

THE ROYAL OSTROVICA

THE MEMORIAL OVER THE GREAT CROATIAN (Bosnian) HISTORY THE CHRONICLE OVER KULENOVIC FAMILY

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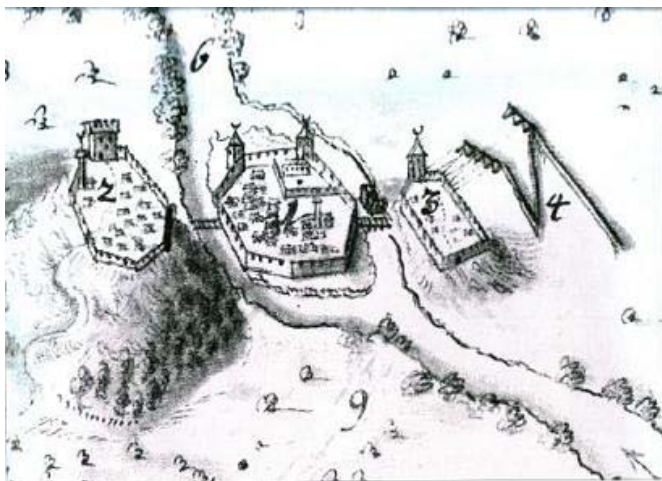
The historical memorials over Bosnia and Bosnian Krajina (Bosanska Krajina) have not by far been worked on nor systematically and scientifically explored. The value and the space within the general evolution of the Croatian and Bosnian people have not been critically determined either. It is important to stress that it is to precisely these memorials over Croatian glory that the beautiful national tradition, which contains within it a healthy and undistorted truth, is connected. That truth is reflected in the national stories and even more so in the national songs. Within them our medieval heroes are still alive. All those heroes have more or less come to life in the shadows of the old Bosnian cities and fortresses, spread across Bosnia, but first and foremost in Bosnian Krajina. Of all these memorials over our famous history, the most interesting is the old city – the center of once independent Bosnian rulers – the city to which the history of the oldest Bosnian family Kulenovic is connected – the royal city of



Ostrovica nearby Kulen Vakuf. Ostrovica has been described by our historians as an objective for scientific and historical research but not sufficiently so that one could say that the entire history of that city is known. This has left a gap and means that there are many more historical moments yet to be discovered and researched.

I, as a son of Bosnian Krajina, am particularly satisfied that I find myself in a position to, with new data, contribute to furthering the knowledge about this royal city Ostrovica. Going through this date it is clear that I have gathered date at its source and from the national tradition, especially when it comes to the available notes. In my research I have asked some prominent historians and people well acquainted with the Bosnian history for help, and in that sense I have managed to connect the stories from national tradition to

exact timing and in so doing help the truth and our predecessors not to go into oblivion.



The history of the royal city Ostrovica is lengthy, rapturous, and interesting. The historical importance of Ostrovica is proven by many memorials spread around the city that have not yet been discovered by scientists. The famous writer and the custodian of Sarajevo museum Milan Karanovic wrote about them. Among all of these memorials nearby Ostrovica one that is

particularly striking is the Tower of Captain Kulen on Prkosi, nearby the Kulenovic Fortress in Havala, the Tower of Kulenovic beg on Klisevic etc.

The name Kulin itself indicates its ancient existence. This is an ancient Slavic name, brought to the South by Croats from their ancestors home White Croatia. This is also proven by the fact that the name is widespread among northern Slaves in different variations, such as Kolin. Scientific research will also agree with the assumption that the same or similar name was used for some kind of higher spirit of the Slavic people from which the rest would take their name, such as Kulin-ban, that is the great grandfathers of our Kulenovic. This was done following the example of other Arian nations. The royal city Ostrovica itself is in integral part of Kulen Vakuf that spreads to the both sides of river Una, close to Lika. When you translate that name Kule Vakuf it means the foundation of the family Kulenovic. Kulenovics have always leaved in and around the city. The city is from both sides surrounded by hills. The hill on the southwest side is crowned by the city of Ostrovica. There is no precise date on when the city of Ostrovica was founded. Ostrovica is first mentioned in 1407 when Hungarian-croat king Ladislav confirmed that the fortress was owned by the duke Sandalj Hranic. The fortress was given to Hranic as a dowry when he married his wife Katarina Vukcic Hrvatinic. It is most



