

# QUEEN HELEN AND KING MICHAEL: THE BEGINNING OF A NEW DYNASTY?\*

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*Queen Helen is the single example of a Croatian queen about whom we have two independent sources: her epitaph and a mention by Thomas the Archdeacon of Split. Similarly, her husband, king Michael Krešimir II is also documented by his wife's epitaph, by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, and a charter issued by his great-grandson Peter Krešimir IV. This cannot be accidental and the aim of this article is to argue that the ascendance of the royal couple to the Croatian throne meant the beginning of a new dynasty. This change was supported by the establishment of the memory of the couple through Helen's foundation of a royal mausoleum and the composition of a book of deeds of the king and his descendants.*

**Key words:** *Queen Helen, St Helen, Michael Krešimir II, Croatia, Dalmatia, memory, politics of memory, epitaph, Benedictines, borders, Salona, Solin*

Until the late 19th century (and occasionally even later), Croatian historiography offered different versions of the genealogy of 10th-century Croatian rulers. Although it would be interesting to make an overview of the proposed – partly legendary – genealogies from Johannes Lucius (1604 – 1679) until the first half of the 19th century, it is sufficient to take a look at some of the opinions that emerged during the so called ‘professionalization’ of Croatian historiography. A good overview of older opinions was provided by Ferdo Šišić in a well-known article on ruler’s genealogy,<sup>1</sup> and I will highlight only some of the more important. Franjo Rački considered that there were only three kings called Krešimir (and not four, as most modern historians agree upon), because he did not distinguish between Krešimir I and II, but he properly believed Krešimir (II) was Stephen I Držislav’s father.<sup>2</sup> Tadija Smičiklas followed that view, seeing in Držislav the younger son of Krešimir I and brother of king Miroslav. It is interesting that Smičiklas, perhaps more than other authors, attached importance to *ban* (second highest ranking official in the kingdom) Pribina, whom he even assumed to have usurped the throne, leading to the split of the kingdom into Croatia and Serbia under the great *župan* Časlav. Smičiklas described the split as fatal because it led to the permanent division of

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<sup>1</sup> F. ŠIŠIĆ, *Genealoški prilozi o hrvatskoj narodnoj dinastiji* (Genealogical contributions on the Croatian national dynasty), in: *Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu* 13/1, 1914., pp. 1-93.

<sup>2</sup> This is obvious from the Index of names in F. RAČKI, *Documenta historiae chroaticae periodum antiquam illustrantia*, Zagreb, 1877, p. 501. Although he did not explicitly state this, his opinion can be derived also from his article *Kada i kako se preobrazi hrvatska kneževina u kraljevinu* (How and when was the Croatian dukedom transformed into the kingdom), in: *Zbornik kralja Tomislava*, (ed.) G. Manojlović, Zagreb, 1925., pp. 3-4.

Croats and Serbs.<sup>3</sup> Apart from trusting the *Kingdom of the Slavs*, Smičiklas misinterpreted John the Deacon, and in Svetoslav saw Držislav's older brother.<sup>4</sup> Vjekoslav Klaić roughly followed Smičiklas' interpretation of events after Miroslav's death, and considered Držislav as one of the younger sons of Krešimir I. Krešimir I and II merged in his interpretation into one person whose eldest son was Svetoslav Suronja.<sup>5</sup>

Klaić was the first, if I'm not mistaken, who called the Croatian rulers from Krešimir I to Peter Krešimir IV the Krešimirović, thus distinguishing them from the previous dynasty of the Trpimirović.<sup>6</sup> The reason for this was that the continuity of the dynasty between Mutimir (mentioned in 892 and 895) and Tomislav (mentioned in 914 and 925) cannot be established,<sup>7</sup> and Klaić, like some of his predecessors, makes no mention of Trpimir II as Tomislav's successor, although he had already been included in the genealogy of the rulers as such by Rački.<sup>8</sup> Šišić is responsible for the permanent placement of Trpimir II among the Croatian rulers,<sup>9</sup> although such an interpretation is still controversial today.

Recently, Predrag Komatina has discussed the issue, arguing for the thesis that there were no two Trpimirs, and that Krešimir (or Krasimir, as he, following Constantine Porphyrogenitus, calls him) and Miroslav ruled between 895 and 925.<sup>10</sup> A strong argument in support of his thesis is the fact that chapter 31 does not mention the Croats' victory over the Bulgarians in 927, which could hardly have happened had the text been written around 949. Komatina, on the other hand, does not consider the so called Grant for Diklo at all, which mentions *ban* Pribina as contemporary to Michael Krešimir I – the same one who, according to Constantine Porphyrogenitus, killed Miroslav, as already pointed out by Šišić.<sup>11</sup> Komatina also easily rejects Thomas' dating of *dux* Tomislav in 914, arguing that the archdeacon was dealing with the timing of Archbishop John, not Tomislav, and that he had information from 914 about John, adding the name of the Croatian ruler for whom he had found record in the minutes of the Split council from 925, from which he knew that Tomislav was John's contemporary. The difficulty, however, is that Thomas did not use the records of the Split council elsewhere in his chronicle<sup>12</sup>, and the question is also what would be the document in which John is mentioned without

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<sup>3</sup> T. SMIČIKLAS, *Povijest hrvatska* (Croatian history), vol. I, Zagreb, 1882, pp. 226-230. This hypothesis is without valid arguments, but rests on an uncritical reading of "The Kingdom of the Slavs" (Ljetopis Popa Dukljanina / The Chronicle of the Priest from Dioclia).

<sup>4</sup> T. SMIČIKLAS, *op. cit.* (n. 3), p. 230.

<sup>5</sup> V. KLAJĆ, *Povijest hrvatska od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX. stoljeća* (Croatian history from the earliest times to the end of the XIX century), vol. I, Zagreb, 1899, pp. 85-89.

<sup>6</sup> V. KLAJĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 5), p. 85.

<sup>7</sup> V. KLAJĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 5), p. 71.

<sup>8</sup> F. RAČKI, *op. cit.* (n. 2), p. 399. Trpimir (II) is mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus in Gy. MORAVCSIK and R. J. H. JENKINS, *De administrando imperio* (DAI), Budapest, 1949, ch. 31, pp. 148-149: „And many years after, in the days of prince Terpimer, father of prince Krasimer...”.

<sup>9</sup> F. ŠIŠIĆ, *Povijest Hrvata u doba narodnih vladara* (History of the Croats in the times of the national rulers), Zagreb, 1925, pp. 430-431. Šišić also presents some earlier opinions on the subject.

<sup>10</sup> P. KOMATINA, O hronologiji hrvatskih vladara u 31. glavi spisa De administrando imperio (On the chronology of Croatian rulers in chapter 31 of De administrando imperio), in: *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest* 42, 2010, pp. 83-105.

<sup>11</sup> F. ŠIŠIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 17-18. In this discussion, Šišić makes other arguments in support of the thesis that Krešimir I and Miroslav were the heirs of Tomislav and not his predecessors. As most of the same arguments occur in all discussions on Krešimir and Miroslav, there is no need to recount them here, so I refer to Šišić's discussion, which satisfactorily documents the situation before Komatina's article.

