

Notes on the Image of Croatia and the Croats with the Romanians from Transylvania (1867-1914)*

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Abstract: *Notes on the Image of Croatia and the Croats with the Romanians from Transylvania (1867-1914).* The present study proposes to succinctly analyze the means of building an image of Croatia and Croats by the Romanians in Transylvania during the dualist period. Even though they were citizens of the same state, Croats rose, within Romanian press, and later in historical writings, a lot less interest than other nations in the Empire. This was both due to the limited direct interaction between the two nations, as well as the different political situation after 1867. Together with general geographical descriptions, the field of politics, social-cultural initiatives and the image of a people with martial attributes represented the main coordinates of the imagological construction within the Romanian press and school textbooks. The image is a generally positive one, showing even a slight feeling of inferiority from the Romanians' side, generated, most probably, by the Croats' success in preserving their historical autonomy, with all the social and cultural consequences deriving from it. Equality between the two nations is seen only in the military field, but here, too, with specific imagological nuances.

Keywords: Croatia, Croats, 19th century, imagology, Romanians, Transylvania

Rezumat: *Note cu privire la imaginea Croației și a croaților la românii din Transilvania (1867-1914).* Studiul își propune să analizeze succint modalitatea de construcție a imaginii Croației și a croaților la românii din Transilvania în perioada dualistă. Deși cetățeni ai aceluiași stat, croații au suscitât în mediile românești, și ulterior în scrisul istoric, mult mai puțin interes decât alte națiuni din Imperiu. Acest fapt se datorează atât interacțiunii directe limitate dintre cele două corpuri etnice, cât și situației politice diferite de după 1867. Alături de descrierile geografice generale, domeniul politicii, inițiativele social-culturale și imaginea de popor cu atribute marțiale au reprezentat principalele coordonate ale construcției imagologice în presa și manualele școlare românești. Imaginea este una în general pozitivă, lăsând să se întrevadă chiar un ușor sentiment de inferioritate al românilor, generat, cel mai probabil, de succesul croaților în a-și prezerva autonomia istorică, cu toate consecințele sociale și culturale rezultate din aceasta. Egalitatea între cele două națiuni este reclamată doar în domeniul militar, însă și aici cu nuanțe și tușe imagologice specifice.

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Cuvinte-cheie: Croația, croați, secolul al XIX-lea, imagologie, români, Transilvania

The image of Croatia and Croats among the Romanians in Transylvania did not benefit from the same attention, within autochthonous imagology works, as other ethnic images.¹ The main reason probably pertains to a more reduced interest for this geographical space and its inhabitants within sources of that time, a situation further reflected by historical research. Within the images of alterity circulated by Romanian intellectuals in the second half of the 19th century, the Croats seem to more difficultly find their place. Even though they were citizens of the same state, the geographical distance, belonging to distinct confessional structures, but most of all the differences in historical tradition and political situation after 1867 rendered the interactions between Romanians and Croats, with effects within the space of ethnical imaging, to punctually concern only a small and well circumscribed number of aspects.

Since the amplitude of the theme is inversely proportional to the richness of previous research, also taking into consideration the situation of primary sources, the present study will exclusively focus on the image of the Croats as it appears in the Romanian journalistic discourse and school textbooks of the time. This is one of the main reasons why, even from the title, it iterates the status of extensive reading notes, ordered in such a way as to offer a point of reference for future research works.

On emitters and receivers

Before diving into the actual subject of the paper, a few words would be welcome on those building (journalists and school textbooks authors) and on the other ones receiving the discourse (the general public). In

¹ See, for example, the main scientific works referring to ethnic images exterior to the Transylvanian space, among Romanians from Transylvania: Sorin Mitu, *Imagini europene și mentalități românești din Transilvania la începutul epocii moderne* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000), p. 10-193; Gheorghe Lascu, *Imaginea Franței la românii din Transilvania până în anul 1918* (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2000); Corneliu Crăciun, *Imaginea Europei în revista Familia (1865-1906)* (Oradea: Editura Muzeului Țării Crișurilor, 2005); Luminița Ignat-Coman, *Imagine de sine la românii ardeleni în perioada dualistă* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2009), pp. 301-307; Elena-Andreea Trif-Boia, *Imaginea celuilalt în cultura românească din Transilvania. Secolul al XIX-lea* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012).

what regards the former, they were, during that time, educated people, most of them involved or preparing to get involved in national politics. Among the editors of the Romanian newspapers one can find members of the board of the Romanian National Party, members of the Hungarian Parliament, University Professors, members of the Romanian Academy, but also the top Romanian professional journalists from Transylvania and Hungary. It is true, due to the lack of in-depth research, little is known about the inner editorial processes, about information networks and the way in which correspondence and news were selected for publishing, but even so it would not be wrong to say that the people building the image of Croatia and Croats among fellow Romanians were members of the highest strata of the Romanian society of the time.