likely that it was built by Hrvoje Vukcic Hrvatinic, who also built Jajce, a royal city in Bosnia. The fact that Ostrovica was frequently visited by Bosnian kings confirms that the city was placed very strategically and that it was almost unapproachable by the enemies. At one time in history Ostrovica was part of the Venetian Republic, which can be seen from the purchase papers signed between

Sandalj Hranic and the Venetian duce on the January 6, 1411. Purchase papers show that Sandalj Hranic sold Ostrovica to the Venetian Republic. Ostrovica was then run by Mlecici until the defeat of the Bosnian kingdom by the Ottoman empire in 1462.



During the rule of Ostrovica Venice appointed on of the descendents of Kulin Ban, the brother of the Venetian doge, Mihajl Kulin. The count Mihajl Venetian converted to Islam upon the arrival of Turks and was renamed by the Turkish Sultan to Hidajet Pasha Kulen. According to this he was the first Kulenovic that became a Muslim. He died couple of years later in a battle with Venetia, who was at that point run by his brother. He left behind him a sin Halil Pasha, that also died in a battle with the Venetian

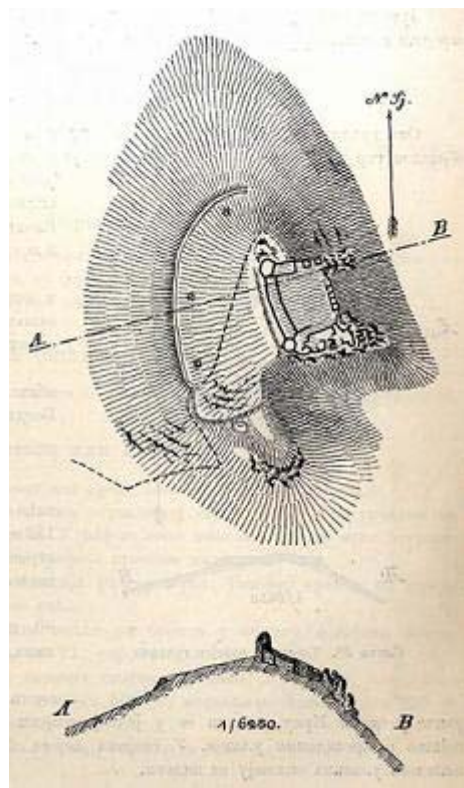
Republic. Halil Pasha's son, Ibrahim Pasha married Sultan Sulejman's daughter and had thus the highest title in the ottoman empire – "sadr azam". Ibrahim Pasha's son, Tahvil Pasha also

served as *sadr azam* during the rule of Sultan Selim II and Murat III. In Turkey Tahvil Pasha was also known as "Croat" or "Tahvil Pasha Croat". His son, Ahmet Pasha died on Mohacko Polje, and his son, Salih Pasha built Kulen Vakuf, Klisevic and other fortresses around Bosnia. This Salih Pasha was killed in 1699 in Travnik, and his son Mahmud Pasha died in 1744 in Persia. He left behind him six sons who settled around Bosnia. Appreciating the genesis of count Mihajl Kulin, as a descendent of the royal Venetian blood, Sultan Murat II, not only left him entire estates and gave him the highest military title in the contemporary Turkey, but also gave him two precious gifts out of which one is still preserved and can be found with the descendent of Hidajet Pasha, Muhamed-beg Kulenovic, former member of the Bosnian government, that lives in Banja Luka today. The gift is a Qur'an, written in golden letters on a 4 meter long and 10 centimeters wide paper. The value of this gift should be determined by experts. Just to give a sense of the value of this book we can point out that during an exhibition in 1910 in Budapest, it was valued to 8000 golden ducats which is approximately the same worth as 5 million Dinars. The experts have determined that this

Qur'an must have been written by one man during a period of 17 years, putting at least 10 hours of work each day.

