

The Collection of Flags and Streamers at the Croatian History Museum and its symbolism

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Abstract

Flags are symbols that consist of a selection and distribution of colours, depictions and, frequently, inscriptions that have the meaning of mottoes. By the term "historical flag" we take to mean a flag – or a field of a flag (in the narrow sense of the term) – made from textile, as well as a staff with a specially shaped metal finial, and sometimes with a streamer. The main part of the Collection of Flags at the Croatian History Museum consists of 150 flags and 70 streamers, the oldest of them dating back to the 17th century. According to the number and typology of the collected flags, this collection holds a prominent position among other European collections of this type. The beginnings of the collection go back to the middle of the 19th century, within the former National Museum, so that it is one of our oldest museum collections. According to their use, their features of typology and style, we can group the flags in this Collection into several segments: military flags, state flags, coronation flags, *Banal* flags, county flags, flags from 1848, the flags of guilds, civil and political associations. The article deals with the typology and symbolism of military, *Banal* and coronation flags as well as the first Croatian national flags. Furthermore, with the aid of examples of the Croatian Falcon and flags of the Croatian Popular Peasants' Party, we learn about the symbolism of flags from the first decades of the 20th century, flags that were symbols of civil associations and political parties that strived to preserve the Croatian national identity. The aim of this article is to present the Collection of Flags not only as a diverse and large collection, but also to interpret historical flags as authentic material historical sources whose symbolic contents bear witness to the existence of Croatia as a state entity and to confirm the existence of the Croatian national idea within the framework of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in a heraldic form.

Introduction

Traditionally, the term flag denotes a piece of material which is in part fixed to a flag-staff and which serves a practical purpose. The theme of this paper is historical flags kept at the Croatian History Museum in Zagreb and the symbolic contents of these flags.

The main body of the Collection consists of 150 flags and 70 streamers dating from the 17th century to the present day. The Collection of Flags and Streamers was one of the first collections founded at the Museum. The first flags came into the possession of the Museum in the middle of the 19th century. The Museum, founded in



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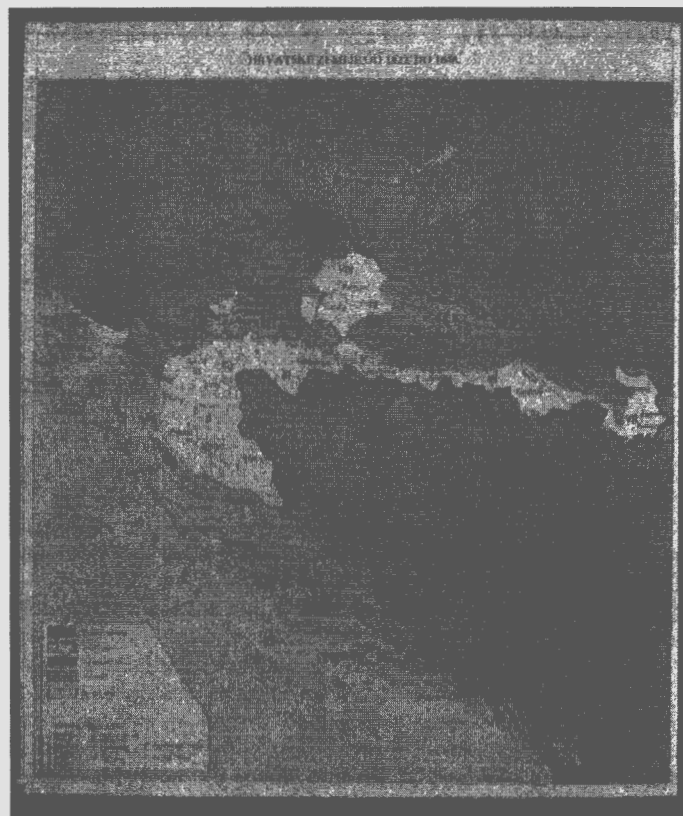


Figure 1 Map of Croatia (Croatian Lands) between 1822-1848.

1846 was initially named the National Museum. Over time, the archaeological and natural history collections became autonomous museum institutions – the Archaeological Museum and the Natural Science Museum in Zagreb. The cultural and historical collections of the National Museum formed a separate Museum that was renamed in 1953 as the History Museum of Croatia. During democratic changes, the Museum of the Revolution of the Peoples of Croatia was joined to the History Museum. This institution, organised in 1991, was renamed the Croatian History Museum.

In the case of historical flags we can differentiate between the following segments:

1. The main section – the flag in the narrow sense of the word or, as it is frequently called, the field of the flag, and
2. The auxiliary parts:
 - a) The staff to which the flag is fixed with a specially fashioned finial;
 - b) The streamer, which began to appear with flags in our collection dating from the 18th century.

According to their use, their typological characteristics and style, the flags in our Collection can be classified into several groups: military flags, state flags, coronation flags, viceroy's flags, county flags, the flags of guilds and civil and political associations. With respect to their use and symbolic aspects, the largest group includes military flags and flags with elements of national and state symbolism. We will devote most of this paper to precisely these flags.

Military flags

The military flag is a symbol of belonging, honour and fighting unity. The capture of a flag in war is considered to be a glorious act, while its loss it deemed to be shameful. The largest segment of our collection consists of military flags, among which we differentiate between *banderium* flags and military flags in the narrow sense of the term. These are, for the most part, infantry regiment or battalion flags, as well as cavalry flags decorated with Habsburg dynastic insignia from the 18th and 19th centuries. These flags belonged to military units of the Military Border organised in central and eastern Croatia (Slavonia).

The historical term of the Military Border represents a part of the territory of the Croatian Kingdom (the region of Slavonia along the river Sava to the estuary of the Sava into the Danube, parts of Lika, Gorski Kotar, Kordun and Banija), which was exempt from the authority of the Croatian Parliament and the Croatian *Ban* and placed under the military and administrative system of the Viennese Court from the end of the 16th century in order to prevent Turkish incursions and conquests to the west (of Europe). This historical Croatian territory was organised as a Croatian and Slavonian Military Border that was finally reincorporated into Croatia in 1881 (Fig. 1).

Although the oldest type of flags is the *banderium* flag, the oldest flag in our holdings is the so-called "Austrian Imperial (Military) Flag" (inventory no. 709) (Figs. 2-3) dating from the end of the 16th or the first half of the 17th century. This flag has earned the epithet of "standard-bearer of the collection" for several reasons: 1) the colour of the flag – it was made from four pieces of dark red silk damask; 2) its dimensions of 151 x 196 cm; 3) the images (Habsburg coat of arms, Mother of God, three-pronged flames) that cover its entire surface.

On the obverse there is the Mother of God – the Heavenly Queen (*regina Coeli*), enthroned, crowned, with a sceptre and holding the infant Jesus who holds an orb. Mary's crown is the crown of the ruling house of Austria. The three-pronged flames covering the entire surface symbolise the descent of the Holy Spirit. On the reverse there is a painted imperial double-headed eagle under the so-called Crown of Rudolf, on its breast is a shield lined with the Order of the Golden Fleece. On the basis of the heraldic features, we can infer that it is the coat of arms of Maximilian II of Habsburg (1564-1576).

With respect to this attribution we should note several facts: in the Middle Ages the red flag (German *Blutfahne*) was traditionally considered to be the flag of the Empire; according to the writings of the biographer of Ferdinand II (1619-1637), the Mother of God became the patron of the regiments on the recommendation of Ferdinand II, and so she became the symbol of regimental flags. Until that time the iconographic motif of the crucified Christ was used on flags equally alongside the Mother of God. In line with these facts we can suppose that the flag was made during the reign of the successors to Maximilian II (1564-1576) /Rudolf (1576-1608), Matthew II (1608-1619), Ferdinand II (1619-1637), Ferdinand III (1637-1657)/ prior to Charles VI.

It is interesting to note that the original flags under which Croatian cavalry units fought in the Thirty Years' War, units known as the Croatian harquebusiers, are today kept in the Trophy Collection of the Military Museum here, in Stockholm. These cavalry flags are different from typical swallow-tailed cavalry flags because they have only one tail – namely the upper one.

In the second half of the 17th century the images on flags became more standard-



Figure 2 Austrian Imperial (Military) Flag obverse.



Figure 3 Austrian Imperial (Military) Flag reverse.

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ised and they are in most cases: a) a black crowned double-headed eagle with the dynastic coat of arms or the initials of the ruler along with royal symbols, and b) the figure of the Mother of God. The elements of the Burgundy heraldic signs disappear, and only the golden flames dispersed on the flag remain as reminiscence of the Order of the Golden Fleece.

There were changes with respect to the appearance and the technique of decorating flags in the 18th century during the reign of Charles VI (1711-1740) and Maria Theresa (1740-1780). In this period the division into cavalry and infantry flags became standardised as well as the typology of the symbols used to decorate them and the techniques used in decoration. Along with painting, symbolic and visual decorations are to an increasing extent made using embroidery. The crowned black two-headed eagle with nimbuses and coat of arms or the initials of the ruler became an exclusively Habsburg dynastic marking on military cavalry and infantry flags. The colour of the flag is mainly yellow, green, or red. The cavalry flags, known in literature as "swallow-tailed flags" were lined with fringes, in contrast to infantry flags that had a multicoloured border in the form of triangular flames. The reforms of L. A. Khevenhüller (1683-1744) defined the appearance of the main regimental flag, which had to have a white field with the image of the Mother of God on one side and the double-headed eagle with dynastic symbols (sword, sceptre, nimbus, crown) on the other side of the flag. In contrast to infantry flags, cavalry flags were made from double-sided silk decorated with richly embroidered images of the royal coat of arms, allegorical battle scenes and Latin mottoes. The staffs of cavalry flags were still similar to a tourney lances with a finial decorated with an image of the patron saint and the coat of arms of the regimental commander. This type of flag, namely flags of the Austrian Imperial Army, were the military symbols of that part of Croatia that we have already mentioned as the Military Border. This military system was brought in line with other units of the Austrian Imperial Army in 1744.