<sup>12</sup> N. BUDAK, *Historia Salonitana and Historia Salonitana Maior: a contribution to the debate about the relation of the two texts*, in: *Summer School in the Study of Historical Manuscripts*, (ed.) M. Tomić, M. Willer, Zadar, 2013, pp. 101-131.

some representative of secular authority: if not the Croatian ruler, then the Byzantine emperor. In his catalogue Thomas otherwise mentions emperors together with the names of the archbishops, so there is no reason why he would not do the same in the case of John<sup>13</sup> if he had such data. It is, therefore, much more likely that the information on Tomislav and John comes from some document, presumably Tomislav's grant to the Church of Split, drawn up in 914, in which the name of the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII (or his mother, Regent Zoe Karbonopsine) was not mentioned.

If Krešimir I and Miroslav reigned after Mutimir and before Tomislav, for their reign, including the war that occurred after Miroslav's assassination, there would not be even twenty years left, provided that Mutimir only reigned until 895, and that Tomislav began to rule only in 914. This, of course, is not impossible, since one can also rule for only a year (like *dux* Zdeslav, 878-9), but it would still be strange that Constantine should not mention Tomislav as the one who had been ruling in Croatia for several years at the time when Chapter 31 of DAI was composed.

Constantine's work clearly did not reach the final editing. Komatina himself points out that the sentence about the military strength of the Croats after their mutual conflict, with incomplete data, was inserted afterwards, so we can ask ourselves whether it was inserted by some continuator, for example the author of Chapter 30.<sup>14</sup> In this case, the data on Krešimir, Miroslav and Pribina could also have been inserted in DAI after Constantine's death, leaving the possibility of their later dating. This would also explain why the chapter on Croats does not mention the victory over Bulgarians under the leadership of Alogobotur, since the continuator would have noticed that it had already been mentioned in the chapter on Serbs.<sup>15</sup>

If we look at the reliable chronological information about Croatian rulers of the 10th century, we can only say that Tomislav still ruled in 925, that Stephen I Držislav reigned at least from 970<sup>16</sup>, and that queen Helen died in 976. In addition, we know from DAI that Miroslav reigned for four years. It is no wonder that with such scarce data, various hypotheses can be built. Therefore the most interesting question here - when Michael Krešimir and Helen occupied the Croatian throne - remains without a definite answer, regardless of whether we believe that there were two (Krešimir I and Miroslav) or three kings (including Trpimir II) ruling after Tomislav and before Krešimir II, or perhaps even only one (Miroslav).

In his time, Bulić's discovery of the remains of Queen Helen's sarcophagus in 1898 provided a very different and more reliable interpretation of Croatian history of the 10th century, especially considering the genealogy of Croatian rulers. The epitaph is only partially preserved and broken up in fragments 90 of which were discovered and only 77 could be joined in an acceptable way, with approximately one third of the text completely missing. Scholars suggested a number of rather different readings of the incomplete text, making it difficult to draw reliable conclusions on some of the details of the epitaph.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> For example: "Marinus archiepiscopus fuit tempore Caroli regis et Branimiri ducis Sclauonie... Martinus archiepiscopus fuit tempore Theodosii imperatoris et Dirscisclau regis.", in: Thomas Archdeacon, *Historia Salonitana*; foreword, Latin text, critical apparatus and translation into Croatian by O. PERIĆ, historical commentary by M. MATIJEVIĆ SOKOL, study *Thomas the Archdeacon and his work* by R. KATIČIĆ, Split, 2003, pp. 52-55. (hereinafter: *HS*). Thomas mentions in the same way Archbishops Peter (in the time of Trpimir and Mutimir) and Paul (in the time of Emperors Basil and Constantine and King Krešimir). Ibidem, pp. 56-57.

<sup>14</sup> That chapter 30 was inserted sometime in the second half of the 10th century was suggested by M. ANČIĆ, *Zamišljanje tradicije: vrijeme i okolnosti postanka 30. glave djela De administrando imperio* (Imagining tradition: Time and circumstances of the composition of ch. 30 of *De administrando imperio*), in: *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest* 42, 2010, pp. 133-151.

<sup>15</sup> Gy. MORAVCSIK – R. J. JENKINS, *op. cit.* (n. 8), pp. 158-159.

<sup>16</sup> R. KATIČIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 13), pp. 54-55.

<sup>17</sup> Different readings of the inscription in: V. DELONGA, *The Latin epigraphic monuments of early medieval Croatia*, Split, 1996, pp. 141-144.

The reading which is today accepted by the majority of scholars was suggested by Željko Rapanić:

”[In hoc t]umulo quiescit Helena fa[mosa  
que fui]t ux[o]r Mihaeli regi mater[que] Stephani r[egis  
habenas r]enuit regni VIII idus mensis oct[obris  
in pace] hic or[dinata f]uit anno ab incarna[cione  
Domini] DCCCCLXXVI i[ndictione IV] cicl[o lunare V epacta] XVII [cic  
lo solari] V [con]current VI. Istaque [v]ivens fu  
[it] regina<sup>18</sup> mater fit pupillorum tuto[r]que viduarum. Icque  
aspicie[n]s vir anime dic miserere Deus.”

(”In this grave lies the famous Helena, the wife of King Michael and the mother of King Stephen. She ruled the kingdom. The eighth day before the ides of October she was buried here in peace in the 976th year from the incarnation of the Lord, in the fourth indiction, the fifth lunar cycle, the seventeenth epact, the fifth sun cycle which corresponds to the sixth. She who in life was queen, also became the mother of orphans and protector of widows. You who look say: God have mercy on her soul!”)<sup>19</sup>

Regardless of different readings, the inscription was a major contribution to understanding family relations within two generations of the ruling dynasty. The most important contribution to resolving the family relations of Tomislav’s heirs was given by Ferdo Šišić, and his interpretation, despite some criticisms, characterized Croatian historiography to this day. Some of his views are no longer questioned but taken as firmly based on data from rare preserved sources.<sup>20</sup> For example, Miroslav and Michael Krešimir II are by the majority of – if not all – contemporary historians, following Šišić, seen as brothers, with Krešimir being the younger one, although sources provide no confirmation of such kinship. The only argument in discussing the family background and kinship ties of the two kings are their names and the usual sequence of their inheritance within their kindred. It seems that the name Krešimir is present in every second generation (although this cannot be stated with complete certainty), so it can be assumed that the oldest son inherited the name of his paternal grandfather. Unfortunately, there are not enough parallel examples in the better documented Dalmatian cities to confirm that this was the usual practice at that time. It seems that only with the 11th century does the vertical system of name inheritance begin to prevail, whereas before that, horizontal, from uncles to nephews, was equally represented.<sup>21</sup> However, vertical system would be more appropriate for patrilineal kindred in which the transfer of authority, that is, the eldership, should be more clearly defined. With this in mind, Krešimir II was most likely the grandson of Krešimir I. We cannot know what his relation to Miroslav was. He could have been his son or nephew.

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<sup>18</sup> Although Rapanić reads „regina”, on the epitaph it is written „regn”. This corresponds to Bulić’s reading „regni mater”. However, there is too much free space at the beginning of the line just for „it” and too much space just for „i” after „regn”. Mate Suić proposed „Istaque vivens funere regni icta mater fit pupillorum...”, which would fill in the gap before „regn” in a better way, but contains too many letters for the one before „mater”. For these two readings and the reconstruction of the sarcophagus see: V. DELONGA, *op. cit.* (n. 17), p. 144.

