

Bosnia-Hercegovina

The origin of the arms with the argent between 6 fleur-de-lys, which is now on the flag of the republic of Bosnia-Hercegovina, has long puzzled me, but they are in fact the arms of the Kotromanic family, which ruled Bosnia in the 14th and 15th centuries. Other arms have also been attributed to Bosnia in the 19th century.

I finally thought of a way to get at this question of the origin of the current Bosnian flag: numismatics, of course. I found a book by one Ivan Rengjeo, *Corpus der mittel-alterlichen Mnnzen von Kroatien, Slavonien, Dalmatien und Bosnien*, Graz, 1959, which is as exhaustive as you can get on the topic (coins from those regions, that is). I have also consulted an article by Pavao Andelic on Medieval Seals of Bosnia-Hercegovina, in the monograph series of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia-Hercegovina (Sarajevo, 1970), but it is in Serbo-Croat, so I can only look at the (numerous) illustrations. What follows is a historical/heraldic account, pieced together from these sources, and a few encyclopedias. Bosnia was dominated alternatively by Serbia and, from the 12th c. onward, by Croatia (in personal union with Hungary) until the early 14th c. Typically, the king of Hungary and Croatia appointed bans, or local governors; and, in typical medieval fashion, these bans took advantage of any weakness of the central monarchy to carve out territories for themselves.

In the early 14th c., the ban of Croatia was Pavao (Paul) Subic of Brebir or Breberio (a town in Dalmatia which was given to the family in 1222): his father and grandfather were counts of Trau or Trogir, his cousins were counts of Spalato or Split. This powerful man titles himself ban of Croatia and dominus Bosniae, and appoints his brother Mladen I Subic (1302-04) and later his eldest son Mladen II (1312-14) as ban of Bosnia. His second son Georg was count of Trau and Split, his third son Pavao was count of Trau. By the third generation, however, the family had lost its power. This first dynasty of bans issued byzantine-style coins, with no heraldry. Their seals, however, show the Subic arms: an eagle wing displayed, and 5 flowers with stems as crest (misread by Siebmacher as ostrich-feathers). The style of the arms is very German, with the shield tilted to the left, a German helm, lambrequins, and a crest. There are no tinctures, but a junior branch issued from Pavao count of Trau, the Subic de Zrin, bore Gules, two wings sable (an interesting violation of the so-called tincture rule).

Pavao Subic was forced to cede control of Southern Bosnia to Stjepan Kotromanic (died 1353); and, in 1314, Mladen II ceded the banate of Bosnia to him. This established the Kotromanic dynasty in Bosnia. Stjepan styles himself *dei gratia Bosniae banus*, which asserts a fair measure of independence. Stjepan's brother married Helena, daughter of Mladen II Subic, and his son Stjepan Tvrtko (1353-91) succeeded Stjepan. In 1377, Tvrtko assumed the title of King of Racia and Bosnia. His seals show the following arms: a bend between six fleurs-de-lys, the helm is a hop-flower on a long stem issuant from an open crown of fleurs-de-lys. The Kotromanic were close to the Hungarian kings, and Stjepan's daughter Elisabeth married Louis I of Hungary (reigned 1342-82). Tvrtko I was succeeded by Stjepan Dabisa (1391-98) and Stjepan Ostoja (1398-1404, 1409-18). The latter's seal shows different

arms, namely an open crown of fleurs-de-lys and the same helm and crest as before. Tvrtko's son Tvrtko II (1404-09, 1421-43) used a seal similar to his father's, with the arms of the Kotromanic family itself, which are the bend between 6 fleur-de-lys, a crowned helm with the same crest.

New coins are issued starting in 1436, markedly Western in style, which display a full-blown achievement: an escutcheon bearing the letter T, crowned with an open crown of fleur-de-lys. The helm is crowned and the crest is a hop-flower on a long stem. The letter T seems to stand for the name of the king. Later, around 1450, impressive new gold coins show the Kotromanic arms. The last kings are Stjepan Tomas Kotromanic (1444-61) and Stjepan Tomasevic Kotromanic (1461-63). The kingdom disappears in 1463 when he is killed by the Turks. In the southern region called Hum or Chelm, a local ban called Stjepan Vukcic Kosaca (died 1466) had proclaimed himself duke or herceg in 1448, and is recognized by the Holy Roman Empire as duke of Saint-Abbas or Saint-Sava in some texts (whence the name Hercegovina for that area). Siebmacher says that the family was descended from the Byzantine Comnenos. The Vukcic family arms appear on the seal of Stjepan Vukcic, and his successors Vladislav Hercegovic (died 1489), Vlatko Hercegovic (died 1489) and Stjepan Hercegovic (died 1517). namely Gules, three bends argent, crest: a lion issuant holding in its two paws a banner gules with a double cross argent (the Hungarian state banner, according to Siebmacher). The same arms appear on coins issued by a self-proclaimed duke of Split in the early 15th c., namely on a bend between two crosses, three fleur-de-lys bendwise. The remaining question is: where did the fleur-de-lys in the Kotromanic (and the Vukcic) arms come from? One distinct possibility is Byzantium, whose style the first Bosnian coins imitate closely. Byzantine emperors started using the fleur-de-lys on their coinage soon after the creation of the empire of Nicaea, after the fall of Constantinople in 1204.

But more realistically, the connection would be with the Hungarian dynastic struggle which broke out in 1302 with the end of the Arpad dynasty. The kings of Naples claimed the throne, and it was during the struggle that, by pledging allegiance to one side and to the other, the Bosnian bans managed to carve out their independent fief. The Bosnian dynasty became quite close to the Angevins, and the daughter of Stjepan, king of Bosnia, married Louis I, king of Hungary. The kings of Naples were the Anjou family, a junior branch of the French royal family, and bore France differenced with a label gules. I can well imagine the Kotromanic adopting, or being granted, fleur-de-lys on their coat of arms as reward for taking the Angevin side. For the moment, Bosnian history books are hard to come by, so I can't easily confirm my hunch. For some reason, these arms were forgotten after the 16th century. A 18th c. French genealogy of the Angevin kings of Hungary blazons the arms of Louis' wife as: Or, issuing from the sinister flank an arm embowed proper, vested Gules, holding a sabre Argent. These are also the arms attributed by the Austrians to Bosnia-Hercegovina after it was annexed from Turkey in 1908. However, a number of 19th century encyclopedias give yet another coat of arms (for example, the French Larousse), namely: Gules, a crescent Argent beneath an 8-pointed star of the same. The crown over the shield is an Eastern crown, i.e. with "spikes". These arms recall the old symbol of Croatia on its early coinage. They are also the arms

attributed to the old kingdoms of Illyria and Bosnia in Siebmacher. There is some evidence for a medieval use of the shield with the arm holding a saber. William Miller, in *Essays on the Latin Orient* (Cambridge, 1921, p.510) describes the arms displayed in Rome on the tomb of Catherine (died 1478), daughter of Stjepan Vukcic duke of Saint-Abbas, and married in 1446 to Stjepan Tomas Kotromanic, last king of Bosnia (d. 1461): his description is unfortunately imprecise, but he mentions two horsemen (which he says is the Kotromanic emblem) and a "mailed arm with a sword in the center" (which he says represents Primorje, or the Coastland).

Word Count: 1249