It is worth mentioning at this point that not all the articles in the Romanian newspapers were written by Romanians. Where texts from foreign authors have been borrowed, we have explicitly highlighted this situation, without however considering it as a methodological hindrance. Even if the original image was not depicted by Romanians, its non-critical borrowing and re-projection point out towards full acceptance. Furthermore, in those cases in which the original source was not mentioned, there is a high chance the information originally came from Hungarian or German regional newspapers, thus there is little first-hand information the historian can rely on.

Things tend to get more complicated when focusing on those receiving the image. For most of the Romanians in Transylvania and Hungary, Croatia remained a relatively distant land, and most probably some of them knew nothing more about it than the fact that Croats existed among the other peoples of the Monarchy and that some of them were constantly involved in soldierly activities due to the fact that a large part of the country's territory was integrated into the former military border region.² The image of Croatia, as depicted in the Romanian school textbooks, does not stand out by means of many specificities. Imagology information comprised in school textbooks is extremely low, with a priority on listing and describing the main geographical landmarks (land forms, hydrology, climate, settlements). Should we synthesize the information a Romanian pupil accumulated

² Ioan Rus, *Icoana pământului sau carte de geografie*, tom II (Blaj: Tipografia Seminarului, 1842), pp. 66-67, 83-87. The Latin transliteration of the original Cyrillic text: *Ibid.* (Baia Mare: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2011). After the dissolution of the military border area, references to it also disappear from school textbooks, although its remembrance must have been perpetuated throughout the following decades.

(ideally) regarding the Croatian space, out of school textbooks, we could state that this space was formed out of two provinces, situated in the South of Hungary, with a large coastline towards the Adriatic Sea, with mixed landforms (mountainous and barren towards the West, but plain, partly swampy, to the East) and with a temperate climate, but harsh in the Western regions. Regarding the inhabitants, Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs are mentioned, and at the coastline, Italians.³ Out of the few ethnical stereotypes we could find in the school textbooks, that of *warrior men of inferior culture*⁴ from the region of the Dalmatian coastline is consonant with the image of Croats and Serbs in Croatia-Slavonia as a *diligent and brave people, the most educated* (among Slavs in the South) *and their literature develops beautifully*.⁵

People from the Western and South-Western regions of today's Romania (mainly the Banat region) were certainly familiar with Croats and probably made clear differentiations between Serbs and Croats, primarily because they got in touch with compact communities of both ethnicities. But in what regards the ones from Transylvania, where such communities were few and small in numbers, the only way they got to know about Croatia and Croats was through either Geography textbooks or newspapers. So there is a high chance that many Romanian peasants would carry throughout their entire life, in their vocabulary, the ethnicon 'Croat' without actually having the possibility to relate it to anything of substance, or to build the slightest geographical projection of the land inhabited by these people. There is an equally high chance the only Croat many Romanian peasants from Transylvania would have seen during their entire life was the one pictured in the satirical reviews of the time.⁶

³ Nicolau Pop, *Geografia Ungariei și elemente din geografia generală pentru școlile populare* (Brașov: Tipografia Alexi, 1882), pp. 29-30; Alexandru Márki, *Geografie pentru școlile civile și superioare de fete pe baza planului de învățământ din 1887, după edițiunea V, în românește de I. Popovici* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1900), pp. 52-57; Vasile Goldiș, *Geografia pentru școlile populare întocmită pe baza planului ministerial de învățământ. Partea primă (pentru clasele III și IV)* (Brașov: Editura Librăriei Circu, 1900), p. 62-64; Id., *Geografia pentru școlile populare întocmită pe baza planului ministerial de învățământ. Partea a doua (pentru clasele V și VI)* (Brassó: Editura Librăriei Ciurcu, 1900), p. 15.

⁴ Goldiș 1900 (III și IV), p. 64; Goldiș 1900 (V și VI), p. 15.

⁵ Márki 1900, p. 55.

⁶ *Gura Satului*, XI, 1871, 17, 25 April/7 May, p. 4; Id., XII, 1873, 43, 23 October/4 November, p. 2-3.