<sup>19</sup> Rapanić’s reading and its English translation in: V. DELONGA, *op. cit.* (n. 17), p. 141 and 144.

<sup>20</sup> F. ŠIŠIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 1).

<sup>21</sup> Z. NIKOLIĆ JAKUS, *Rođaci i bližnji*, Zagreb, 2003, pp. 34-45. However, the royal kindred could have been structured as patrilineal earlier than noble kindred in Dalmatian towns.

The fragments of Queen Helen's epitaph confirm what Thomas the Archdeacon recorded about her:

„His temporibus celebrata fuit synodus in ciuitate Nonensi sub Ioanne cardinali apostolice sedis legato. Vbi proclamationem faciente Laurentio archiepiscopo illustris uir Demetrius, cognomenato Suinimir, rex Chroatorum, restituit ecclesie sancti Domnii ecclesias sancti Stephani et sancte Marie in Salona cum omnibus earum bonis. Has siquidem ecclesias edificauit et dotauit quedam Helena regina, donans eas Spalatine sedi iure perpetuo possidendas. Que ob reuerentiam regalium sepulchrorum concessa fuerant quibusdam regularibus ad tempus, qui assidue in eis officiorum ministeria exercebant. Ibi namque magnificus uir Cresimirus rex, in atrio uidelicet basilice sancti Stephani, tumultatus est cum pluribus aliis regibus et reginis.”<sup>22</sup>

(“At that time a synod was held in the city of Nin under the direction of the papal legate, Cardinal John. Archbishop Lawrence announced there that the illustrious Demetrius, surnamed Zvonimir, King of the Croats, was restoring to the church of Saint Domnius the churches of Saint Stephen and Saint Mary in Solin, together with all their goods. These churches had been founded and endowed by a certain Queen Helen, who gave them to the see of Split to hold in perpetuity. But they had been temporarily granted to the regular clergy, so that they might accord reverence to the royal tombs, and these monks assiduously performed their rites and services in them. There the most noble King Krešimir is buried in the atrium of the basilica of Saint Stephen, along with many other kings and queens.”)<sup>23</sup>

As already pointed out, sources about Croatian rulers of the 10th century are very poor, and there are none about the queens, with the exception of Helen.<sup>24</sup> So the question is: can it be coincidental that she was mentioned in two independent sources? Some time ago, Martin Homza published an article dealing with queens in Central and Eastern Europe, identified with St. Helen, mother of Emperor Constantine I.<sup>25</sup> The cult itself, according to Homza, originated from three constituent elements: the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary, examples of the lives of some Roman Christian female patricians, and the cult of the Holly Cross. Combined into one, these elements contributed to the creation of the legend of Helen's discovery of the Holly Cross in Jerusalem, as best formulated by St. Ambrose in a posthumous speech to Emperor Theodosius in 395 AD.<sup>26</sup> The Archbishop of Milan compared Helen to the Virgin Mary, and as a saint she began to be mentioned in the late 8th and early 9th centuries.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> R. KATIČIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 13), pp. 80-81.

<sup>23</sup> English translation: *Thomae archidiaconi Spalatensis Historia Salonitanorum atque Spalatinorum pontificum – Archdeacon Thomas of Split: History of the Bishops of Salona and Split*, Latin text by O. PERIĆ, edited, translated and annotated by D. KARBIĆ, M. MATIJEVIĆ SOKOL and J. ROSS SWEENEY, Budapest – New York, 2006, p. 91.

<sup>24</sup> N. BUDAK, O novopronađenom natpisu s imenom kraljice Domaslave iz crkve sv. Vida na Klisu (About a newly found inscription with the name of Queen Domaslava from the church of St. Vitus on Klis), in: *Historijski zbornik* 64/2, 2011, pp. 317-320.

<sup>25</sup> M. HOMZA has written on this subject in two articles: *Imitatio Helenae (Helena et Constantini) u vybraných panovníčok svätej povesti v strednej a vo východnej Európe v 10. – 13. storočí* (Imitatio Helenae (Helena et Constantini) by some monarchs of holy reputation in Central and Eastern Europe in 10th-13th Centuries), in idem, *Mulieres suadentes. Presviedčajúce ženy* (Persuasive women), Bratislava, 2002, pp. 46-79; M. HOMZA, The role of Helenae in the hagiography of female rulers until the late thirteenth centuries (sic!), in *България, българите и Европа - мит, история, съвремие* (Bulgaria, Bulgarians and Europe - Myth, History, Contemporaneity), vol. 3, Veliko Trnovo, 2009, pp. 128-158.

<sup>26</sup> M. HOMZA, *op. cit.* (n. 25), p. 129.

<sup>27</sup> M. HOMZA, *op. cit.* (n. 25), p. 130.

The characteristics of her cult, which were later attributed, to a greater or lesser extent, to Christian queens, were: the merit of introducing Christianity into her own kingdom, the erection of churches, the establishment of monasteries, the care for widows, orphans, the poor, the sick and the weak, the acquisition of relics (especially the Holy Cross) and the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.<sup>28</sup> Complementing Jo Ann Mcnamara, Homza warned that the cult of Helen could occur on its own, but also paired with Constantine. Byzantine ruler couples were proclaimed new Constantine and Helen (though it was not about mothers and sons but spouses).<sup>29</sup>

The spread of Helen's cult was accompanied by the transfer of her relics, originally housed in her Roman mausoleum, today Tor Pignataro next to the remains of Constantine's funeral basilica of Sts. Marcellin and Peter on Via Labicana.<sup>30</sup> The relics reached a number of churches in the West and the East, but not before 841/842, when they were first transferred to France.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to the other queens, Homza also addressed Helen, the wife of Michael Krešimir II. He emphasized the fact that she had erected a basilica which, according to Homza, would suggest that she was a zealous Christian woman. The fact that she entrusted the care of the complex to the Benedictines is comparable to the same endeavours of the Kievan St. Olga and the Bohemian St. Ludmila. What she also has in common with them is that she held a ruler's position for a while.<sup>32</sup> That Helen ruled on her own for some time after her husband's death stems, in Homza's view, from some of the readings of her epitaph. Although it does not necessarily follow from the partially preserved inscription, it is undeniable that as the king's wife, then the mother of his successor, she held the highest position next to the ruler. Homza also accepts the reading according to which Helen renounced her sovereign position, thereby re-fitting into the model of behaviour of the aforementioned saintly rulers and Empress Adelaide of Burgundy, though this part of the inscription is not straightforward either. It is possible to read it in such a way that Helen left the throne because she died and not of her own will. We can certainly agree with Homza's comparison of the Croatian ruler and the queens already mentioned, who also took care of the memory of the members of their dynasty by building an endowment in which the monks preserved the memory of the deceased kings and queens.<sup>33</sup>

Trying to find additional arguments in support of his thesis on Queen Helen as imitator of St. Helen, Homza claimed that she, like Olga and Ludmila respectively, had also been buried in the central church of the kingdom, which testifies to the important role she would play after her death. He attaches particular importance to the claim that Helen was the "mother of the kingdom". He

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<sup>28</sup> J. A. MCNAMARA, *Imitatio Helenae. Sainthood as an Attribute of Queenship*, in: *Saints, Studies in Hagiography*, (ed.) S. Stica, New York, 1996, p. 5180 (according to: M. HOMZA, *op. cit.* (n. 25), p. 131); N. LENSKI, *The Age of Constantine*, Cambridge, 2006, pp. 304-305.