In our collection we have cavalry flags from the reign of Charles VI and Maria Theresa, which we are presenting at this occasion. One of these is a cavalry flag (inventory no. 2145) (Fig. 4) made from white silk (67x83 cm) decorated on both sides by a painted image of the coat of arms: a crowned double-headed eagle with nimbuses. The eagle carries on his chest a blue shield with the initials of the ruler C VI (Carolus VI). Above the shield there is an archducal hat, and the shield is lined with the Order of the Golden Fleece. In its talons the eagle holds the symbols of royal power: a sword and sceptre. A second example is that of an infantry regiment flag (inventory no. 25545) (Fig. 5) made from yellow silk (90x93 cm) decorated with embroidery. In the centre of both sides of the flag field there is an embroidered heraldic device from the time of Charles VI. Along the edge and in the corners the flag is decorated with an embroidered floral motif in greenish-brown tones.

From the time of Maria Theresa we have a flag of the Military Border hussar company of the Karlovac regiment. This swallow-tailed flag (inventory no. 708) (Figs. 6-7) is made from yellow silk (55x88 cm) and is richly decorated with embroidery and edged with fringes. On the centre of the obverse field, which is richly decorated with a flower motif, there is an embroidered Imperial Austrian eagle that carries on its chest two coats of arms surmounted by a crown: the coat of arms of Maria Theresa as the Queen of Hungary and Bohemia with the Austrian coat of arms in the centre, as well as the coat of arms of Francis, duke of Lothringia and Archduke of Tuscany. On the reverse there is Baroque embroidery of a medallion with a depiction of a group of Ro-



Figure 4 Austrian cavalry flag from the reign of Charles VI.



Figure 5 Austrian infantry regiment flag from first half of the 18 c.

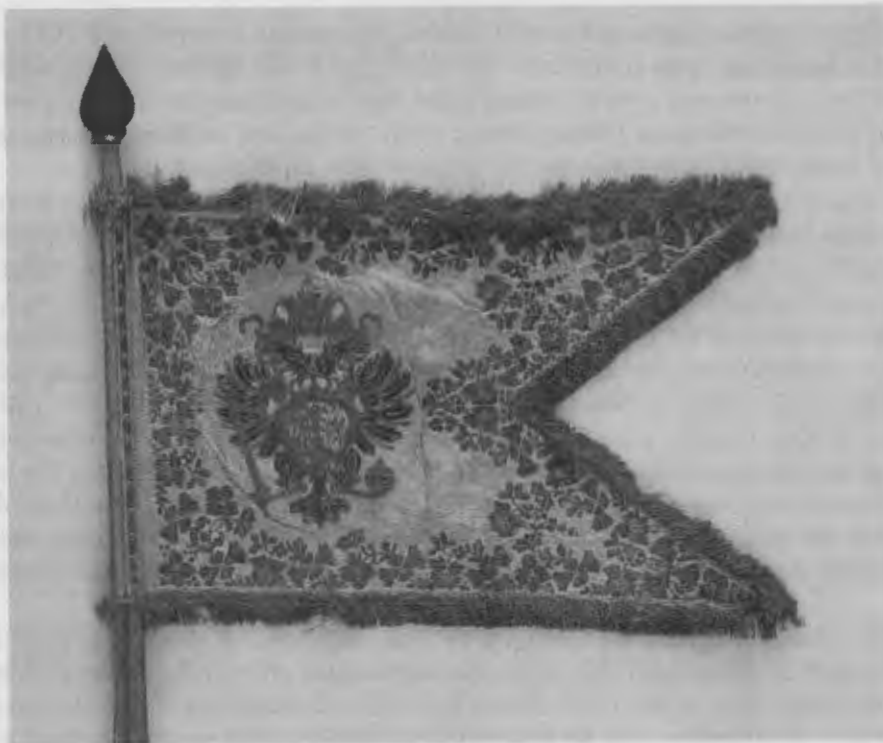


Figure 6 Flag of the Military Border hussar of the Karlovac regiment, obverse.

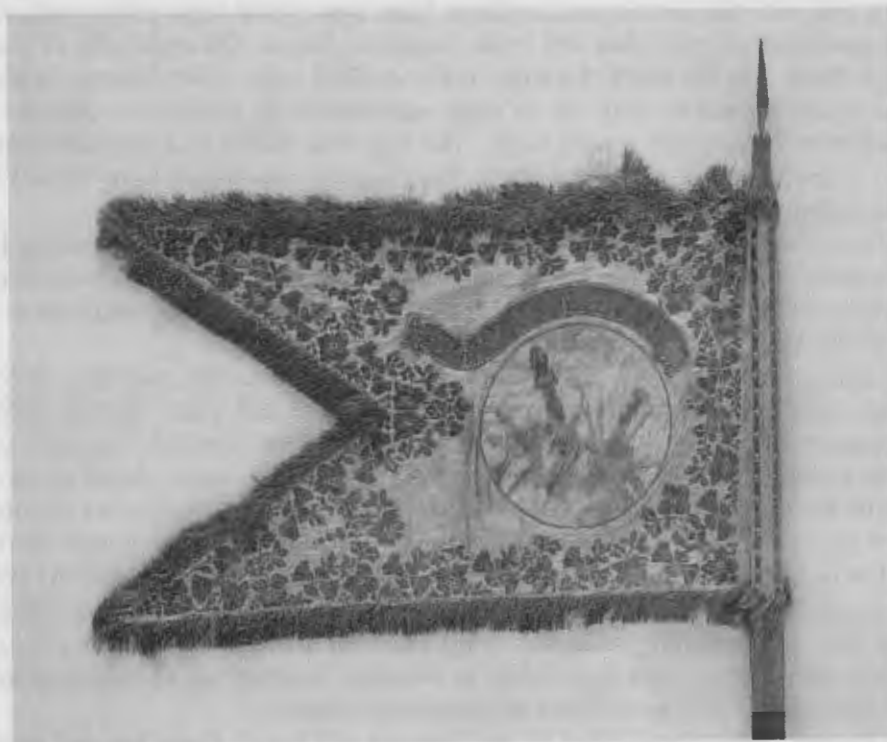


Figure 7 Flag of the Military Border hussar of the Karlovac regiment, reverse.

man military trophies (*signa* and *vexilla*, shields, spears with inscriptions IOVIA / NI). Above the medallion there is the motto RETRACTATA NITESVNT. The spear that is like a tourney spear ends with a silvered finial that on one side has the engraved coat of arms of Prince Sachsen Hilburghausen (who carried out military reforms in the Military Border) and on the other the figure of St. John of Nepomuk.

As a result of a new Baroque view of the world, in the 18th century there appeared flags used for special occasions, in order to embellish ceremonies in which we recognise the extravagance of the Baroque style. This primarily refers to two flags that the Zagreb Chapter of Canons had made for the visit of Empress Maria Theresa to Zagreb that was planned for 1753. The flags are rectangular in form; they are of considerable size (224x224 cm; 215x186 cm), made from multicoloured silk using various techniques (embroidery, applications, patchwork), decorated on both sides with the same motif. One flag (inventory no. 1644) (Fig. 8) is decorated with an iconographic image of St Ladislav, while the other flag (inventory no. 1643) (Fig. 9) has the image of the Immaculate Mother of God. The staffs end with a gilded leaf-like finial decorated with the coat of arms of the contemporary Bishop of Zagreb Thauszy and the iconographic depiction of St. Ladislav, namely the image of the Immaculate Mother of God.

The collection also holds examples of Austrian royal and imperial military flags from the time of Francis I (1792-1835). The appearance of these flags was defined by regulations laid down by the Commission for Uniforms according to directives issued by the Royal War Council. The heraldic rules and iconographic symbols defined at that time for infantry battalion and regimental flags remained essentially unchanged until 1918.

In line with this rectangular battalion flags were made from yellow silk with a border consisting of red, silver and black triangular flames. On both sides of the flag (Fig. 10) there was the black Austrian double-headed eagle with dynastic markings, with an Austrian coat of arms on its chest, surrounded by shields (11 shields) with coats of arms of Austrian crown lands. The flag was nailed to a flagstaff that was painted in spirals in red, white and black. The flagstaff ends with a heart-shaped finial with the engraved initials of the ruler.

These flags also had silk or velvet streamers tied into a bow and decorated with extravagantly embroidered mottoes and coats of arms – most frequently with dynastic or family coats of arms of the person that acted as the sponsor at the consecration ceremony for the flag.

Regimental flags (Figs. 11-12) were made from white silk, and they were also rectangle with a border in the form of black, silver, red and white flaming triangles. The centre of the field on the obverse had an embroidered heraldic depiction of the Austrian Empire: the crowned double-headed eagle with a dynastic shield on its chest lined with the symbols of orders; the eagle's wings have the crowned coats of arms (11 coats of arms) of the Austrian crown lands. The reverse has an iconographic depiction of the Immaculate Mother of God in the centre of the field. The staff is spirally painted in black, silver, red and gold; it ended with a heart-shaped finial with the monarch's initials. The corresponding streamers (Fig. 13) were made mainly from silk rep or plush tied into a bow, with rich tassels at the ends. Inscriptions and decorations are richly embroidered with pronounced multicoloured stitching.