The peoples of Croatia

From a demographical and ethnic ('racial') point of view there was little differentiation made by the Romanian press between the Serbs and the Croats living in 19th century Hungary. They were perceived as Southern Slavs, and statistical figures were always offered summed up for the two nations. The country itself was nominated in the textbooks by its official name: Croatia-Slavonia. Furthermore, the imagined geographies, of Western origin, of a post-Imperial future were placing Croatia-Slavonia and a large part of Bosnia under the control of the Kingdom of Serbia, 20 years before this political reorganization actually took place.⁷

This reduction to the general Slavic character represents, technically, a form of essentialization whose inner entanglement, subtracting and overwriting mechanism are comparable, *mutatis mutandis*, with the ones described by Edward Said for Orientalism.⁸ The two nations have been merged, from a demographical perspective, into a single Slavic corpus. Even the figures of military statistics presented by the Romanian newspapers kept them together.⁹ Of course, the press was only reproducing statistics borrowed from other sources (both official and unofficial), thus projecting rather than building an image in this regard. Effects among the readers remained however unchanged by this authorship issue. This was in fact only the lowest step of the ladder on top of which Austria-Hungary was imagologically divided between four main 'races': Germans, Hungarians, Slavs and Latins, with the Romanian press constantly rising awareness towards the imminent danger of the overwhelming growth of Slavic populations and their allegiance towards the Russian Empire.

If from a 'racial' perspective the Croats were perceived as Southern Slavs, being regarded somewhat similar to the Serbs, from a denominational point of view the difference between these two nations was always underlined. Croats were Catholics, this being reminded constantly, while Serbs were Orthodox.¹⁰ Just as the Republic of Venice in the late 18th century was making distinctions among the populations in Dalmatia based rather on denomination than ethnicity,¹¹ the Romanian press, a century later, acknowledged the confessional division

⁷ *Bunul Econom*, II, 1901, 45, 3/16 November, p. 7. Information originating in the newspaper *Arena* from Verona, spread by French newspapers from Paris.

⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York etc.: First Vintage Books, 1978), p. 239-241.

⁹ *Bunul Econom*, II, 1901, 12, 17/30 March, p. 12.

¹⁰ *Albina Carpaților*, I, 1877, 2, 25 August, p. 24.

¹¹ Larry Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs. The Discovery of Dalmatia in the Age of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 11.

while stressing the 'racial' unity. But the place of the Croats in this matter seems to be somewhere in between, as their rising nationalist feelings are presented as surpassing the confessional ones even among the clergy: *Croatian Catholic priests are largely different from the ones from the West. They are, just as the lower Hungarian clergy, more devoted to their nationality than to Rome. They behave proudly and independently [...] they have a most martial appearance [...] They have asked for, and the Gathering of 1848 also asked for them the right to use vernacular in church service and to get married. They see alongside them the Greek-Uniate priests, also servants of Rome, who have children and wives like in the early church, and do not understand why they are not allowed to do the same.*¹² Even if the description above does not belong to a Romanian, its translation and publication by two main Romanian newspapers of the time, on both sides of the Carpathians, adds its content to the Romanian imaginary on Croats.

Despite the shared belonging to the Slavic race, there were cases in which differences between Serbs and Croats were clearly emphasized, especially when there was a political stake involved. One such example was the violent protests of 1902 against the requests of the Serbs from the northern Croatian counties to have these administrative units merged with Hungary.¹³

Alongside the Slavic inhabitants of Croatia, the Romanian newspapers, unlike the textbooks, constantly mentioned the presence of the Vlach populations, close relatives of the Romanians.¹⁴ The recovery process of the 'brothers' Vlachi represents a perfectly normal feature of the late romanticism and early liberal-nationalism which characterized both the cultural-scientific life and the political visions of the Romanians during the second half of the 19th century. Articles about them are being signed by important cultural personalities of the time (Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, Grigore Silași) and references to these populations are usually entangled with alarms regarding the process of acculturation and the loss of their ethnic specificity. Such alarms, however, do not point

¹² *Federatiunea*, I, 1868, 130, 4/16 September, p. 513 (article by Émile de Laveleye in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, translated for *Românul* by D.P. Vioreanu): *Preoții catolici diferă mult de ai Occidentului. Ei sunt, ca clerul inferior ungar, mai devotați naționalității lor decât Romei. Au apucături independente și mândre [...] au un aer foarte marțial [...] Au cerut și adunarea din 1848 a reclamat și ea pentru dânsii autorizarea de a face liturghia în limba vulgară și a se căsători. Ei văd lângă dânsii pe colegii lor greci-uniți, supuși și ei Romei, având femei și copii ca în timpurile primitive ale bisericii și nu înțeleg pentru ce să nu poată face și ei asemenea.*

¹³ *Bunul Econom*, III, 1902, 35, 6 September, p. 35; Id., 37, 21 September, p. 2; Id., 40, 12 October, p. 3.