<sup>29</sup> M. HOMZA, *op. cit.* (n. 25), p. 131.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, 130-131; LENSKI, *o. c.* (n. 28), p. 267.

<sup>31</sup> M. HOMZA, *op. cit.* (n. 25), p. 131.

<sup>32</sup> Homza assumes that the basilical complex on the island has been handed over to the Benedictines, but it is also possible that it has been donated to the Archdiocese of Split. However, it is clear from Thomas text that the monks took care of the rulers' memory. It is not sure that these monks were following Benedict's rules, but it is very probable. The unquestionable activity of Benedictines on Croatian territory was only documented at the end of the 10th century, when the monastery of St. Chrysogonus in Zadar was restored. However, the connections of the eastern Adriatic coast with Benevento indicate the possible spreading of the Benedictine order in Croatia as early as the 9th century. N. BUDAK, *Hrvatska povijest 550 – 1100 (Croatian History 550 – 1100)*, Zagreb, 2nd ed. 2019, pp. 158-159.

<sup>33</sup> M. HOMZA, *op. cit.* (n. 25), p. 141. On memory as liturgical practice in Croatia and Dalmatia: N. BUDAK, *Liturgical Memory in Croatia and Dalmatia Around the Year 1000*, *Hortus artium medievalium* 6, 2000, pp. 135-142.; M. KUMIR, *For the Salvation of One's Soul: Piety, Status and Memory in the Dalmatian Duchy (c. 812–850)*, in *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU*, 23, 2017, pp. 48-60.

also emphasizes her concern for widows and orphans, an Old Testament motif used to affirm the female holiness of the sovereigns from the time of St. Helen.<sup>34</sup>

In the end, he puts forward a hypothesis that is impossible to prove, despite its appeal, that Helen would have been remembered as a "holy mother of the ruling dynasty" had it not come to a personal union of the Kingdom of Croatia and Dalmatia with Hungary. Although this was possible, the change of the dynasty that had occurred with the advent of Zvonimir to the Croatian throne was already a step towards the twilight of the memory of the Queen. Thomas the Archdeacon noted that Zvonimir had returned the churches of St Stephen and St Mary to the Archbishop of Split. Whether this was indeed a matter of restoration, or whether the Church of Split skilfully convinced the king that the archbishopric had owned them since their construction, and that the monks only temporarily took care about the royal tombs, we cannot know. Thomas' statement that churches were only temporarily delivered to the monks seems less probable, given that deceased rulers were in their care for at least a century, from the establishment of Helen's endowment until the Council of Nin (probably in 1079). Moreover, the intention of such endowments was to eternally maintain the memory of the founder. It seems that the monastery was a royal possession and was abolished by Zvonimir, or handed over to the Archbishop in an effort to break the tradition of the previous dynasty. In this connection he probably also handed over to Pope Gregory VII, from whom he had received new royal insignia, two royal crowns belonging to his predecessors.<sup>35</sup> The erasure of Helen's memory was also successfully demonstrated by Thomas' text in which the Archdeacon mentions "a certain Queen Helen", demonstrating that he had no knowledge of her apart of the information he provided to his readers. Helen's beatification attempt, if ever there had been one, had obviously failed. If we wonder who could be responsible for the *damnatio memoriae*, Zvonimir must come to our mind first as the only one who had reason to erase the memory of his predecessors on the throne, but of course there is no evidence for this hypothesis.

The inscription on Helen's sarcophagus probably did not exist in Thomas' time, for if he had seen it he would not have referred to Helen as "a certain queen". On the other hand, he also could not have found out from the inscription – had he seen it – that she had erected the churches of St. Stephen and St. Mary and invited monks, because that was not mentioned in the epitaph. He must therefore have had another source, perhaps a note on the foundation of the monastery, in which, among other things, it was mentioned that one of the Krešimirs, no doubt Michael, was buried in the church of St. Stephen. The term *magnificus vir* is most likely derived from that note.<sup>36</sup> Had he seen Helen's epitaph, Thomas would probably have linked the two sources. As he did not do so, most likely the epitaph was destroyed before his time.

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<sup>34</sup> M. HOMZA, *op. cit.* (n. 25), pp. 141-142. It is not clear why Homza thinks that the church of St. Stephen was the "central church of the Croats", although it was in an obviously important place and had an outstanding function.

<sup>35</sup> J. STIPIŠIĆ – M. ŠAMŠALOVIĆ, *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae* (further: CD), vol. I, Zagreb, 1967, p. 140.

<sup>36</sup> That it was a note, and not a foundation document, I have concluded because the foundation documents of Benedictine monasteries in Croatia and Dalmatia from the early Middle Ages were not preserved, so they probably did not exist. Notes on the foundation of a monastery were later entered into cartularies and are today, unjustifiably, called foundation charters. Several authors have already written about the possible source used by Thomas: F. BULIĆ, Izvještaj o crkvi sv. Marije od Otoka i nadgrobnom natpisu kraljice Jelene (Report on the church of St. Mary of Otok and the epitaph of Queen Helen), in: *Vjesnik Hrvatskog arheološkog društva*, n. s., 5, 1901, pp. 201-227.; Lj. KARAMAN, *Iz kolijevke hrvatske prošlosti* (From the cradle of Croatian history), Zagreb, 1930, p. 218. and L. KATIĆ, Ubikacija crkava sv. Mojsija i sv. Stjepana u Solinu (The location of the churches of St. Moses and St. Stephen in Solin), in: *Zbornik naučnih radova: Ferdi Šišiću povodom šezdestogodišnjice života*, (ed.) G. Novak, 1869-1929, Zagreb, 1929, pp. 69-78. More recently, M. Matijević Sokol wrote about this on several occasions, assuming that Thomas' source was Zvonimir's original charter issued to the Benedictine nuns of Split, granting them the possession of Bosiljina. See: M. MATIJEVIĆ SOKOL – V. SOKOL, "Quedam Helena regina ...", in: *Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu* 3, 43, 2010, p. 422. In the article the authors, among other things, provide an overview of current opinions on the Otok problem and suggest a place where one of the hitherto unallocated fragments of Helen's epitaph could be inserted.

