

## The Croatian Early Middle Ages in Service of Politics in the Beginnings of Independent Croatia

This paper endeavors to detect thematic circles and patterns that are closely related to the history of Croatian Early Middle Ages and were used by the Croatian political elite in strengthening and maintaining of Croatian national pathos and in affirmation of national historical right during the 1990s. The aim is to establish how the interpretations of politicians concerning certain aspects of Croatian early medieval history influenced media and popular notions in general, especially in regard to the idea of the thousand-year-old dream of Croatian people. A fair share of such interpretations has also found their place in fundamental documents of Croatian statehood. This examination is primarily based on political speeches and relevant state and political documents. The strengthening of national imaginary in the time of struggle for the preservation of state which is also related with the national integration is usually perceived, not entirely unfounded, as a legitimate political tactics that was used in the past and is still used by nations and states. In this sense, the Croatian Early Middle Ages is all but inexhaustible source for interpretations supporting again and again almost mythical notions about early Croatian history that may be used for everyday political purposes. Within these concepts, the national history is an unchangeable category, it is omnitemporal and timeless, offers eternal truths with final purpose which, naturally, all leads to the politicization of history and even the politicization of historical science. In the process, by projecting the contemporary concepts and notions into the past, there is an attempt to establish an uninterrupted continuity of national and statehood identity which reveals the profound, substantial misunderstanding of historical realities.

**Key words:** Croatian Early Middle Ages, politics, ideologization, mythologization, 1990s