¹⁴ See also Crăciun 2005, p. 113-116.

towards forced denationalization, but mainly towards an inexorable and lengthy process of acculturation in which time and geographical distance from the main national body were the main adversaries of these ethnic enclaves: *As we know, in Serbia, and even in Croatia, there are Romanians which, sadly, we know little about: what they do and how they live these poor souls – wouldn't it be better if at least from Serbia a Romanian would have been called into that society?* (the Romanian Academy)¹⁵

Croats and Politics

Politics was the field to generate most of the Romanian press's texts on Croatia and Croats, especially after 1865. At the same time, this large quantity of references hosts rather poor and highly stereotypic information, consisting usually in a depiction of recent political events and developments accompanied, implicitly or explicitly, by anti-Hungarian remarks.

In what regards the position of the Croats towards the 1867 Compromise, the interest of the Romanian press is easily understandable. It was clear for everyone that, even before the 1866 war, the union of Transylvania and Hungary was sealed. The special situation of Croatia, however, the debates around it and the Croatian-Hungarian Compromise represented, for the Romanians, an example, up to a point a hope, and after that point a reason for frustration and for those in Hungary to criticize the ones in Transylvania for not opposing harder the dualist tendencies. Between 1866 and 1868 news about Croatia appeared in the Romanian newspapers every second or third issue, due mainly to the political situation of the province. These news, however, remain poor in descriptive imagology elements, so that rather the selection of events and the general attitude of the editor are the ones that offer clues about the perception of Romanians over this ethnical group.

Generally, Croats were characterized as more politically active than Romanians,¹⁶ and the pact of 1868 remained a landmark and desideratum for Transylvania. Even since March 8th 1867, Iosif Hodoș, member of the Hungarian Parliament, demanded the situation of the intra-Carpathian Principality to be resolved through negotiations between two parliamentary delegations (from Hungary and Transylvania), just like in the case of Croatia, since Transylvania would

¹⁵ *Albina*, I, 1866, 17, 15/27 May, p. 2: *Precum știm în Serbia, ba și în Croația, sunt români despre care voi! puține știm: ce mai fac și cum trăiesc săracii – apoi n-ar fi fost bine ca cel puțin și din Serbia să fi chemat vreun român la acea societate.*

¹⁶ *Amicul Școalei*, V, 1864, 9, 2 May, p. 96.

have at least just as many rights as the latter.¹⁷ The same attitude continued after the political situation of the two provinces became completely different: *An intimate nex rules between the hardships of Croatia and Transylvania. The Croatian people, and the Transylvanian one, meaning Romanian, equally fight for their national freedom and public right freedom. Thus, Croatia and Transylvania are natural allies even through their stance towards the Empire.*¹⁸

The more favorable political deal negotiated by the Croats was viewed by Romanians in Transylvania as a defeat, and a reason to once again blame the discord and lack of unitary vision that reigned within the national movement: *Even today, when Croats start receiving compliments and, generally, the friendliest promises, they are fearful and reserved; loyal patriots that they are, they gladly incline towards a truce, but a formal one, with all involved and from the grounds, on positive bases and guarantees: they care for the national program and honor. Seeing this, we cannot help from being happy for the Croats and sad for the Romanians! Where would our cause have been today should the great and many selfish men have not stood between us, those who left the camp of national fighters to pursue their own private interests, and then supported the plans and system that were contrary to our interests and development as Romanians?*¹⁹

From this point of view, Croats were, for Romanians, throughout the entire dualist period, a permanent landmark in the construction of their own political image, as well as the embodiment of the success in political relations with the Hungarians. The explanation of this success did not pertain to the different historical, judicial or demographic realities that were creating the distance between Transylvania and Croatia, instead it was regarded as being a result of the firmer attitude and character of the Croats: *Croats have been and are Croats,*

¹⁷ *Albina*, II, 1867, 25, 1/13 March, p. 3.

¹⁸ *Federatiunea*, III, 1870, 48-380, 22 May/3 June, p. 187: *Între năzuințele Croației și ale Transilvaniei domnește un nex intim. Poporul croat și transilvean, respectiv român, luptă în mod egal pentru libertatea sa națională și de drept public. Drept ce Croația și Transilvania sunt aliați naturali chiar prin pozițiunea lor față de Imperiu.*