Not taking into account the later literature on research on Otok, Homza, referring to Lovro Katić, thought that Helen was buried in the church of St. Mary, while the rest of the kings found their resting place in the church of St. Stephen.<sup>37</sup> On this he builds the thesis that the queen associated with the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary, while the kings placed themselves under the protection of the first martyr Stephen. This repeats the pattern observed in the examples of other dynasties seeking their beginnings in the male-female ruling couple, following the model of Constantine and Helena. Because the West tried to avoid a direct analogy with these names, since the root of the model was eastern, in the Croatian case, Homza claims, the name Helen (Jelena) was retained, while that of Constantine was replaced. An alternative was found in St. Stephen whose name (Wreathed) suggests a ruler's position. Because of this, Držislav did not get the name Stjepan simply because he was the first crowned king of the Croats, but it was a deliberate project to mark the founder of a new dynasty.<sup>38</sup>

Homza's idea of Helen and Stephen I Držislav as an imitation of Helena and Constantine I model seems attractive, despite some of the shortcomings of his work when it comes to Croatian history. In addition to being unfamiliar with recent interpretations of the complex on Otok, Homza does not take into account Thomas' information that Stephen Držislav received royal insignia from Byzantium and that the Croatian rulers bore the new title of kings of Dalmatia and Croatia, though this would further empower his thesis on the founding couple of the dynasty.<sup>39</sup>

However, there are other arguments which suggest that King Krešimir II's wife did not bear the name Helen by chance and that she really ruled at a time that was crucial for Croatian dynastic history. Confirmation should be sought in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' laconic report about the war that followed after Ban Pribina killed King Miroslav:

“Ὅτι τὴν πολλὴν ταύτην δύναμιν καὶ τὸ τοῦ λαοῦ πλῆθος εἶχεν ἡ Χρῳβατία μέχρι τοῦ ἄρχοντος Κρασημέρη. Κάκεινον μὲν τελευτήσαντος, τοῦ δὲ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, Μιροσθλάβου ἄρξαντος ἔτη τέσσαρα καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ Πριβουνία βοεάνου ἀναιρεθέντος, καὶ διχονοιῶν καὶ πολλῶν διχοστασιῶν εἰς τὴν χώραν γενομένων, ἠλάττωται καὶ τὸ καβαλλαρικὸν καὶ τὸ πεζικὸν καὶ αἱ σαγήναι καὶ αἱ κονδοῦραι τῆς ἐξουσίας τῶν Χρῳβάτων. Ἀρτίως δὲ ἔχει σαγήνας λ', κονδοῦρας μεγάλας καὶ μικρὰς \*\*\* καὶ καβαλλαρικὸν \*\*\* καὶ πεζικὸν \*\*\*.

(“This great power and multitude of men Croatia possessed until the time of prince Krasimer. But when he was dead and his son Miroslav, after ruling four years, was made away by the ban Pribounias, and quarrels and numerous dissensions broke out in the country, the horse and foot and galleys and cutters of the Croat dominion were diminished. And now it has 30 galleys and \*\*\* cutters, large and small, and \*\*\* horse and \*\*\* foot.”)<sup>40</sup>

Although the figures quoted in the DAI are not, of course, necessarily a reflection of the real situation, especially when it comes to the numbers of horsemen and pedestrians mentioned in the text just before the passage quoted here, they could still be an indicator of the consequences of the war within the dynasty. Unfortunately, only the number of galleys came to us, but it also illustrates the weakening of the forces at the disposal of the new ruler, whom DAI does not name. Even the author of Chapter 30, who in many ways followed the pattern in which Chapter 29 and Chapter 31 were written, left no information about the military strength of the Croats. We can only speculate on the reasons for this omission. Although the decrease in the naval power of the Croats may also be interpreted by the fact that during the war they lost control of the Dalmatian cities, as will be the case at the end of the century, it is more likely that it was caused by a conflict between supporters and opponents of King Miroslav.

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<sup>37</sup> M. HOMZA, *op. cit.* (n. 25), p. 142.

<sup>38</sup> M. HOMZA, *op. cit.* (n. 25), pp. 142-143.

<sup>39</sup> R. KATIČIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 13), pp. 54-55.

<sup>40</sup> Gy. MORAVCSIK – R. J. JENKINS, *op. cit.* (n. 8), pp. 150-151.

Why the conflict occurred, Constantine does not write, but it can be assumed that the problem was in the inheritance of the throne.<sup>41</sup> Rare information about Croatian rulers available to us from the termination of Mutimir's rule to Michael Krešimir II do not allow us to draw any firm conclusions as to whether the Trpimirović dynasty kept the throne or if they were replaced by some other kindred. The only thing that could suggest continuity of the dynasty at least until the middle of the first half of the 10th century is the name of Trpimir II. We can only assume that he was the grandson of Trpimir I if we accept Constantine's information about the Croatian rulers as reliable. In any case, the fact remains that no names of the rulers who occupied the Croatian throne until the time of Miroslav, with the exception of Krešimir I, appear since the time of Michael Krešimir II in the royal genealogies. I think this is a strong argument in favour of the claim that the Trpimirović dynasty did not rule Croatia after Trpimir II, and perhaps even after Mutimir, should we accept that Constantine's archontology was the result of the Emperor's confusion and invention of a non-existing Trpimir II and Krešimir I.

Therefore, it is justified, as Klaić and Šišić have observed, to speak of the Krešimirović dynasty from the middle of the 10th century. Šišić, however, made the aforementioned unjustified proposal, which was accepted as fact in historiography, claiming that Michael Krešimir II was the younger brother of Miroslav. Accepting the information from ch. 31 of DAI, we can presume that Krešimir I was succeeded by his son Miroslav who was killed, but that after the conflict there was no change of dynasty because Miroslav's nephew acquired the throne. It can be concluded that Krešimir II was Miroslav's nephew and not his son since Miroslav's name never again appeared in the royal lineage (or we have no information on this). It seems, then, that Miroslav had no male offspring to outlive him.

The disappearance of the memory of Miroslav in the later generations of the Krešimirović would also suggest that he and Krešimir II were on opposite sides at the time of the conflict, although no source explicitly claims it. In any case, Krešimir II came out of the war as the victor. This is probably why he added a new name to his original one - Michael, identifying himself with the warrior archangel, the warlord of angels and the victor over the dragon, a symbol of evil.<sup>42</sup> The warlike character he attributed to himself could symbolize the importance of winning the exhausting war. Such a victory, which ensured the continuity of the ruler's lineage for the next four generations, was a primordial act which marked the establishment of a new dynasty (notwithstanding Krešimir I) and which required the commemoration of its founder.

That the later dynastic memory extended back to Michael Krešimir is confirmed by the so called Grant for Diklo, in which Peter Krešimir IV refers to his ancestors:

"Ego Cresimir, qui alio nomine uocor Petrus, Chroatorum rex Dalmatinorumque, notifico omnibus, quod iustum mihi uidetur, ut statuta parentum meorum antiquorum non cassentur, maxime illa, que ad salutem eorum pertinent animarum. Comperimus namque in gestis proauis nostri Cresimiri maioris, quod pro remedio anime sue tradidisse (!) monasterio sancti Chrisogoni territorium aliquod in loco, qui dicitur Hyculus..."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Komatina believes that this was due to the different attitudes of the divided Croats towards the Bulgarians, but there is no real argument for this.

<sup>42</sup> Apocalypse 12: 7-8, "And there is war in heaven: Michael and his angels make war with the Dragon. The dragon enters war and its angels, but does not prevail. And there was no more room for them in heaven." The cult of St. Michael was widespread along the eastern Adriatic coast. Out of about 400 known pre-Romanesque churches, 38 were dedicated to the Archangel, ten of them in Croatia. See: T. MARASOVIĆ, *Dalmatia praeromanica, vol. 1: Ranosrednjovjekovno graditeljstvo u Dalmaciji* (Early medieval architecture in Dalmatia), Split – Zagreb, 2008, 164, pp. 170-171.