Changes in the organisation of the Imperial and Royal Army brought about by the introduction of the dualistic organisation of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1867 also



Figure 8 Flag of the Zagreb Chapter from the reign of Maria Theresa.

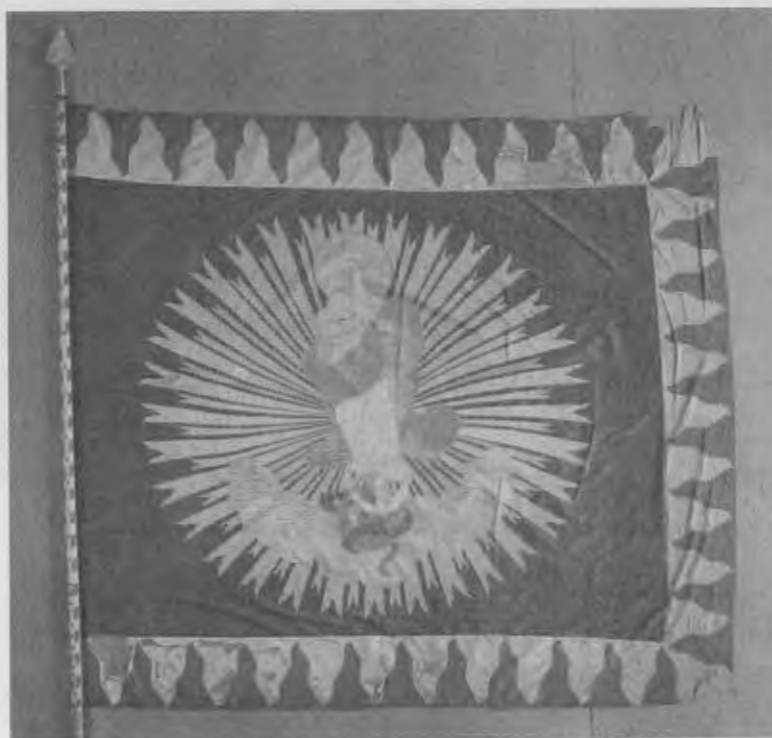


Figure 9 Flag of the Zagreb Chapter from the reign of Maria Theresa.



Figure 10 Battalion flag of the Ogulin regiment.



Figure 11 Infantry regiment flag, obverse.



Figure 12 Infantry regiment flag, reverse.



Figure 13 Streamer from the flag of infantry regiment in Zagreb.

led to changes in the military organisation and its symbolism. There was a new type of regimental military flag known as the flag of the Hungarian and Croatian Royal Home Guard, and our Collection also holds specimens of these flags (Figs. 14-15). These were flags made from white silk and decorated with embroidery, rectangular (size 128x136 cm) with a border of alternately placed triangles in the colours of the Croatian tricolour (red-silver-blue). On the obverse, the centre of the field contains two angels holding the coat of arms of the lands of the Crown of St. Stephen surmounted by the Crown of St. Stephen. On the reverse there are the initials of the monarch F J I (Francis Joseph I) surmounted by the Crown of St. Stephen. The staff ends with a finial, decorated on one side with the Hungarian coat of arms, and with the initials of Francis Joseph I on the other. This type of military flag also had streamers that have been preserved.

Apart from military flags that bear witness to Croatia's presence in the state union of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Collection also holds flags from the period when Croatia was part of the joint state of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which was formed in 1918 after the end of World War I. That state union was known as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and, from 1929, as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

In line with the decree concerning the appearance of flags from 1924, the flag of the Army of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Fig. 16) is the Yugoslav tricolour (horizontally blue, white and red), parallelogram-shaped (75x75 cm), sewn from double silk, on both sides decorated with the state coat of arms and inscription, edged with gilt tassels. The obverse and reverse are symbolically and content-wise identical; the only difference being in the script for the inscription on the flag, on one side it is in Cyrillic script, and on the other in Latin script. In the middle of the centre white field is the coat of arms of the State of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on a red medallion edged with laurel branches. The blue field has the motto: *S verom u Boga* (With Faith in God), while the red field has the motto: *Za kralja i otadžbinu* (For King and Country). The flagstaff was simply made from ash with a spear shaped brass finial.

The Collection also has flags that bear witness to the antifascist partisan movement on the part of the Croatian people in World War II (1941-1945). These are simple single-colour or tricolour textile flags rectangular in form (80x120 cm). One type is a flag like our inventory number 10706 (Fig. 17) sewn from two pieces of red material with two triangular endings and woollen tassels at the end of the endings. The middle of the flag field contains a five-pointed star made from white material, and the upper corner next to the staff has the proletarian symbol of a sickle and hammer made from white material and sewn on. The second type of flag was a tricolour with a five-pointed star, whose appearance was defined by a decree from the autumn of 1941. According to this decree, the flags of individual military units had to be national tricolours with a five-pointed star across all three fields. The colours of the tricolour depended on the national structure of each individual partisan unit (for example, Serb units had red, blue and white; Croatian units had red, white and blue).

Similar to this type was the partisan tricolour (MRNH 356) with an inscription, whose appearance was defined by the regulations concerning the appearance of partisan flags. This partisan tricolour from World War II is a Croatian tricolour with the inscription on the white field executed in pencil (Fig. 18). On one side is the inscription *Vojaska Matije Gubca*, and on the other *Četa Matije Gubca*. This flag belonged to the company that took the name of the leader of a great peasant revolt in Croatia in 1573, and it brought together antifascist fighters from the ranks of the Croatian people. (The



Figure 14 Flag of the Hungarian and Croatian Royal Home Guard obverse.



Figure 15 Flag of the Hungarian and Croatian Royal Home Guard reverse.



Figure 16 Flag of the Army of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

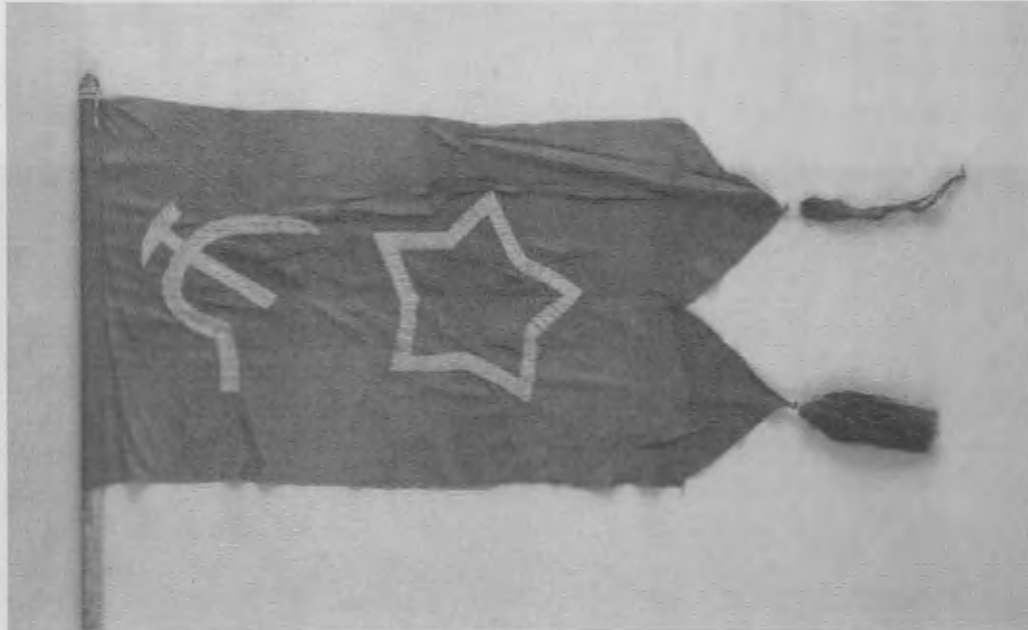


Figure 17 Red flag with the proletarian symbol.



Figure 18 Partisan (Croatian) tricolour from World War II.

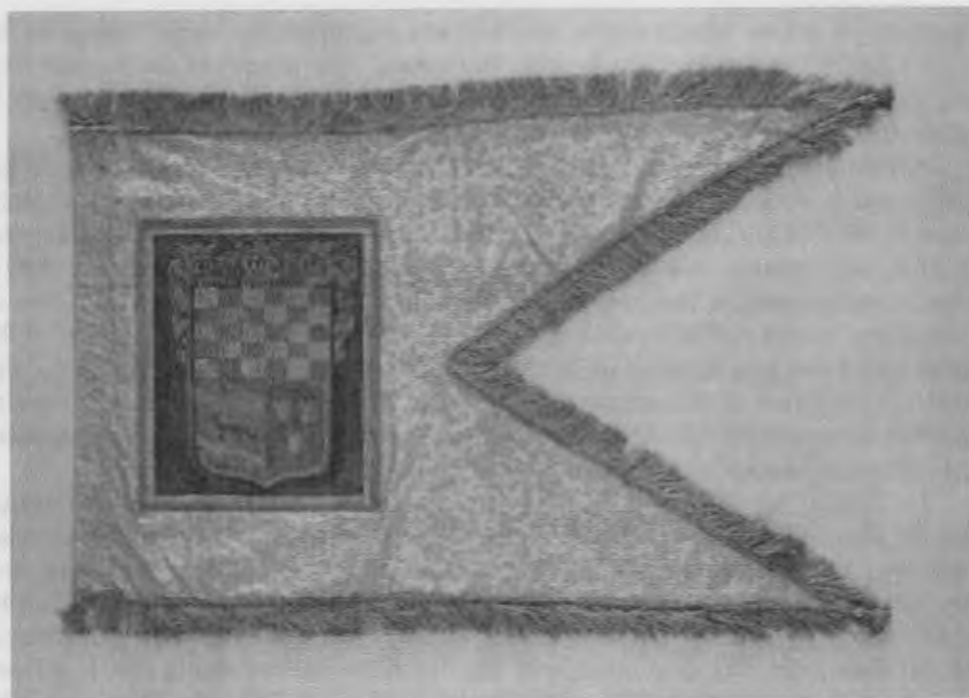


Figure 19 Cavalry flag of the Croatian company for the defence of the homeland during the Napoleonic conquests, obverse.