¹⁹ *Albina*, VII, 1873, 61, 12/24 August, p. 1: *Chiar astăzi, când croaților încep a se face complimente și în generalitate cele mai amicabile promisiuni ei sunt caviți (precauți, n.a.) și rezervați; ca patrioți loiali ce sunt se declară plecați bucuroși la împăcare, dar la împăcare formală, cu toții și din temei, pe baze și garanții pozitive: ei țin la programul și onoarea națională. Când vedem întâmplându-se acestea nu putem a nu ne bucura pentru croați și a nu ne întrista pentru români! Unde sta astăzi cauza noastră dacă între noi nu se găseau egoiștii cei mulți și mari, care pentru interesul lor particular se despărțiră de tabăra luptătorilor naționali și se făcură sprijinitorii sistemului și planurilor contrare interesurilor și dezvoltării noastre ca români?*

*and today they are more national than ever in defending and strengthening the autonomy of Croatia and the freedom of the Croat nation.*²⁰

The comparison did not stop at the boundaries of the former historical provinces in the new Dualist Hungary and at the determination proven during national political fights, but also reverberated towards the relation between church and politics. Among the most important Croatian personalities, Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer represents the main character emphasized by the Romanian press during the second half of the 19th century, most probably because of his strong national political involvement, a feature lacking in almost all Romanian hierarchs of the period.²¹ His image of a national fighter – both politically and on a social and cultural plan – was constantly present in the Romanian press, determining Romanian Greek-Catholic periodicals at the end of the century to reiterate the theme of the importance of bishops' involvement in the national political fight: *Croats, a handful of people, but all Catholics, fought for independence and autonomy, which would of course also please the aspirations of Romanians in Transylvania and Hungary, should they obtain it for themselves. In the Croats' fight for their rights, we always see, in the foreground, the Catholic clerics and bishops.*²²

The social and cultural comparison

The more favorable political deal struck by Croatia in 1868 seems to have generated among Romanians not only frustration, but also an inferiority complex which reverberates from politics towards the field of societal and cultural accomplishments.²³ In this regard, the Croats were almost always presented as the more advanced nation. Socially, they were being associated with a higher share of nobility, and with a wider involvement of this noble class into the everyday life and civil society. Even leaving aside nobility agency, the fact that in Croatia women had the right to be

²⁰ *Federatiunea*, V, 1872, 66-666, 17/29 June, p. 2: *Croații au fost și sunt croați, și astăzi mai naționali ca oricând altă dată întru apărarea și întărirea autonomiei Croației și a libertății națiunii croate.*

²¹ *Biserica și Școala*, XXIX, 1905, 14, 3/16 April, p. 115.

²² *Unirea*, VI, 1896, 28, 11 July, p. 222: *Croații, o mână de oameni, însă toți catolici, și-au eluat o independență și o autonomie, care desigur ar mulțumi și aspirațiunile românilor din Transilvania și Ungaria, când ar putea-o dobândi și pentru sine. În lupta pentru drepturile croaților totdeauna vedem figurând pe primul plan clerul și arhierii catolici.*

²³ It should be noted that this inferiority complex in relation with the Croats represents only a small, particular, aspect of the negative side of Romanians' self-image. For an overview of the latter see S. Mitu, *Geneza identității naționale la românii ardeleni* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997), p. 85-186, especially p. 103-110, 131-144 for issues related to cultural backwardness and lack of political enthusiasm.

elected into local representative organisms was being highlighted by the Romanians press as a feature placing them among the most advanced nations of the continent.²⁴

From a cultural point of view, money collections for the University and the cultural activities in general were constantly praised by the Romanian press, which seized the moment and highlighted, by comparison, the less developed state of the Romanians in similar issues, despite the clear demographic advantage: *a handful of Croats accomplishes wonders. And us, millions of Romanians?*²⁵ The same stereotype can be identified almost 50 years later, during the First World War, when the Romanian Greek-Catholic press lamented on the Romanian cultural institutions being unable to provide the soldiers with enough books: *Our views are so narrow that we are ashamed to compare with other people, let us just say the Croats, which are by no means more numerous than us, the Unites.*²⁶

The issue of the University, at its turn, was one of the Romanians' greatest set-backs. Despite the idea of a Romanian institution of higher education being brought up immediately after the 1848-49 revolution, in the end Romanians had to settle with two chairs of Romanian Language and Literature, one at the University in Budapest and the other in Kolozsvár/Cluj.²⁷ In this regard, news about the projected University in Zagreb were constantly present in the newspapers before 1874, Bishop Strossmayer's initiatives were being highly emphasized,²⁸ and the inauguration of the new institution was saluted with great enthusiasm.²⁹

Just as in the case of political fights, the Romanian religious press constantly highlighted, at the beginning of the 20th century, the important role played by Croatian bishops in the cultural and social prosperity of the nation³⁰. However, the involvement of the clerics in

²⁴ *Amicul Familiei*, VIII, 1884, 7, 1/13 April, p. 98.

