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BOTH BULWARK AND BRIDGE:  
The Symbolic Conceptualization of the Frontier Position  
of Croatia in the Original Yugoslavism

For centuries, Croatia was a territory on the frontier of two worlds: Western Christian Europe and the Islamic Orient, i.e., the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire. In the 16th century, this position attained its symbolic expression in the form of an ideologeme about Croatia as the bulwark of Christianity, which played an important role in the self-perception of Croats (first of the Croatian estates and later of the modern Croatian nation). However, in the second half of the 19th century, this ideologeme transformed into a conception of Croatia as a bridge between West and East. This change occurred within the framework of an ideological system that greatly influenced the process of the formation of the modern Croatian nation at the time. I call this ideology the *original Yugoslavism*.<sup>1</sup> In my paper, I intend to follow, describe, and explain the transformation of the symbolic conceptualization of the frontier position of Croatia, which took place within the mentioned Croatian national-integrational ideology. My research is based on the analysis of articles and public speeches by the main creators of the original Yugoslavism: Josip Juraj Strossmayer (1815–1905), a Catholic bishop, theologian, and benefactor, and Franjo Rački (1828–1894), a Catholic priest, historian, and publicist. I am going to focus on the following two aspects of the examined subject: 1) the conceptualization of the role of the Croats in the history and the process of solving the Eastern Question, as well as in mediating and spreading Western culture to the Balkans; and 2) the specifics of the Croatian Orientalist discourse, which is implicitly present in such interpretations of the historical and cultural mission of one's own nation.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Stehlík, P., *Bosna v chorvatských národně-integračních ideologiích 19. století*, Brno 2013; Gross, M., *Vítek i djelovanje Franje Račkoga*, Zagreb 2004.

Rački and Strossmayer were convinced that the Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, and Bulgarians would perish unless they united their still fragmented intellectual forces in order to form a common culture, which would be capable of matching the value and inner diversity of cultures of the more advanced Romance and Germanic nations. In their idea of culturally integrating the South Slavic territory over the long term, they assigned a key role to the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts (JAZU) in Zagreb, which was founded with their considerable contribution in 1867. According to the vision of its founders, the Academy was to become a central scientific and national-educational institution of the whole Slavic South that would fundamentally contribute to the cultural refinement and mutuality of the South Slavs. It should be noted that it was conceived to serve not only the Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes in the Habsburg Monarchy, but also their “brothers” who were still living under full or partial Ottoman sovereignty. The intended role of the Academy in relation to these Ottoman subjects was to mediate selected achievements of Western culture and knowledge to them, so that they could overcome the alleged “handicap” stemming from their centuries-long separation from the civilizational development of the European West.

In this context, Rački assigned an extraordinary role to Croatian culture, which he deemed as firmly anchored in the Western European cultural and civilizational context, and which, at the same time, was a genuine expression of the Slavic “spirit” of the Croatian nation. Therefore, he considered Croatian culture to be an ideal medium for enlightening the South Slavs inhabiting the lands beyond Croatia’s frontier rivers, the Sava and the Una, because he was convinced that it could mediate the cultural heritage and values of Western civilization to them in a comprehensible manner and language. Strossmayer held similar views as he believed that Croatia, particularly Zagreb, should become the cultural and educational epicenter of the whole Slavic South. In accordance with this vision, he compared his homeland and its capital to Tuscany and Florence, respectively. His idea was that Croatia and Zagreb would eventually take up an exceptional position in the culture of the Balkan Peninsula, analogous to the position held by the mentioned Italian region and its capital in the culture of the Apennine Peninsula. The Academy working in conjunction with the University of Zagreb, which was also conceived as an institution designated for all South Slavs, was supposed to play an essential role in achieving this goal. From the perspective of the adherents of Yugoslavism, the founding of the University in 1874 naturally bolstered the leading status of Zagreb in the cultural revival and “spiritual” unification of the Slavic South, which Strossmayer and Rački considered to be an unavoidable precondition for successful political unification. In their view, this unification was supposed to be realised in a common

federal Yugoslav state, which would be part of a federalized Habsburg Monarchy or fully independently. It goes without saying that an indispensable prerequisite for forming such a South Slavic political unit was freeing Southeast Europe from Ottoman supremacy.