<sup>43</sup> J. STIPIŠIĆ – M. ŠAMŠALOVIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 35), pp. 105-106. The continuation of the text reads: „a quercu, que stat supra uallem Rabiosam, usque ad stafilum, qui hac de causa situs est in treuio, quod est contra Sablatam, perpetuo possidendum, quod tutum possessoribus suis mansit tempore ipsius et filii eius Dirzislai et eorum potentibus banis, uidelicet Pribyne et Godemiri, et temporibus Suataslao et eius fratrum, silicet Cresimiri et Goyslai, et filii eius regi (!) Stephani, patris mei, fauentibus nobilibus banis, eorum qui fuere temporibus; hi sunt: Varda, Bosetrenhc (!) et Stephanus Prasca."

(”I, Krešimir, who by another name am called Peter, King of the Croats and Dalmatians, inform everyone that it seems to me just, that the decisions of my ancient ancestors are not violated, and above all those concerning the salvation of their souls. We have found, in the deeds of our great-grandfather Krešimir the Elder, that in order to save his soul, he handed over to the monastery of St. Chrisogonus land in a place called Diklo ... ”)

Krešimir IV further enumerates all his predecessors on the throne and their *bans*. This document, so important for the establishment of the ruler’s genealogy, testifies to the fact that somebody composed a manuscript describing the deeds of Michael Krešimir II, reaffirming the prominent role attributed to this ”founder” of the dynasty. The fact that the text referred to Krešimir IV as Krešimir the Elder and without mentioning Krešimir I, means that the latter has fallen into oblivion and that his memory has been systematically erased by establishing the founding status of his (most likely) grandson.

Not much can be added to what the authors who analyzed Helen’s epitaph and Thomas’ note mentioning the Queen have already written about her.<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately, the identification of the churches that Thomas mentions has not been completed to this day.<sup>45</sup> Unlike earlier scholars, who identified Helen’s church of St. Mary with today’s St. Mary on Otok, the more recent opinion is that the church on Otok is actually that of St. Stephen, which served as the mausoleum of Croatian rulers. The problem, however, is that no other royal tombs, with or without inscriptions, were found during the survey.<sup>46</sup> The opinion that this was a church with two dedications, which would eliminate the need to search for another church, is refuted by the data of later charters, especially the one of Ladislav, bishop of Knin, of February 23, 1397, which states: ”... et insula in qua existunt ecclesie beate virginis et sancti Stephani ... ”.<sup>47</sup>

In our argumentation, however, the question of the exact location of these two churches is not crucial. The church and the monastery, undoubtedly located on Otok, had a dual function: on the one hand they served to preserve the memory of Helen and the dynasty, while on the other they supervised the route that led from Trogir to Split and Stobreč.<sup>48</sup> It is interesting to note that there are no earlier traces of control being established over this important crossing over the river Jadro, which also suggests some changes in the relations of power and ownership in the area of Solin, which we so far cannot detect from the few preserved data.

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<sup>44</sup> Ž. RAPANIĆ, Mater (pater) pupillorum tutorque viduarum, in: *Izdanja Hrvatskog arheološkog društva*, vol. 3, Zagreb, 1978, pp. 83-90.

<sup>45</sup> All known documents mentioning the churches of St. Mary and St. Stephen were collected by P. BLAŽEVIĆ in her MA thesis *Muzeološka koncepcija prezentacije Solina u ranom srednjem vijeku* (The Museological Concept of the Presentation of Solin in the Early Middle Ages), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, 2013. This paper also contains a comprehensive review of the literature on Queen Helen and Otok and is a very good starting point for anyone who wants to get into this issue. See: [http://darhiv.ffzg.unizg.hr/id/eprint/2417/1/Diplomski\\_rad\\_Petra\\_Blazevic.pdf](http://darhiv.ffzg.unizg.hr/id/eprint/2417/1/Diplomski_rad_Petra_Blazevic.pdf) (last visited: 7/30/2019).

<sup>46</sup> Katić was of the opinion that the royal graves were the ones he dug up when exploring another church on the island, in whose narthex he discovered 16 graves with later burials. In his opinion, these were secondary burials in the former royal tombs, but any confirmation is lacking. See: Ž. RAPANIĆ – L. KATIĆ, *Prošlost i spomenici Solina* (The Past and Monuments of Solin), Solin, 1971, p. 74.

<sup>47</sup> J. STIPIŠIĆ – M. ŠAMŠALOVIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 35), p. 179. It is interesting to note that the church in Biskupija near Knin, which was used as a mausoleum of Croatian rulers in the 9th century, was dedicated to St. Mary and St. Stephen, at least since the 10th century, according to a fragmentary preserved inscription. Following another epigraphic fragment, the church was damaged and probably renewed sometime in the 10th century. From the same period another fragment mentions archangels Michael and Gabriel, sub-titularies of the church. See: V. DELONGA, *op. cit.* (n. 17), p. 65 and p. 70. It is tempting to interpret these inscriptions as results of the events connected to the war and victory of Michael Krešimir II, but the partiality of the preserved texts does not allow us to draw such a conclusion.

<sup>48</sup> L. KATIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 46), p. 69; L. KATIĆ, *Zadužbine hrvatske kraljice Jelene na Otoku u Solinu*, in: *Rasprave i članci iz hrvatske povijesti*, (ed.) L. Katić, Split, 1993, pp. 166-167.

There is no doubt that the area of Salona with its surroundings, including the eastern suburbs to which the Solin toponym corresponds, was a domain of the Trpimirović. The possessions of Putalj, Biaći and Rižinice, with remnants of ducal foundations, are proof enough. The only question is whether the area was owned by Trpimir's lineage, which is less likely, or was it part of the ruler's fisc, inherited from the Roman Empire? In the absence of arguments, I can only assume that the city, even if it was deserted, with the entire Kaštela-Solin surroundings, could hardly become a private property at some point. The Trpimirović patrimonial assets were, nevertheless, probably related to Knin and Kosovo / Petrovo Polje, with Knin, Biskupija and Kapitul as defense, economic and memorial centers.

Another interesting question, for now unanswered, is where were the Croatian rulers buried after they stopped using Biskupija as a burial church? Is that what the church on Kapitul served for? In any case, by her own act, Helen founded a new mausoleum of Croatian rulers, away from the Knin area and located along the ruins of ancient Salona. It is unlikely that this act did not have a strong symbolic meaning, not only in terms of a new beginning, but also in bringing the memorial site closer to both, the existing metropolitan center in Split and the burial place of the most prominent Dalmatian martyrs in Salona. In addition, as has already been pointed out, the monastery that housed the monks, however small (and it is yet to be determined how big it actually was), was located on an island over which an important land route crossed. Therefore, it was not about establishing a monastery in an isolated and peaceful place, just the opposite. The only element of continuity in relation to Biskupija was the dedication of the church to the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>49</sup>

Lovre Katić reconstructed the scope of the property of the church of St. Mary on Otok.<sup>50</sup> This endowment of Helen had a large estate worthy of royal donation. Since we have no information that any other donations to the church / monastery after Helen's death increased this estate, it is safe to assume that in the 14th century it had the same scope as in Helen's time. Katić warned of another important fact related to the property of St. Mary: it was located on the border with the territory of Split, so we can attribute to the monastery the role of border control, regardless of the degree of integration of Byzantine Dalmatia, and especially Split, with Croatia.