²⁵ *Federatiunea*, II, 1869, 49-234, 27 April/ 9 May, p. 198: *O mână de croați face minuni. Și noi, milioanele de români?*

²⁶ *Cultura creștină*, VI, 1916, 8, 25 April, p. 236: *Așa de înguste orizonturi avem, încât ni-e rușine să ne asemănăm cu alte popoare, să zicem numai cu Croații, cari nu sunt mai mulți la număr ca noi uniții.*

²⁷ Cornel Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualității românești din Transilvania și Banat în epoca modernă* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000), p. 39-57.

²⁸ *Albina*, I, 1866, 79, 14/26 October, p. 2.

²⁹ *Federatiunea*, VII, 1874, 79-80-884-85, 17/29 November, p. 603.

³⁰ *Biserica și Scola*, XXXVI, 1912, 5, 29 ianuarie/11 februarie, p. 7; *Cultura creștină*, VI, 1916, 3, 10 February, p. 91: *... ne gândim cu o cale și la marele episcop Strossmayer – de la nașterea căruia s-au împlinit acum 100 de ani – care prin luptă continuă a asigurat neamului*

society and the symbiosis between the Church and the nation are presented as manifesting on all levels: *A study colleague in Croatia (father Blazevic) told me a lot about secular priests, doctors, lawyers, professors, journalists, ploughmen, foremen and industrialists, who belong to either of these orders, especially to the Franciscan one. We can image what that would be like in other parts of the Catholic world.*³¹

Even the laymen economy magazines seemed to adhere to this idea. The editors of these magazines ascribed the better organization of the Croat *Matica* and the improved symbiosis between it and the civil society (as compared to ASTRA), to the influence of church hierarchs, and in particular to Strossmayer.³²

Despite the fact that the Romanian press accepts a Croats' superiority on a cultural and social level, the economic level of the greater mass of the population is presented as being rather precarious (poor harvests, natural disasters).³³ The high backlogs in paying taxes,³⁴ and even the protests against inter-regional exchanges of children during holidays – due to economic reasons,³⁵ are factual arguments that complete this picture. Croatia is generally presented as poorer than Transylvania. But this situation is used as a favorable argument for Croats in the ensemble of the comparison between the two nations, by highlighting the successes in other fields, including the political relation with Hungary, despite the more difficult economic premises: *Croatia is a country which is a lot poorer than Transylvania, and does not believe the promoters of the false doctrine, and in order to be rid of the deficit created by the so-called union with Hungary, they demand even the expansion of autonomy in the financial field.*³⁶

său o aleasă poziție de drept public, a dat un partid național (al dreptului), o academie sud-slavică în Zagreb, știință tehnologică și o universitate croată. Așa se iubește biserica, fără ca interesele neamului să fie neglijate ori chiar uitate! Figura marelui nostru episcop I.M. Clain, a mecenatului Șuluțiu, și a altora, sunt pildele românești ale acestui fel de iubire.

³¹ *Cultura creștină*, XV, 1926, 4-6, April-June, p. 112: *Un coleg de studii din Croația (păr. Blazevic) îmi povestea că la ei o mulțime de preoți seculari, medici, avocați, profesori, ziariști, de plugari, maiștri și industriași fac parte din câte unul din aceste ordine, dar mai ales din cel franciscan. Ne putem gândi cum va fi în alte părți ale lumii catolice.*

³² *Revista economică*, VIII, 1906, 39, 30 September, p. 349.

³³ *Biserica și Scola*, IV, 1880, 45, 2/14 November, p. 356; Id., XXII, 1898, 10, 8/20 March, p. 78.

³⁴ *Bunul Econom*, I, 1900, 3, 15/27 January, p. 5.

³⁵ *Biserica și Scola*, XLII, 1918, 33, 12/25 August, p. 2.

³⁶ *Federatiunea*, V, 1872, 18-618, 13/25 February, p. 1.

Croats as martial people

One of the most interesting parts of the Croats' image refers to their martial features. There is no solid and continuous discourse on this stereotype, but various pieces of information let us perceive that they were regarded for certain as stoutly, violent and battle-ready people. Even some of the textbooks mentioned this feature, but only in relation with the population of coastal Dalmatia, not the inner-land: *Its inhabitants are Dalmatians and Italians, warrior people, but of little culture.*³⁷ It is interesting, from this point of view, the fact that the image in Romanian textbooks is the opposite of the one developed by the Venetians, who considered the inhabitants of the coastline to be more civilized as those inside the country.³⁸ Most probably, in this case, we are dealing partially with a game of distances (the perceived degree of civilization decreases depending on the geographical distance to the emitter of discourse), partially with a classical association between mountainous landscape and the character of the people.³⁹

Regarding the military aspect of the image of Croats, it has two components: one dedicated exclusively to alterity and a second one aimed at the Romanian identity construction in relation to the Croatian alterity. The majority of references to the former component places the Croats within the most martial peoples of the Monarchy, praising their military qualities.