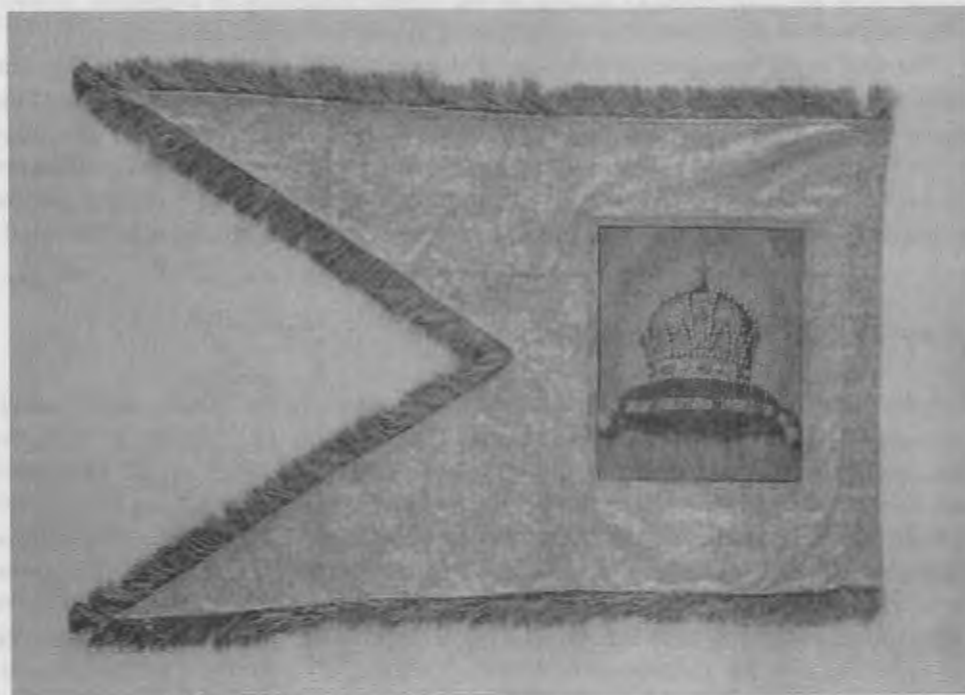


Figure 20 Cavalry flag of the Croatian company for the defence of the homeland during the Napoleonic conquests, reverse.

peasant revolt led by Matija Gubec in 1573 was organised on feudal estates in the Croatian Zagorje region and was brutally suppressed. The legend of the peasant king Matija Gubec lived on in traditional lore and in the consciousness of the peasants in centuries to come.)

Another flag that tentatively belongs in this section is the cavalry flag of the Croatian company for the defence of the homeland during the Napoleonic conquests (inventory no. 1624) (Figs. 19-20). It is a flag that brought together Croatian companies after the Croatian Diet proclaimed a general uprising – a mobilisation that is known in historiographic literature as an *insurrection*. An *insurrection* was the duty of all magnates, nobles and other citizens to place themselves under the command of the viceroy (*Ban*) and take up arms under the royal or viceroy flag. According to the embroidered inscription of the streamer, we can date the flag to 1797. This is a cavalry flag made from reddish silk damask (67x102 cm) edged with silver tassels and decorated with coats of arms on both sides of the flag.

This flag is a symbol of the class institution of the Croatian nobility that propagated the idea of Croatian statehood. The Croatian nobility as a body politic founded its ideology on international law and it became, through its political and social features, the basic integrative element of the community of the Croatian feudal people. The heraldic or symbolic expression of this ideology can be drawn from the coats of arms decorating the flag. The obverse of the flag has a painted shield that is divided into three with the coats of arms of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia, surmounted by coats of arms decorations that were typical of noblemen's coats of arms that stress the attribution of the coat of arms as a symbol of the Croatian body politic. The reverse has a painted Crown of St. Stephen lying on a scarlet pillow. The flag and its coats of arms represent the state territory known as the Triune Kingdom of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia within the framework of the Kingdom of Croatia and Hungary.

The flag is the visual representation of the politics of the Croatian nobility that pursued a policy of preserving elements of Croatian autonomy, the preservation of the territorial integrity and the acquiring of "virtual" (historical) territories. At the same time, the flag symbolises the idea of Croatian statehood and its bearer, the Croatian political nation. Viewing this flag and its symbolism in their historical context, we can characterise it as a military flag with elements of the symbolism of Croatian statehood.

Viceroy's flags (Flags of the *Bans*)

During the period of feudalism (which would last as a system in Croatia until the middle of the 19th century), the *Ban* (viceroy) was, along with the king (or prince), the highest political authority in the land. The rights and obligations of the *Ban* were founded on his relationship to the king and the Croatian Diet, namely on the right to independently make decisions relating to military and judicial matters. Croatian historiography has concluded that the king gave the *Ban* a sceptre as a sign of judicial, and a flag as a sign of military authority. This *Banal* right was the basis of his esteem in the personal union of Croatia with the Arpad, Anjou, Iagello and Habsburg dynasties, and it was therefore also the foundation of Croatia's traditional autonomy. In the Hungarian and Croatian hierarchy of barons, the *Ban* as the state's standard-bearer, held third place behind palatines and judges. During coronations of a monarch, he carried one of the insignias.

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In the first half of the 19th century Croatia existed as a subject in international law with the name the Kingdom of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia. The symbolic expressions of its status and autonomy are evident in the iconography of the flags of the Croatian Bans. The symbolism of the *Banal* flags is aimed at stressing the office of the *Ban* as the highest dignitary in the Croatian Kingdom, which was in diplomatic sources from the end of the 16th century onwards known as *Regnum Dalmatiae, Croatiae et Sclavoniae*.

The flag of the Croatian *Ban* Franjo Vlačić from the first half of the 19th century (1832) and its symbolism mark the military power of the *Ban* and his pronounced position as the representative of the Croatian entity within the Habsburg Monarchy. The flag (inventory no. 1647) (Figs. 21-22) is made from dark red silk damask; it is swallow-tailed (150x206 cm), embroidered on both sides, adorned along the edges with gilt metal strands and metal tassels on the ends. Its form is reminiscent of cavalry flags, cavalry being traditionally thought of as a constant in Croatian military history. Obverse: the centre has multicoloured relief embroidery with the baron's coat of arms of the Vlačić family, under which is the symbolic depiction of flags and military medals. Along the edge of the flag field there is a border of stylised leaves and tendrils in golden thread, while the remainder of the surface of the flag field is embroidered with tulips stitched with metal thread. Reverse: the centre has embroidered coats of arms of the Triune Kingdom of Slavonia, Croatia and Dalmatia surmounted by the Crown of St. Stephen and edged with laurels and an oak branch. The rest of the flag is decorated with stylised embroidered tulips.

According to the Pragmatic Sanction from 1723, the Triune Kingdom was an integral part of Hungary. According to the interpretation of Croatian historiography, the doctrine of the "saintly crown" of St. Stephen was the ideological justification for the existence of a unified Hungarian state. This crown was not identical with the king, who was only a part of it. The King of St. Stephen was a symbol of a unified state and of the union of the king and the Hungarian "body politic", and it encompasses an indivisible territory of the Hungarian state (according to the Pragmatic Sanction from 1723) that consists of the centre (*territorium metropolitanum*) and added segments (*partes adnexae*), namely the kingdoms of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia, and after the Croatian-Hungarian Agreement from 1868 it also incorporated Rijeka as a separate body of that "saintly crown".

The flag of *Ban* Josip Jelačić from 1848 (inventory no. 11862) (Fig. 23) holds a special place among Croatian historical flags. The flag was carried during the ceremony of the installation of Jelačić as the *Ban* of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia in June 1848. According to type, it is a cavalry, swallow-tailed flag, but in contrast to former red *Banal* flags, this one is a Croatian tricolour. Because of its symbolism and the fact that it belonged to the *Ban* who at the time of the formation of national states managed (albeit only for a moment and only formally) to unite the entire Croatian territory, this flag is considered to be the forerunner of the Croatian state flag. Its colours are heraldically founded; they have been taken from the historical coats of arms of Croatian kingdoms. The flag (93x 123 cm) is sewn from three pieces of different types of silk, edged with silver tassels. It is decorated by painted coats of arms. On one side are cartouches with the coats of arms of the kingdoms of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia united with the Illyrian symbol and surmounted by a crown, while the other side has the painted family coat of arms of the Jelačić family. The flagstaff is richly engraved and gilded, ending with a finial in the form of the Illyrian symbol.