If we look at the series of events that took place at the beginning of the second half of the 10th century, as well as their reflections in later sources, we must conclude that the assassination of King Miroslav resulted in great changes. A ruler came to the throne who would be remembered more than any of his predecessors, which cannot be a coincidence, but part of an organized effort in which the king's wife, Helen, played an important role. Michael, the victor over the forces of evil, was perceived as the founder of a new dynasty, regardless of whether he was really related to the previous rulers or not. His wife, whose birth name we do not know, took the ruler's name Jelena / Helen, thus symbolically marking the beginning of a new dynasty.

Her task was to strengthen the legitimacy of the ruler's lineage and to provide him with a lasting memory. To achieve this, she erected a mausoleum that replaced the burial site of rulers from the past few decades. Prayers of monks were necessary to preserve the memory, so Helen established a monastery on the largest island in the delta of the river Jadro. The choice of location could not have been accidental, and it certainly did not happen without the king's approval. In this respect, an interesting note is made in an 18th-century manuscript, already pointed out by Frane Bulić.<sup>51</sup> It states:

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<sup>49</sup> Katić also points to a different interpretation of the continuity associated with St. Mary of Otok. While unfortunately not referring to the sources, he claims that "the later tradition, though wrong," understood Helen's church as a reminiscence of the Salonitan cathedral of St. Mary. See: KATIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 48), p. 194. It is an interesting hypothesis that by choosing the Blessed Virgin Mary Helen wanted to use the Salonitan tradition to reinforce the symbolic importance of the new ruling centre.

<sup>50</sup> L. KATIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 48), pp. 197-204.

<sup>51</sup> F. BULIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 36), p. 223.

"Cresimirus filius Tischimiri regis Serviae a patre Bossina et regio titulo donatus c. 929 defuncto Cidomiro socero Chroatorum novo suo regno adiunxit regiamque Salonae figit 932. Uxor Helena Basilicam apud Salonas fundatrix. Ob. c. 954."<sup>52</sup>

("Krešimir, son of Tišimir King of Serbia, received from his father Bosnia and the royal title around 929. When his father-in-law Cidomir died, he annexed Croatia to his new kingdom and established the capital in Salona in 932. His wife Helen was the founder of the basilica near Salona. She died around 954.")

It should also be noted that the author of the catalogue divides the Croatian rulers into princes (*duces*) and kings (*reges*) and that according to him, Krešimir is the first Croatian king, since he is referred to in the text as the first under the subtitle "*Reges*". Although the information about Tišimir and Cidomir and their relations with Krešimir, as well as the entire catalogue, as pointed out by Šišić, is mostly a figment of the author's imagination, it is nevertheless interesting that it is precisely stated for Krešimir that he, as the first king, chose Salona as the seat of his kingdom. Even the chronology is reasonably appropriate, given that the compiler of the note had only Thomas, Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Mavro Orbini's "*Kingdom of Slavs*", and perhaps the chroniclers of Dubrovnik at his disposal, assuming, of course, that he did not have some source which is not known today.

That the task of preserving memory was successful is evident from the fact that Michael Krešimir was remembered as the first of a series of rulers to be mentioned in the Donation for Diklo. In Croatia after the year 1000 only the memory of rare rulers (Trpimir, Branimir and Mutimir) was preserved, and this only because they were recorded in the charters of the Split church. Although doubt was expressed about the reliability of the claim in the Donation for Diklo that *Gesta* of Krešimir II actually existed<sup>53</sup>, I do not see real reason for doubt. Indeed, it seems to me that putting together such a work would be a logical element of a program to preserve the memory of the one who wanted to present himself as the founder of the dynasty.

The events that followed the enthronement of Krešimir II, as interpreted today, could be a confirmation that his success had echoes beyond Croatian borders. It is impossible to accept, but also to completely reject, the claims made by the "*Kingdom of the Slavs*" (Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclia) that Krešimir conquered the whole of Bosnia.<sup>54</sup> The creation of ch. 30 of DAI, which happened probably at the same time as the designation of royal authority and titles of eparch and patrician to Krešimir's son Stephen I Držislav, is an indication that changes in Croatia have been reflected in Constantinople as well. The cult of St. Stephen could have gained importance either at the time of Držislav's coronation, when the new king chose the name of the first martyr as his royal name, or as Homza thinks, as a Western replacement for Constantine in the founding couple Constantine - Helen. In fact, one possibility does not suppress the other, but it rather complements it, and it cannot be accidental that Helen dedicated one of her endowments to this particular saint. In addition,

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<sup>52</sup> Hrvatski državni arhiv, Obitelj Fanfogna-Garagnin, F 713, 8.10, Vol. X, 123p. The full text, entitled *Catalogus ducum et regum Dalmatie et Croatiae*, which several authors attribute to Philipo Riceputi, was published with comments by F. ŠIŠIĆ in *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. 90-93.

<sup>53</sup> Nada Klaić questioned the authenticity of the Donation for Diklo and thus the existence of the *Gesta*. However, she accepted as credible the information that Krešimir II donated to the monastery of St. Chrysogonus land in Diklo, as well as the genealogy of kings and *bans* mentioned in the charter. See: N. KLAJČ, *Povijest Hrvata u ranom srednjem vijeku* (History of Croats in the Early Middle Ages), Zagreb, 2nd ed., 1975, p. 317, n. 140.

<sup>54</sup> „Deinde Cresimirus cepit totam Bosnam et dominavit eam.” V. MOŠIN, *Ljetopis Popa Dukljanina* (Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclia), Zagreb, 1950, p. 73. On different opinions about this information: N. KLAJČ, *op. cit.* (n. 53), p. 316, ft. 138.

the cult of St. Stephen was not developed in Croatia, and the question is how much he was present in Dalmatia at that time, so it was also a novelty and a symbol of change.<sup>55</sup>

Finally, we can conclude that the reach of the changes that came about with the victory of Michael Krešimir II in the war that shook Croatia has not been sufficiently recognized in historiography, although much has been written about every single segment of this complex phenomenon, especially thanks to Bulić's discovery of Helen's epitaph. I believe that there are sufficient arguments to abandon the idea that the Trpimirović ruled as a dynasty from Trpimir to Stephen III (1089-1090), and to reaffirm what Vjekoslav Klaić introduced into historiography, calling the rulers from the second half of the 10th century Krešimirović. Obviously, it was not only about changing the dynasty, but also about creating different relations between Croats and Byzantium. Something can be concluded from the fact that the Krešimirović were well connected with Zadar as the centre of Byzantine rule, with the cult of St Chrysogonus possibly playing an important symbolic role.<sup>56</sup> This, judging by Helen's endeavor, was preceded by more than a symbolic reinforcement of the royal presence at the gates of Split and by the communication linking the archbishop's seat with Trogir.

The final point to be made is that one of the few Croatian queens whose name is remembered is the other Helen, the wife of king Demetrius Zvonimir (1074-1089). If we apply the analogy with the case of the first Helen, it is obvious that the latter is mentioned at the moment of dynastic fracture and ascension to the throne of the king who sought to break his ties with his predecessors in order to establish his own dynasty. He was prevented by the death of his only son Radovan, but there is no reason to doubt Zvonimir's intentions. Did his wife take the name Helen for the same reason as her predecessor from the 10th century did? Besides, does her other name / nickname (Beautiful / Lijepa) not point to another source of inspiration for those who called her that: "beautiful Helen" may be a spark of light in the darkness that envelops our knowledge of the culture of the time, suggesting that the legend of Troy was known to the Croatian elite as early as the 11th century?