Apart from this and many other precious things with him you can also find the remaining documents about the conversion of count Mihajl Kulin, later known as Hidajet Pasha, to Islam, and about the awards given to him by Sultan.

This historical records do not mention whether Kulin-ban was married. It is known that Ninoslav Kotromanic succeeded Kulin-ban who ruled between 1180 and 1204. The Kotromanic parentage ruled Bosnia until the arrival of the Turks in 1462. It is unknown what family relation Ninoslav Kotromanic had with Kulin-ban. It is assumed that he was a son of Kulin-ban's brother, or his sister who was married to Tihomir Zahumski (the brother of Stefan Nemanja). The family connection is confirmed through a document and a charter written by Ninoslav himself and that states: "I will, as a king of Bosnia, rule as did my cousin and precursor Kulin-ban, because those laws are wise and good". From that one could read that the Bosnian royal family Kotromanic



was related to Kulin. That family stayed at the Bosnian throne the longest period, until it was overthrown by the Turks. Because Kulin-ban was a heretic (bogumil) he was often attacked by the surrounding rulers, first and foremost the Serbian ruler Stevan Nemanja. Because of that the descendents of Kulin-ban sought refuge at the Catholic Church, at that time belonging to the Venice and for couple of centuries were posted at important positions there. It is from there that the Venetian duce Kulin comes from, whose brother Mihajlo Kulin converted to Islam. A Venetian duce could only be a person who was born on the territory of the Venetian Republic that during that period bordered to Bosnia and where the city of Ostrovica belonged.

Whether count Mihajl converted to Islam out of his free will and thus willingly gave up the fortress in order to keep his estates, or if he was captured and then converted to Islam, is unknown. When Ostrovica still belonged to Venetian Republic it had only the south part. The northern part was however built much later by Salih Pasha Kulen in order to fortify it against the Austrians. At the same time building of nearby fortresses started, such as the tower on



Klisevic. Salih Pasha Kulen was shot down in Travnik on June 13, 1723. The Turkish Vizier Abdulah Pasha Defterdarija had him killed. It is told that Mahmut Pasha Kulenovic, who took over after Salih Pasha Kulen, finished the fortress. During his rule the county of Bihac and the city of Ostrovica were in 1737 attacked by the Austrians under the command of general von Raupaha, but without a result.

military from all over the Ottoman empire, together with the native Kulenovics. The most important of them all was the Asian family Azapagic that during a certain period commanded Ostrovica. Once the male side of this family died out the only family member that was left was a daughter with a large amount of inheritance from their parents. This inheritance was to



the largest extent in Lika. The rich girl married Halil-beg Kulenovic, who was later poisoned by his brother Mehmed-beg who had raised charges against him in Tsarigrad (Istanbul). Later Ostrovica was inhabited by Kulenovic-Harac, out of which the most famous one was Mehmed-beg. His daughter committed suicide by jumping from a 50 meters high window, because she did not want to get married. The last inhabitant of the city was Mahumd-beg

Kulenovic-Harac. After him the city remains empty. During the Austrian occupation great battles were fought resulting in severe damage of the city and was thus impossible to leave in it. The visiting tourist can today only see stones and walls. The surroundings are very romantic and are one of the most interesting parts of Bosnia.

Today Ostrovica stands alone with its great walls, uninhabited and deserted. The old royal castle is a ruin and stands there only to remind us of its historical meaning. One can no longer see the royal glory, nor the gathering of soldiers. Within its walls nobody is playing the games about the great heroes.



The silence is surrounding the long forgotten lances and armors, and is only interrupted by the black eagle who seems to be attacking the walls as if he still can smell the dead horses and heroes.