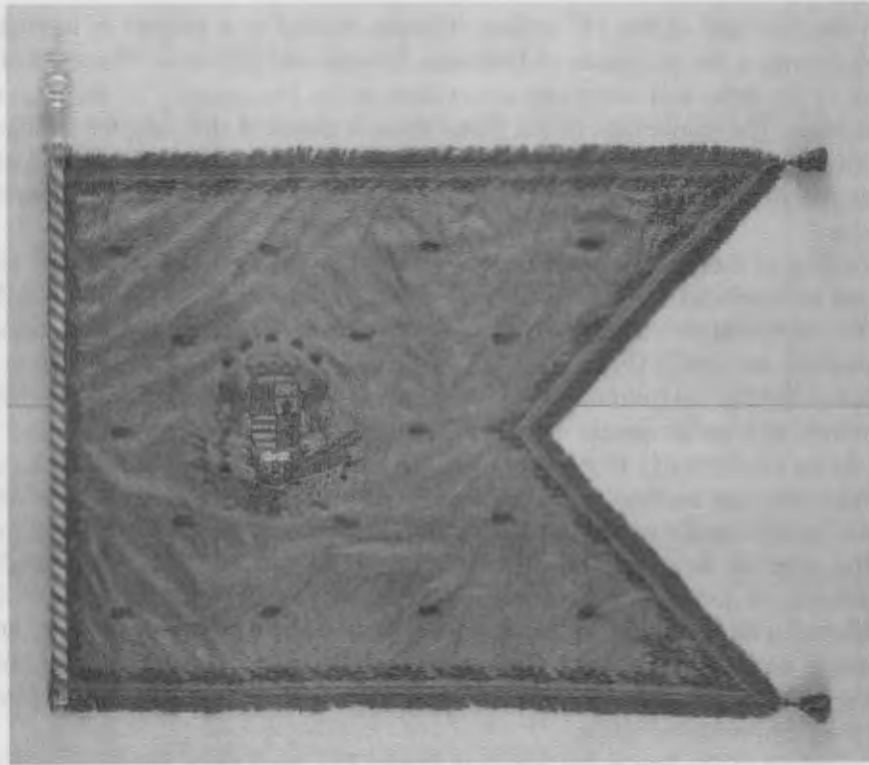


Figure 21 Flag of Ban Franjo Vlašić, obverse.



Figure 22 Flag of Ban Franjo Vlašić, reverse detail.



Figure 23 Flag of Ban Josip Jelačić, reverse.

Coronation flags

A significant segment of historical flags needs to be devoted to coronation flags, which are, along with the *Banal* flags, one of the symbols of the Croatian feudal state. These flags symbolically illustrate the position and place of the Croatian Kingdom within the framework of the lands of the Habsburg crown.

Coronation flags were made for a specific purpose – for the coronation ceremony of the Habsburgs as the kings of Hungary and Croatia. On these occasions they symbolise the Triune Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia. They have the form of cavalry flags (they are swallow-tailed) just like *Banal* flags, as well as painted heraldic depictions and inscriptions. The obverse holds the name of the crowned ruler and the date, while the reverse holds the coat of arms and the name of the Kingdom. The field of the flag is edged with tassels and decorated around the edges with a painted floral border.

Croatian *Bans* and the most important Croatian magnates attended coronations. The coronation of Maximilian II (1564-1576) as the king of Croatia and Hungary on September 8th 1563 in Pressburg (present-day Bratislava) was attended by the Croatian *Ban* Nikola IV Zrinski with his sons Juraj and Krsto, with an entourage of 168 horsemen. On that occasion the *Ban* carried the royal orb, while the others carried the flags of the Kingdoms.

The coronation flag of the Kingdom of Croatia from 1830 (inventory no. 11752) (Figs. 24-25) is made from yellow silk damask in the form of a swallow's tail (131x200 cm) and it is edged with tassels. The obverse holds, horizontally, the painted inscription in Latin: FERDINANDVS V/IN /REGEM HUNGARIAE CORONATUS POSONII/DIE ... SEPT./1830. The reverse holds in the centre of the field of the flag the Croatian historical coat of arms (6x4 white and red fields) surmounted by the Anjou crown and the inscription CROATIAE. The coat of arms stands above a laurel branch and palm branch – the symbols of immortality, rejuvenation and victory. The flagstaff is spirally painted in red, white and green, but the finial has not been preserved.

The coronation flag of the Kingdom of Slavonia (inventory no. 32446) (Figs. 26-27) from 1867 also has the shape of a cavalry flag (106x167 cm); it is made from green silk damask, and is lined with tassels and painted on both sides. The obverse has, in the centre, the historical coat of arms of the Kingdom of Slavonia, surmounted by the royal, "Anjou", crown above which stands the inscription SLAVONIAE. Under the coat of arms there is a palm and laurel branch. The edge of the flag has a floral ornamental border. Reverse: the entire surface of the field of the flag is covered by the inscription painted in gold: FRANCISCUS JOSEPHVS I /IN REGEM HVNGARIAE CORONATVS / BUDAE PESTINI / DIE VIII IVNII/MDCCCLXVII.

***Banderium* flags**

We have briefly mentioned *banderium* flags, which are considered to be the oldest type of flag. The symbolism of these flags expresses and confirms the social status of feudal lords "the master of the flag" – *banderium*. The coat of arms, or, better to say, its elements, are a category on which we can make a determination with respect to a



Figure 24 Coronation flag of the Kingdom of Croatia, obverse.



Figure 25 Coronation flag of the Kingdom of Croatia, reverse detail.



Figure 26 Coronation flag of the Kingdom of Slavonia, obverse detail.



Figure 27 Coronation flag of the Kingdom of Slavonia, reverse.



Figure 28 Duke Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić in "Hrvoje' Missal".

flag, so that these flags are sometimes in literature referred to as heraldic flags. We should mention that the coat of arms and not the colour of the flag field represents the essential element for attributing a *banderium* flag.

These flags became symbols primarily of the feudal military companies of the magnates from the time of the Anjou dynasty in the 14th century. They began to lose their initial military significance when the Habsburgs came to the Croatian and Hungarian throne at the beginning of the 16th century, but they were to remain present in Croatia until the feudal system was abolished in 1848.

According to their initial use, *banderium* flags are considered to be military flags, but they were used in feudal Croatia as a symbol of feudal institutions within the framework of ceremonies of the estates, for example during the coronations of monarchs and the installations of Bans. Unfortunately, the original *banderium* flags of Croatian magnates from the period when these flags flourished have not been preserved. We only have the illustration of Duke Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić in *Hrvoje's Missal*, which dates from the beginning of the 15th century (Fig. 28). The illustration shows a knight who is holding a lance in his right hand with a gonfanon flag of a simple shape with triangular endings. Our knowledge concerning the appearance of *banderium* flags or "banners" (flags with a coat of arms) of Croatian magnates and Bans is based on preserved graveyard monuments with depictions of the deceased magnates in all their splendour and power, always in armour, with a fur cap or a helmet, holding a sword in their left hand and a flag in the right. Our Collection holds only three original

banderium flags from the territory of the Croatian Kingdom, and they date from the 17th and 18th centuries. Their illustrations were made by painting and they consist of a combination of magnates' heraldic elements, namely the family coats of arms, of Habsburg dynastic elements (black double-headed eagle and royal insignia), of iconographic depictions of patron saints and of mottoes written in Latin. In this context the preserved central section of the banner of Franjo Čikulini from 1663 can be considered to be a typical example of a flag or banner of a Croatian magnate. The flag (inventory no. 2130) (Figs. 29-30) is made from dark red silk damask (59x56 cm); on one side it is decorated with the painted coat of arms of the Čikulini family surrounded by an inscription and initials as well as the year 1663. On the other side there are two hands crossed in front of a golden cross (the symbol of the Franciscan Order) and the Latin inscription: IN HOC SIGNO VINCE PRO DEO REGE ET PATRIA (In this sign you shall be victorious for God and country). Along the edge of the parallelogram-shaped flag there is a decoration in the form of a "bow garland". We can see that this, what is our oldest *banderium* flag, does not have a symbol that would indicate the allegiance of its owners to any ruling (dynastic) house.

The flag made in the first half of the 18th century symbolising a *banderium* – a troop of soldiers that the lords of the manor Vrbovec (some 30 km from Zagreb), the Patačić family, were obliged to provide – has been preserved together with the staff with finial and streamer. We find heraldic symbols on the flag field and the finial of the staff, while the motto, which is also an element of the flag, is not on the flag itself but on the streamer.

The flag (inventory no. 711) (Figs. 31-32) was made from three pieces of pale yellow silk damask and is decorated with painted heraldic devices (a combination of the Patačić family coat of arms and the Habsburg dynastic devices). The obverse of the flag has the painted coat of arms of the counts of Patačić surmounted by an archbishop's hat above a cross. The reverse of the flag has in its centre a painted crowned black Austrian double-headed eagle with sword and sceptre and nimbuses around the eagle's heads. The eagle's breast holds a cartouche with the Austrian coat of arms and the initial C VI (Charles VI) on a white bar.

The finial (Fig. 33) is made from gilt bronze; on one side it has the Habsburg dynastic device – a double-headed eagle with the Hungarian coat of arms on its chest, while on the other there is the goddess Fortuna which is an integral part of the Patačić family coat of arms. This flag has a third part – a streamer with an embroidered inscription in metal thread (using Croatian orthography from the 18th century that was in use before the reforms that were carried out by Ljudevit Gaj in the first half of the 19th century): WERNOST KRALYU GROFFICZA PATAČICH. LYUBAV DOMOVINE (Loyal to God, the Countess Patačić. Love of Country).