### Kraljica Jelena i kralj Mihajlo – početak nove dinastije?

Hrvatska historiografija nudila je sve do Ferde Šišića različita tumačenja genealogije hrvatskih vladara. Krešimir I. i II. stapali su se u jednu osobu, a različito su se tumačili i rodbinski odnosi Miroslava, Krešimira II. i Držislava. Danas općenito prevladava genealogija kakvu je predložio Šišić, iako se još uvijek javljaju rasprave o pojedinim pitanjima, kao, primjerice, o tome jesu li Trpimir II. i Krešimir I. uopće postojali ili jesu li vladali u 10. ili u 9. stoljeću. S druge strane, neki Šišićevi prijedlozi, iako neutemeljeni u izvorima, prihvaćeni su kao dokazani. To se odnosi na njegovu tvrdnju da su Miroslav i Mihajlo Krešimir II. bili braća, iako nijedan izvor to ne potvrđuje. Važan doprinos rješava-

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<sup>55</sup> Apart from the churches in Solin and Biskupija, there were at most another 5 dedicated to St. Stephen, but it is difficult to decide whether the dedications preceded or followed Helen's lifetime. See: MARASOVIĆ, *op. cit.* (n. 42), p. 173.

<sup>56</sup> T. VEDRIŠ, *Hagiografija i rani kult sv. Anastazije i sv. Krizogona u Zadru* (Hagiography and the early cult of St. Anastasia and St. Chrysogonus in Zadar), Zagreb, 2019., pp. 166-167. N. BUDAK, Early medieval boundaries in Dalmatia/Croatia (8th–11th centuries), in: „*Castellum, civitas, urbs*“. *Zentren und Eliten im frühmittelalterlichen Ostmitteleuropa*, (ed.) O. Heinrich – Tamáska, H. Herold, P. Straub and T. Vida, Budapest - Leipzig – Keszthely – Rahden/Westf., 2015., p. 42. Ivo Babić suggested there was a close link between the names Krešimir and Krševan (Chrysogonus): I. BABIĆ, O imenu Krešimir (On the name Krešimir), in: *Brački zbornik* 22, 2007., pp. 299-313.

nju genealoške problematike dalo je Bulićevo otkriće epitafa kraljice Jelene. Činjenica da je sačuvan fragmentarno dovela je do predlaganja različitih čitanja koja mogu promijeniti smisao teksta.

Vjekoslav Klaić bio je, čini se, prvi koji je uveo naziv Krešimirovići za pripadnike dinastije koja je na vlast došla s Krešimirom I. Činjenica je da se ne mogu dokazati rodbinske veze Tomislava i njegovih prethodnika, kojima u prilog govori jedino ime Trpimira II., ako doista u *De administrando imperio* nije došao greškom autora. Vrlo je malo posve pouzdanih podataka o hrvatskim vladarima 10. st., ali se ipak može pretpostaviti da su Krešimirovići bili doista nova dinastija. Naime, imena prethodnih vladara više se ne javljaju u vladarskoj genealogiji, dok se imena Krešimir i Stjepan javljaju redovito u svakoj drugoj generaciji, a i ime Gojслав se ponavlja. Možemo pretpostaviti da se dinastija Krešimirovića učvrstila na prijestolju nakon rata koji je započeo ubojstvom Miroslava. Pobjeda nad protivnicima imala je takvo simboličko značenje da se na Krešimira II. gledalo kao na osnivača dinastije, bez obzira na postojanje njegova istoimenog pretka.

Krešimir II. je možda zbog te pobjede uzeo vladarsko ime arhanđela Mihajla, pobjednika nad silama zla. Njegova je supruga pak uzela ime majke cara Konstantina, Sv. Helene. Prema tumačenju Martina Homze, njezin je sin uzeo ime Stjepan kako bi se stvorio pandan paru Helena – Konstantin, s obzirom na to da se na Zapadu izbjegavalo Konstantinovo ime zbog njegove bizantske konotacije. Dakako, Stjepan I. Držislav mogao je to ime uzeti i zbog oznaka kraljevske vlasti dobivenih iz Konstantinopola. Jelena je, po Homzinu sudu, oponašala Sv. Helenu kao svoj uzor, pri čemu nije bila iznimka među europskim vladaricama. Dinastija je inicirala i program očuvanja svoje memorije tako da je kraljica dala podići vladarski mauzolej, a napisana su i *gesta* kralja Krešimira II. Uspješnost tog pothvata vidi se i po tome što je još i Toma Arhiđakon znao za kraljicu, iako su imena svih drugih vladarskih supruga do njegovoga vremena pala u zaborav.

Samostan koji je Jelena dala podići na otoku kod Solina nije imao samo funkciju mauzoleja. Kako je bio smješten na najpogodnijem prijelazu preko rijeke Jadro, na cesti koja je povezivala Trogir i Stobreč, imao je i nadzornu funkciju. Osim toga, bio je smješten na samoj granici splitskog agera, čime je mogao nadzirati granicu, ali je mogao značiti i simboličko približavanje dinastije metropolitanskom središtu. Samostan je bio obdaren velikim zemljišnim posjedom koji se, kako je to pokazao Lovre Katić, održao i u sljedećim stoljećima. Zanimljivo je da jedan rukopis iz 18. st., koji je objavio Šišić, navodi kako je Krešimir ustanovio svoj glavni grad u Saloni 932., a da je njegova supruga Jelena, graditeljica bazilike pokraj Salone, umrla oko 954. godine. Taj bi rukopis mogao ukazivati na neku danas izgubljenu tradiciju o kraljevskom paru, koja se održavala mimo nama poznatih izvora. Prema tom rukopisu, Krešimir je i prvi hrvatski kralj, jer su prije njega vladali vojvode (*duces*).

Još se jedna promjena može povezati s Krešimirovićima. Osim približavanja Splitu, oni već od Krešimira II. jačaju veze sa Zadrom, napose sa Samostanom Sv. Krševana, a kasnije i sa Sv. Marijom. Jača povezanost s ta dva središta govori i o prisnijim vezama s Bizantom.

Na kraju valja napomenuti da je postojala još jedna hrvatska kraljica Jelena, supruga Dmitra Zvonimira. Njezino se ime može također dovesti u vezu s novim početkom, jer Zvonimir prekida s tradicijom prethodne dinastije, nastojeći stvoriti vlastitu. To se očituje u poklanjanju kraljevskog mauzoleja Splitskoj nadbiskupiji i prepuštanju kruna iz riznice u vranskom samostanu Sv. Grgura papi. Međutim, kako ta Jelena nosi još i nadimak Lijepa, ne bismo li možda u njoj mogli prepoznati lijepu Helenu, uzročnicu Trojanskog rata, što bi moglo značiti da je legenda o Troji bila poznata u Hrvatskoj već u 11. stoljeću?

**Ključne riječi:** *kraljica Jelena, Sv. Jelena, Mihajlo Krešimir II., Hrvatska, Dalmacija, sjećanje, politika sjećanja, epitaf, benediktinci, granice, Salona, Solin*