For example, a short while before the start of the 1866 war, when relations between Austria and Prussia were already highly deteriorated, the following piece of news was published by one of the main Romanian journals: *Fear of Croats. As one can see, the Prussians fear much the Croatian militia of Austria. The newspaper from Berlin Evangelische Kirchenzeitung, under the title The Bible and the Croat shows how a [Prussian] soldier escaped from a Croatian bullet by having a Bible between chest and shirt. The bullet went through Moses and the Prophets, but stopped at the New Testament. Go then, and do the same [the German newspaper wrote]. Of course, the respective journal forgot to ask itself if God himself knew about Bismark's politics and if there will be a war against Austria.*⁴⁰ There are many layers of information in this short piece of news. Even if the information is based on a true event, the German Lutheran newspaper surely knew how to make it sound appropriate to its agenda, by highlighting the right

³⁷ Goldiș 1900 (*V și VI*), p. 15.

³⁸ Wolff 2001, p. 11.

³⁹ Dumitru Drăghicescu, *Din psihologia poporului român (introduce)* (Bucharest: Librăria Leon Alcalay, 1907), p. 52-53.

⁴⁰ *Albina*, I, 1866, 19, 22 May/3 June, p. 4.

alterities in it. First, a German Lutheran newspaper writes about an enemy which is Austrian (by citizenship), Catholic (by religion) and at the same time Slavic (by ethnicity). And not any kind of Slavic, but Croat – well known for their military skills. Secondly, the bullet went through the whole Old Testament, but was stopped by the cornerstone of Christianity: The New Testament – an outcome befitting a church newspaper. At its turn, the Romanian newspaper turned this minor piece of German propaganda into Austrian propaganda by inferring that the Germans were afraid of the Croatian soldiers. One should not see the actual fear of Croats as inspiration for this article in the first place, but rather their perfect fit-in: they represented the perfect alterity as a militarized Catholic Slavic nation in service of the Habsburgs. The purpose of the German newspaper was purely propagandistic, in the same way as it was the purpose of the Romanian newspaper, and they were both using the image of the Croats as a loyal nation with military tradition, in order to fuel the propagandistic war that prepared the military conflict.

Another case dates from early 20th century. During the first years after 1900, when the commanding language in the Imperial and Royal army became an issue of high interest due to the pressures of introducing Hungarian as commanding language for the Hungarian units in the common army (k.u.k.), the Romanian journalists, strong supporters of the unified command in German, took great pleasure in highlighting the Croatian opposition's intent of asking for Croatian to be introduced as commanding language for the Croatian k.u.k. units if Hungarians got along with their request.⁴¹

Of course, such propositions and sceneries were, again, purely press propaganda. The German commanding language represented one of the strongest unity features of the Imperial and Royal Army which, at its turn, was one of the main pillars of the Empire. Neither did the Hungarians succeed, nor the Croats even seriously attempted in such endeavors. Still, the image remains: for the Romanians, the Croats represented at the time the only nation in Hungary who, based on its political situation and military historical tradition, was in position to ask loudly for equal treatment.

The recognition of the military qualities of Croats does not seem to have induced, however, any feeling of inferiority to the Romanians. As opposed to politics, where the difference in status between Transylvania and Croatia had generated, as previously shown, a series of inherent

⁴¹ *Bunul Econom*, IV, 1903, 37, 20 September, p. 3.

frustrations, on a military level, the Romanian press insists, throughout the entire dualist period, on the equality of military qualities of the two nations: *Romanians and Croats have been counted, and still are until today, among the best soldiers of Austria and they have shared, proportionally, more blood for the Throne and Habsburg Dynasty.*⁴²

*On the battle fields, surrounded by the shine of shared glory and wetted by shared blood, we have met each other, and the shared glory of hard fights and common sacrifices made us again comrades with the Croatian sister-nation.*⁴³ There are even cases in which the Romanians' contribution to the armed forces of the Empire is being emphasized as higher than the Croats'.⁴⁴