A third type of *banderium* flag derives most probably from the 18th century and it was the symbol of a cavalry *banderium* of the Erdödy-Palffy family on its estates around the Drava and Mura rivers. Its shape – swallow-tailed – speaks in favour of the attribution as a cavalry flag; it is made from red silk damask and is decorated with painted iconographic and heraldic motifs (Figs. 34-35). On one side there is a medallion surrounded by a garland; the medallion has the image of the Mother of God with Infant, above which is the inscription PATRONA HUNGARIAE; on the other side is the heraldic device of the Austrian double-headed eagle with the royal insignias with the crowned eagle of the Erdödy-Palffy family on a medallion on its chest. Above the coat of arms is the motto: FORTITER ET (?) CONSTANTER.



Figure 29 Banner of Franjo Čikulini, obverse.



Figure 30 Banner of Franjo Čikulini, reverse.

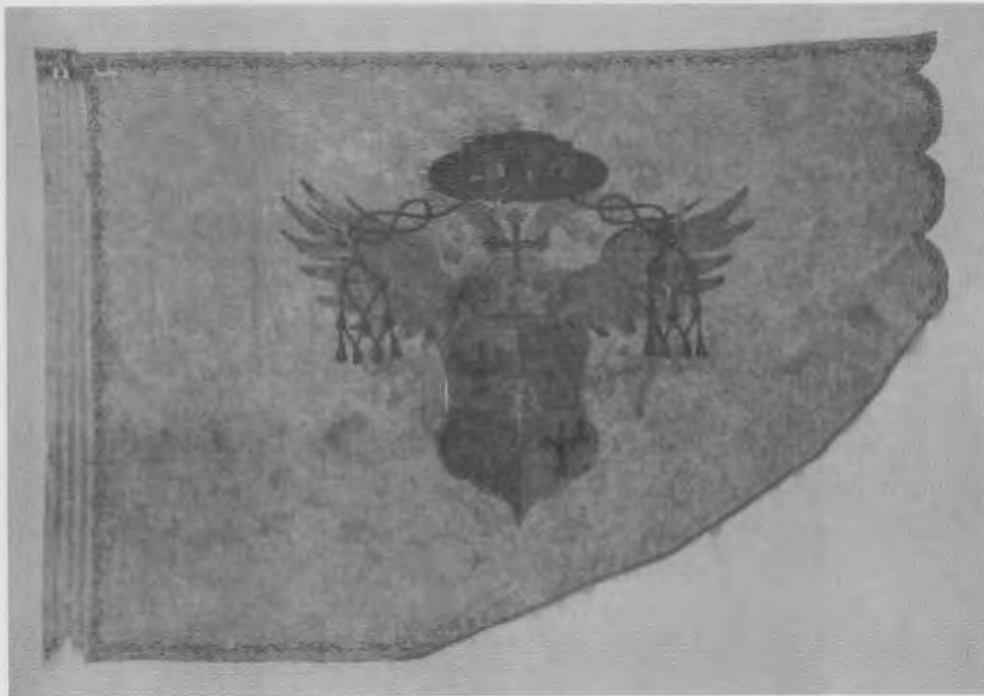


Figure 31 Banderium flag of the Vrbovec Manor, obverse.



Figure 32 Banderium flag of the Vrbovec Manor, reverse.

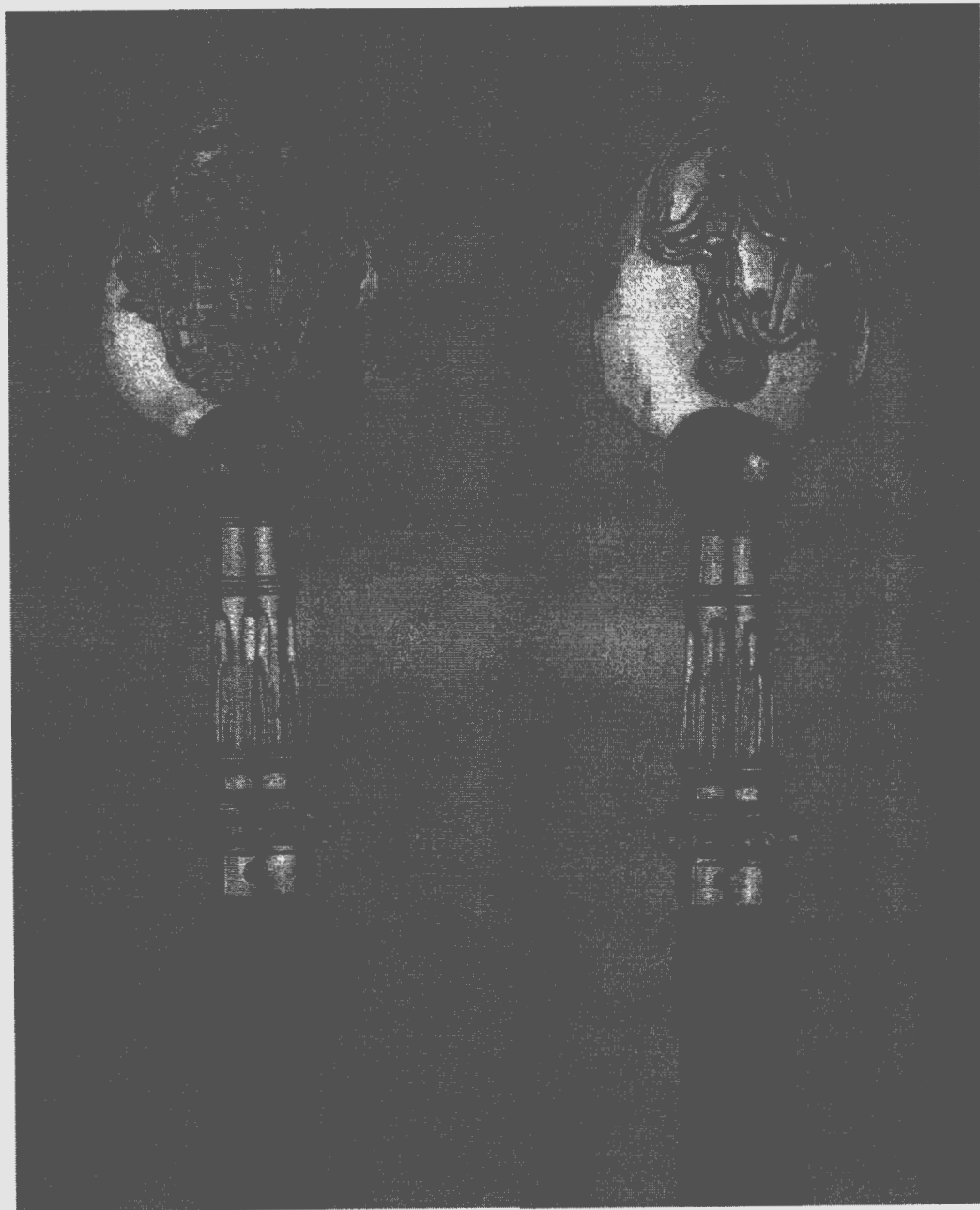


Figure 33 Finial of banderium flag of Vrbovec Manor.



Figure 34 Cavalry banderium flag, obverse.



Figure 35 Cavalry banderium flag, reverse.



Figure 36 Four-coloured flag from Vukovar, 1848.

Flags as symbols of national states

The 18th century was a time in Europe when there was an ongoing process of transforming feudal forms of social activity into civil forms. The appearance of civil forms in society in feudal Croatia can also be traced in the appearance of new types of flags from the end of the 18th century, and especially in 1848. These are flags of national troops along with the existing military, *banderium*, coronation, county and guild flags that bear witness to new forms of civic social activity.

Flags from 1848

After the revolutionary events in France, national civil states began to develop on liberal principles. Viewing this through the process of flags and its symbols, these events led to a change in the meaning of symbols and the colours of flags, while the colour of the flag field was based on heraldry (taken from the colour of the coat of arms) and became the main defining element of allegiance to a flag. The heraldic symbolism of a flag that was the main criterion of allegiance to it in the period of feudalism was replaced in civil societies by allegiance to colour.

A special segment of our Collection is the group of flags in national colours whose emergence is linked with the revolutionary events in Europe and the Habsburg

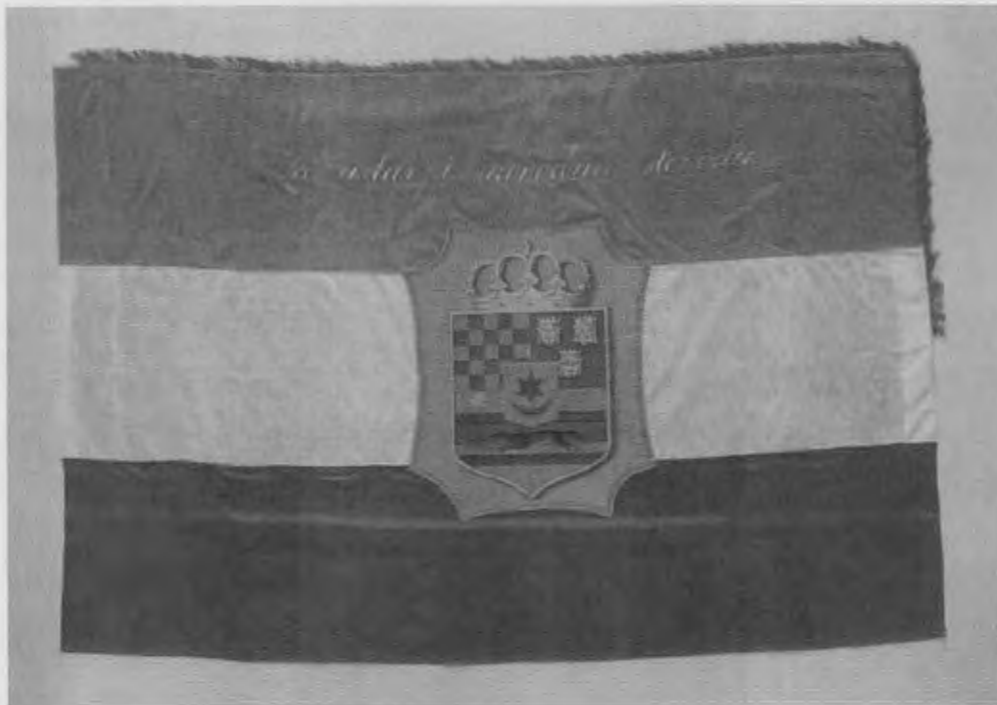


Figure 37 Croatian tricolour - flag of the Zagreb National Guard from 1848.



