorial waters, which along with mainland territory form a constituent part of the Croatian state territory.

Croatian sovereignty on the sea does not totally end outside of the territorial waters, either. By the principle of a »median line«, an epicontinental belt also separates Croatia and Italy. According to international law, Croatia has the primary right to research and exploit the sea and sea-floor in the epicontinental belt. Maritime boundaries with Slovenia and Montenegro have not yet been determined.



Fig. 7. Border length
Sl.7. *Duljina granica*

The total land surface area of the Republic of Croatia is 56,538 km². The area of the coastal waters, which is 33,200 km² can be added to this. The territory of Croatia is quite disjointed. The distance between its two farthest points is almost twice as far as that of a circle with the same surface area, if only the land area is counted. The disjointed nature of Croatia's territory is shown by the fact that a circle with the same surface area would have an extent of 843 km, while the borders of Croatia, not counting coastal lines, are almost three times this number. This indented and unique shape is the cause of great defensive and transportation difficulties (figure 8).

Croatia's size puts it among the mid-sized European countries. For example, it is larger than Albania, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Bosnia-

Herzegovina, but smaller than Latvia, Lithuania and Ireland.

3. Regions

In Croatia there are numerous and varying regions, with different sizes and often overlapping territories (A Concise Atlas, 1993). Their existence is based on separate historical and political development and the location of Croatian lands in several different natural and geographic zones. The best-known traditional historic regions are Dalmatia and Slavonia, and also Istria.

The original Roman Dalmatia, besides the coastal belt, covered an extensive hinterland that included the majority of today's Bosnia-Herzegovina. Later, the Byzantine district of Dalmatia was restricted to a few coastal cities and islands. Dalmatia's current territorial extent is

due largely to Venetian expansion on the littoral in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Slavonia (originally Slovinje) also covered a much larger territory in the past. All of the Croatian lands north of Gvozd (today Velika and Mala Kapela) were called Slavonia. After Ottoman conquest and Croatian reconquest, Slavonia was limited to the areas of the three counties of Eastern Croatia since the 18th century.

The name Istria always referred to the peninsula in Western Croatia. Although Croatian in national character, Istria was only politically and administratively united with Croatia in the 20th century.

The remaining historical regions are of a lesser significance or borders that are unclear (Žumberak, Banija, Kordun). Some regions are not only historically but geographically

determined (Baranya, Međimurje, Lika). The majority of the remaining regions are determined exclusively on physical-geographic characteristics of some parts of Croatia (Gorski Kotar, Podravina, Posavina, Moslavina, Pokuplje, Ravni Kotari, Dalmatinska zagora, etc.) The Croatian regions of Baranya, Srijem and Istria are parts of what were once larger territorial entities, but during the course of border changes in the 20th century they stayed in Croatia or were partially incorporated into neighboring countries (Hungary, Serbia, Slovenia).

Even if the names of the major regions were even periodically used in the state name (Triune Kingdom of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia), today they are geographic concepts, all up until recently without any sort of administrative significance.

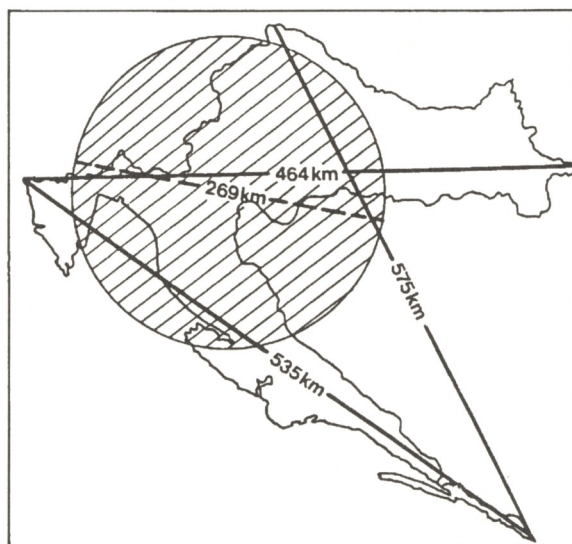


Fig. 8. The shape and distances of extreme land points

Sl. 8. *Oblik i odnosi zračnih udaljenosti*

The new administrative-territorial organization, enacted in late 1992, reaffirmed the names of some individual regions by incorporating them in the names of the newly-formed counties. The term »krajina« or »Serbian krajina« has recently been used quite often in the international media. Rebel Serbs in Croatia use this name for the Croatian territory that they control, but it does not have a basis in tradition. The word alone is certainly often used, but as a general term written with a small letter, noting that it means a border territory of uncertain extent. The word

»krajina« in Croatian has the same meaning as the word frontier does in English. The Austrian military-defensive belt in Croatia was called the Military Frontier (Militär Gränze on German) and it did not correspond to the territory of the so-called Serbian Krajina. This concept was often used in literature to denote smaller regions, so that there was an Imotska krajina, Cetinska krajina or Sinjska krajina. In this context, only the term Kninska krajina is known, thus as a common concept without any firmly determined territorial significance.

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Sažetak**HRVATSKA - PROŠLOST I SADAŠNJOST
SMJEŠTAJ, POLOŽAJ, TERITORIJ, GRANICE, REGIJE**

by

Mladen Klemenčić

Hrvatska država i u fizičko-geografskom i u povijesno-kulturnom i u etničkom pogledu leži na dodiru više velikih europskih cjelina. To je čini regionalno raščlanjenom zemljom, tradicionalno otvorenom za različite utjecaje koji su se u Hrvatskoj katkad prožimali, a katkad i sukobljavali. Na unutrašnjem planu položaj na zemljopisno jedinstvenom spoju srednjeg Podunavlja s Jadranom, odnosno Srednje Europe s Mediteranom, uvjetuje regionalnu raščlanjenost u kojoj su pojedini dijelovi povezani i upućeni jedan na drugog. Na izvanjskom planu takav položaj Hr-

vatskoj pruža povoljne mogućnosti participacije u europskim gospodarskim tokovima. U geopolitičkom pogledu taj se položaj pokazao iznimno osjetljivim pa je opstojnost hrvatske države i hrvatskog naroda više puta bila ozbiljno ugrožena. Posljedice toga brojne su teritorijalne mijene kao i sudjelovanje Hrvatske u više različitih državno-političkih saveza. Prednosti koje može crpiti iz svoga položaja, slojevitog kulturnog nasljeđa i bogatstva proizašlog iz regionalnog prožimanja, Hrvatska će u punoj mjeri moći ostvariti kao neovisna i suverena država

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