The martial image of Croats does not stop, however, at military profession and activities, and its being projected over the whole nation, this being one of the essential aspects that differentiates them from Romanians. Either if referring to the warrior inhabitants of the Dalmatian coast (as V. Goldiș did in the above mentioned textbook), or to the outlaw Udmanic, who, when surrounded by the representatives of the Law, preferred to shoot himself, rather than be caught alive,⁴⁵ or to cases of violent peasant uprising brought to public view,⁴⁶ the image of the Croats as violent but proud and fearless people is constantly reinforced by the Romanian newspapers. Such features are seen as widespread among laymen and priests alike and the *extreme violence of their patriotic feelings*⁴⁷ is thought to be the cornerstone of the Croatian national success. In the end, these collective traits are deeply opposed to the seemliness, seriousness and patience characterizing the Romanians from Transylvania.⁴⁸

⁴² *Albina*, XI, 1876, 35, 11/23 April, p. 2: *Românii și croații s-au numărat și pot număra până astăzi, la locul întâi, între cei mai buni soldați ai Austriei și ca proporționalminte dânsii au vărsat mai mult sânge pentru Tronul și Dinastia Habsburgică.*

⁴³ *Unirea*, XXV, 1915, 88, 7 September, p. 2: *Pe câmpurile de luptă, înconjurată de strălucirea gloriei comune și udată cu sânge comun, ne-am întâlnit unii cu alții și gloria comună a luptelor grele și jertfele comune din nou ne-au făcut tovarăși cu națiunea soră croată.*

⁴⁴ *Foaia Diecezana*, XI, 1896, 14, 31 March, p. 6.

⁴⁵ *Albina*, I, 1866, 67, 16/28 September, p. 4.

⁴⁶ *Bunul Econom*, IV, 1903, 19, 17 May, p. 3; *Id.* 23, 14 June, p. 2; *Id.*, 25, 28 June, p. 3; *Id.*, 33, 23 august, p. 6.

⁴⁷ *Federatiunea*, I, 1868, 130, 4/16 September, p. 513.

⁴⁸ Mitu 2000, p. 299-307.

Conclusions

Although this paper covered a limited series of sources, being more of a prolegomenous study than an actual research, some general observations and future topics of interest are worth highlighting.

In the space of mediated interactions, a first field in which the image of Croatia and the Croats came into contact (at least in theory) with the entire Romanian population, was that of school education. As opposed to the case of co-inhabiting ethnicities of Transylvania, where empirical knowledge, with its entire baggage of stereotypes, preceded theoretical knowledge, it is very likely that the first encounter between the majority of Romanians and the name 'Croatia', respectively the ethnical label of 'Croat', took place in school, in the pages of Geography textbooks. Knowledge obtained from these sources is characterized by a high degree of standardization, according to pedagogy rigors and by low imagology content. The most important circulated stereotype was that of the unflinching and warrior character of the inhabitants, somewhat associated to the mountainous and barren specificity of the Western and coastal regions of the province.

Within the journalistic discourse, the most extended among the fields of interest, as weight within the written sources of that time, is represented by the internal politics of the Double Monarchy. The moment of the Compromise of 1867, then the political crises between Croatia and Hungary - especially after 1900 - drew the attention of the Romanian press, always in search of examples and political allies against the Hungarians. In this context, one even perceives the development of a sentiment of inferiority of Romanians, who constantly relate to Croatia's autonomy and seek to explain their political failure through differences in character and attitude between the two nations. In the context of a different political situation within Hungary, direct relations between Romanian and Croatian leaders were extremely reduced and lacked notable results,⁴⁹ so the political relation between the two ethnic groups remained predominantly imagined, even at the highest strata of the political elite.

In the spirit of the previous political parallel, and given the fact that both Croats and Romanians would find themselves in a point of political and identity defense, comparisons in the field of social development and cultural accomplishments can be regarded as an expression of the importance that civil society and cultural institutions

⁴⁹ Lucian Boia, *Eugen Brode (1850-1912). Destinul frânt al unui luptător național* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2013), pp. 136-137.

had, in the eyes of the elite, in building national identity. In this plan, too, the Romanian press projects on the Croats the image of a people more organized and more advanced, despite the province's reduced economic resources.

The martial aspect is one of the constants in the Croats' image. It involves both a purely military dimension, and references to the character traits specific to warrior nations projected on the Croatian civil society. Comparisons with Romanians are present in this case, too. While on a military plan, they see the qualities of the two nations as equal, regarding the general attitude, Croats are seen as much more unflinching and firm, character traits which are also used to explain their political successes.

In broad terms, this is how the image of Croats was built, as it was promoted by the Romanian press and school textbooks in Transylvania: a people with a military tradition and martial attributes, the latter reverberating in the field of politics and social-cultural organization; a permanent example for Romanians in terms of the more successful political relations with Hungary and social and cultural progress; lastly, a landmark in identity construction, both in the dimension of the negative self-image of Romanians (the lack of unity and political firmness, lacks in social and cultural commitment), and the positive one (military traits).