Figure 38 Croatian tricolour from 1848.

Monarchy in 1848, The colours of these flags, namely tricolours, will become symbols of national civil states in the territory of the Habsburg Monarchy in the second half of the 19th century. According to contemporary understanding, colour became a mark of national identity. This group of flags is made up of one Italian and Hungarian tricolour, six Croatian tricolours, and one four-coloured flag from Vukovar with horizontally placed bars of blue, red, white and green with a motto in the white field (Fig. 36). The Italian and Hungarian tricolours came into the possession of the Museum collection as the spoils of war of troops from the Military Border that took part in operations during 1848 and 1849.

Red, blue and white became Croatian colours; they were taken from the coats of arms of historical Croatian lands (the Kingdom of Croatia and the Kingdom of Slavonia). The Croatian tricolour with these colours arranged in horizontal fields first appeared in the spring of 1848 on the flags of the Zagreb home guard (inventory no. 704, 705) (Fig. 37). These tricolours are decorated with a crowned complex coat of arms, made up of the coats of arms of the Kingdoms of Croatia, Dalmatia and Slavonia, as well as the Illyrian symbol in the centre of the shield and embroidered mottoes. The mottoes were an expression of their political programmes. Mottoes on one flag: *Za ustav i narodnu slobodu* (For the constitution and national freedom) (Fig. 38), *za bratinstvo slavjansko* (For Slav brotherhood); on the other: *za slavjanstvo* (For Slav unity) and *Za slobodu* (For freedom).

It is interesting to note that “patriotic women” from Zagreb financed the making of these flags in Vienna.

Other Croatian national flags were simpler, sewn from various types of textiles (wool, linen, cotton, silk) and were decorated only with mottoes. The mottoes that appear on these flags — *Za narodnost i slobodu* (For the nation and freedom), *Za slobodu, kralja i domovinu* (For freedom, king and country) — express loyalty to the king, the people and country. The symbolism of national colours is also present on the spirally painted flagstaff that ends with a finial in the shape of the Illyrian symbol of a crescent and mullets of six points.

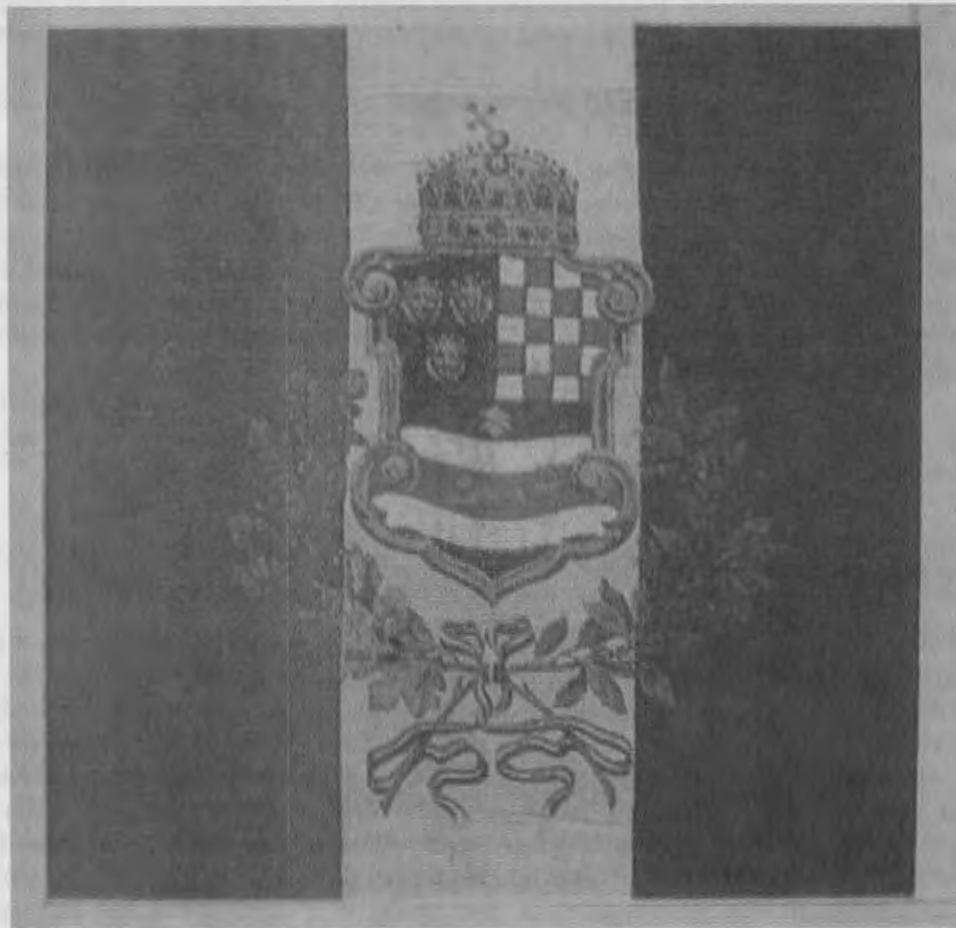
The abolition of feudal social relations led to the disappearance of *banderium* flags as well as of flags of those institutions (for example, guilds) that were typical of that epoch.

The first state flags

The state flag is a symbol that expresses affiliation to a state. Its contents are a reminder of historical watersheds in the life of a nation. In international law, the flag is, together with the coat of arms, a stamp of state unity and sovereignty. In the second half of the 19th century Croatia developed as a civil state within the Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The articles of the Hungaro-Croatian Agreement from 1868 defined the territorial integrity, special status and autonomy of Croatia in that multinational union. The articles for the first time created the legal basis for the definition of the national coat of arms and the flag of the Kingdom of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia. The first regulations concerning their appearance and use were adopted during the tenure of Ivan Mažuranić (1873-1880) as Ban. These facts are illustrated by the flags that are, because of their symbolism, considered to be the oldest examples of Croatian state flags; in a certain way they draw on their precursor — Jelačić's



Figure 39 Croatian tricolour with the coat of arms of the Triune Kingdom.



*Figure 40 Croatian flag with the coat of arms of the Triune Kingdom
— Croatian state symbol.*

Banal flag from 1848. One of these flags is the Croatian flag with the coat of arms of the Triune Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia (inventory no. 11703) (Fig. 39). This is a rectangular Croatian tricolour decorated with crowned coat of arms of the Triune Kingdom that does not completely correspond to the coat of arms as required by law – that is to say that the crown above the coat of arms is not the Crown of St. Stephen. The second flag is also a Croatian tricolour (inventory no. 32451) (Fig. 40) with the coat of arms of the Triune Kingdom. This second flag is also perpendicular, very large (435x203 cm), and only partly contains the elements of Croatian state symbols as required by the regulations of the Croatian Regional Government – the coat of arms is crowned by the Crown of St. Stephen. However, the national colours red, white and blue are not placed horizontally, while the coat of arms is decorated with an oak and laurel branch tied with the Croatian tricolour.

From the second half of the 19th century there was an increase in the number of flags. Their increase was the result of the development of civil society and the forms of its activities, the formation of political parties and civil associations, as well as the emergence of new ideologies and movements that marked the history of the modern age. This is borne out by examples of flags from our Collection, like the flags of the Croatian Popular Peasants' Party and the flags of parties that adopted a more radical national ideology. This group of flags also includes those of various societies, like societies of the *Hrvatski sokol* (Croatian Falcon), the *Družba braće hrvatskog zmaja* (Brotherhood of the Croatian Dragon), *Hrvatskog junaka* (Croatian Hero), and Masonic organisations.

Political party flags

Among flags of this type, certainly the most interesting is the flag of the Croatian Popular Peasants' Party (inventory no. 11866) (Fig. 41) made in the twenties of the 20th century in the area around Sisak. The flag (because of the embroidery, colour and decorative motifs) represents an example of village folk craft from the region along the river Sava. It is a Croatian tricolour, rectangular in form and rather large (375x117 cm) with triangular endings, decorated with woollen tassels. The flag is richly decorated on both sides with vertically embroidered party symbols and inscription. Along the red field there is an embroidered motif of vines with blue grapes, while the blue field has embroidered brambles. In the white field there is a vertical inscription embroidered in yellow thread GORIČICA and the coat of arms of the Triune Kingdom, crowned by a royal crown. Underneath the coat of arms there is the party motto, also embroidered with yellow thread: BUDIMO SVOJI/SVAKI NA SVOM/BRANIMO SLOŽNO/HRVATSKI DOM (Be our own masters, to each his own, let us be united and defend our Croatian home). Under these lines are party symbols – a sheaf of wheat tied with a tricolour ribbon between two sickles and a plough. At the end of the white field there is an embroidered bouquet of flowers. The flag was the symbol of the party that was led by Antun and Stjepan Radić and played a significant part in the political and national integration of Croats between the two world wars.

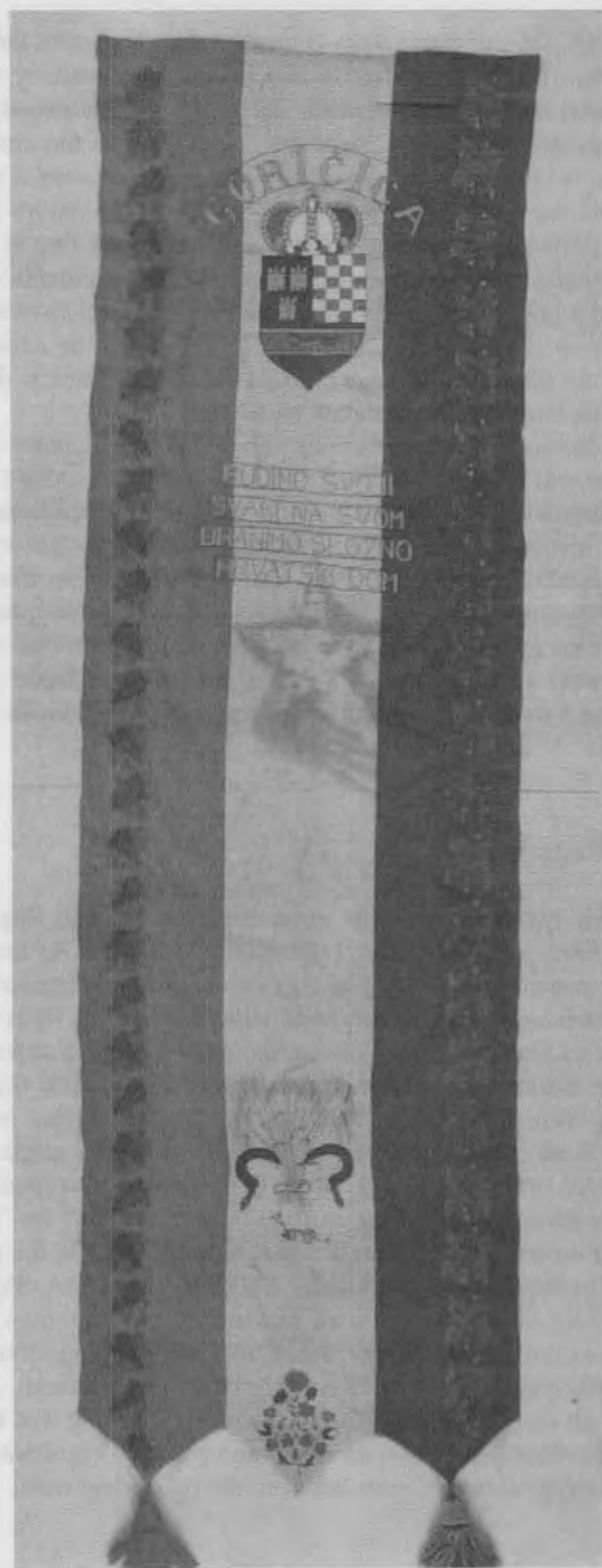


Figure 41 Flag of the Croatian Popular Peasants' Party.

Flags of Sokol societies

The flags of *Sokol* societies that appeared in the first decades of the 20th century represent the second most numerous group in our museum collection. With this group we shall conclude the presentation of historical flags at the Croatian History Museum. *Sokol* societies were societies or clubs promoting physical exercises that emerged from the second half of the 19th century in Slav lands of the Habsburg Monarchy. They were named after the falcon, which is traditionally seen as a symbol of courage, audacity, agility and the quest for freedom. The first *Sokol* society in Croatia was founded as *Hrvatski sokol* (Croatian Falcon) in 1874 in Zagreb. These societies placed their emphasis on physical education and enlightenment, as well as on the preservation of the Croatian national sentiment.

The *Sokol* flags are Croatian tricolours, in most cases made from silk and decorated with embroidered society symbols (monogram-emblem, the figure of a falcon) and the historical Croatian coat of arms, and sometimes also had the coat of arms and name of the town and the name of the society; they were the work of Croatian embroiderers. The staff was sometimes carved, channelled and ended in a falcon-shaped finial. *Sokol* flags made in the 1930s were frequently fixed to the staff using gilt brass pins with the names of other societies, the names of sponsors and other dignitaries who contributed to the prosperity of that particular society. These flags are the work of home embroiderers, and some of them represent true works of art.

Here we see the flag of the Croatian *Sokol* from Đakovo (Figs. 42-43). Obverse: the centre of the field has the embroidered falcon monogram surrounded by rich decorations. Above that is the *Sokol* greeting *Zdravo*, and underneath it the years 1906-1926. The reverse: in the centre of the white field is an embroidered depiction of a falcon in flight with weights and gilt-embroidered inscription: *Hrvatski sokol Djakovo*. The second example is the flag of the Croatian Falcon from Samobor (Figs. 44-45); the obverse is decorated with the town's coat of arms and inscription *Hrvatski sokol Samobor*; the reverse has an embroidered falcon monogram. A third example of the combination of symbols is provided by the flag of the Croatian Falcon from Ogulin (Figs. 46-47). The obverse of the flag has an embroidered depiction of the Croatian Falcon movement in the middle of the white field: a falcon with spread wings over the historical Croatian coat of arms. Above the coat of arms there is the inscription *Hrvatski sokol*, and underneath it, in the blue field, the name of the town – *OGULIN*. The centre of the reverse has the falcon monogram symbol with the years 1906 (the year the society was founded) and 1926 (the anniversary of the founding). Along with the majority of the *Sokol* flags, their streamers have also been preserved; they were mainly in the colours of the Croatian tricolour (red, white and blue) with embroidered inscriptions (name of the sponsor, of the leaders and the *Sokol* greeting) and the date of the event.

Conclusion

Flags are symbols that consist of a selection and distribution of colour, depictions and frequently inscriptions that have the meaning of mottoes. On the basis of the described types of flag we can conclude that flags from the 17th century onwards were made



Figure 42 Flag of the Croatian Sokol from Đakovo, obverse.



Figure 43 Flag of the Croatian Sokol from Đakovo, reverse.



Figure 44 Flag of the Croatian Sokol from Samobor, obverse.



Figure 45 Flag of the Croatian Sokol from Samobor, reverse.



Figure 46 Flag of the Croatian Sokol from Ogulin, obverse.



Figure 47 Flag of the Croatian Sokol from Ogulin, reverse.

The Collection of Flags and Streamers at the Croatian History Museum

from various type of silk and decorated with heraldic symbols and mottoes, iconographic depictions of patron saints and floral motifs. Decorations were painted or embroidered, and embroidery was primarily used for cavalry flags. From the time of Maria Theresa, and especially her heir Charles VI, the appearance of flags was subject to regulations implemented in line with the organisation of the army.

The heraldic symbols of the Austrian Empire or the Habsburg Monarchy, the Hungarian Kingdom and the kingdoms of Croatia were present on military flags, state flags and *Banal* flags in various combinations.

The most frequent of these symbols was the black double-headed eagle with spread wings with nimbuses and with a shield on its chest with general symbols of royal authority and honour: initially with a crown, sword and sceptre, and later on also with the imperial orb. The shield on its breast holds either the dynastic coat of arms or the monarch initials, or a combination of coat of arms and initials surrounded by Austrian military decorations. The Hungarian Kingdom is symbolised by the depictions of the Hungarian coat of arms – the old and the new with the Crown of St. Stephen. Croatian individuality is especially pronounced on *Banal* and coronation flags through the use of the historical coats of arms of the Kingdoms of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia. The figure of the Mother of God became a symbol of flags with a military character and use from the time of Ferdinand II (1619-1637). Apart from this exceptionally widespread iconographic symbol on flags from the region of the Kingdom of Hungary and Croatia there is also the figure of St. Stephen and St. Ladislav.

Along with these heraldic and iconographic devices we saw that flags had decorative elements – laurel, oak and palm branches. These were symbols and synonyms of immortality, strength and eternity since antiquity.

And so we can conclude that the presented flags are authentic material historical sources that bear witness, in heraldic form, to the existence of Croatia and the Croatian national idea within the Habsburg Monarchy and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Abbreviations

MRNH Muzej revolucije naroda Hrvatske
(Museum of the Revolution of the People of Croatia).

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About the author



Jelena Borošak-Marijanović has a BA in history and archaeology and is a museum advisor and head of the Collection of Flags and the Collection of Uniforms at the Croatian History Museum in Zagreb (Croatia). She was born on May 14th 1951. She gained her elementary and secondary education in Križevci (Croatia). At the Faculty of Arts of the University of Zagreb she studied history and archaeology, graduating in 1975. From 1976 she has worked at the Croatian History Museum in Zagreb as a curator. For more than 10 years she has been involved with the museological and historical treatment of the Collection of Flags. She is also involved in researching archival sources and literature dealing with themes from Croatian history from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, as well as with the history of military uniforms. She has been the author and associate in preparing numerous cultural and historical museum exhibitions and catalogues dealing with themes from national history from the 19th and 20th centuries that were presented in Croatia and abroad (Austria, Hungary) over the past 20 years. In November 2000 she took part at the symposium in Budapest that was organised on the occasion of the thousandth anniversary of the Hungarian Kingdom with the paper: "Symbols of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Hungarian Kingdom on flags in the collection of the Croatian History Museum". At the 1st Congress of Croatian Historians held in Zagreb in December of 1999, she read the paper "Nations and national symbols: the influence of the Croatian national idea on the symbolism of flags in the 19th century". In 1996 the Croatian History Museum published her catalogue of the Collection of Flags under the title *Flags through the Centuries*.

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