Therefore, it will not come as a surprise that the main ideologues of Yugoslavism paid extraordinary attention to the Eastern Question. In this context, it should be emphasized that an important part of their perspective on the history and the process of solving this complex issue constituted the aforementioned traditional ideologeme about Croatia as the *antemurale christianitatis* (Bulwark of Christianity). Rački and Strossmayer, like many other South Slavic, Albanian, Hungarian or Polish national ideologues, accentuated the reputed sacrifice made by their nation to the benefit of a greater whole, while they perceived this same nation to be an indispensable part and the farthest outpost of such a whole. However, Rački did not credit only the Croats for the centuries-long defense of Europe and its Christian civilization against various Turkic marauders and the expansion of Islam, but he also cited the South Slavs and even to Slavdom as a whole.

On the basis of a comparative analysis of the sources in which the creators of the original Yugoslavism operate with the term *bulwark* (*predziđe* in Croatian) and related motifs, it can be concluded that they date the historical focal point of the given ideologeme to the period when the Croats and other South Slavs held out against the Ottoman Turks. In this context, Rački remarks that “[n]o nation has suffered so much from the Turks” as “the nation of the South Slavs” for whom this arch-enemy has “destroyed all the past and obscured the near future”.<sup>2</sup> The thing is that, according to him, the Ottomans uprooted the promisingly developing and strengthening Bulgarian, Serbian, and Bosnian states, which meant that these conquered territories could not participate in the epoch-making changes that Western Europe had gone through on the threshold of the Modern Era.<sup>3</sup> Although some Croats, unlike their mentioned neighbours, had an opportunity to sample the fruits of the Renaissance and humanism, which Rački calls “a spectacular movement”, he states that it was not until “the idea of the defence of Christendom from the victorious Islam” emerged, that the unification of the Croatian South and North, i.e., Dalmatia (the Littoral) and Pannonia (the Interior) could be accomplished “under one flag”.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Rački, F., Misli jednoga Hrvata nedržavnika o iztočnom pitanju. *Pozor* (Zagreb) br. 204, 16. 9. 1862.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> Rački, F., Svečano slovo predsjednika dra. Fr. Račkoga. *Ljetopis JAZU* (Zagreb) 5 (1890), 91.

At the beginning of the 1860s, when Rački concentrated his efforts on winning the support of the Emperor and the Hungarians for a policy that would correspond to the interests of the South Slavs, he claimed that it was the Habsburgs together with “the nations of Hungary-Croatia” who sacrificed their fortune and blood in the struggle against the Turks.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, it was exactly these allies who stuck to their guns and took “lead of Christian Europe in order to protect its culture and prosperity”, becoming the “bulwark of Christianity against Mohammedanism” in the process.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, later on, Rački also ascribed the very same role to Slavdom or to its Southern branch, while emphasizing that already since the fifth century “the Slavic nation” had defended Christian civilization against the assaults of “various nations and tribes of the Turkic family”<sup>7</sup> and that it was Providence itself that placed the Slavs at the frontier of the East and West, so that they could “defend the intellectual work of the more fortunate West for so many centuries”.<sup>8</sup> It was due to this sacrifice that the Slavs were culturally lagging behind the Romance and Germanic nations. On the other hand, Rački declared their preparedness “to graft an offshoot from the tree of Romance and Germanic knowledge to their young, but well-branched and lush, tree”; and to look after it in the best manner afterwards, so that it could also “bear fruit to the benefit of mankind and the glory of reason”.<sup>9</sup> Everything explicated about Slavdom allegedly also held true for the South Slavs, who “would have stood on an equal level of education with Western Europe” if their development had not been violently interrupted by the Ottomans.<sup>10</sup> However, South Slavs had instead become “martyrs of Christendom and the defenders of civilization in the centuries-long struggle against Mohammedanism”.<sup>11</sup> Although they had barely recuperated from the wounds inflicted during the wars with the Turks, the South Slavs had already realized that it was “only the works of intellect” that “erect imperishable monuments” – an idea which they identified with.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Rački, F., Misli. *Pozor* (Zagreb) br. 204, 16. 9. 1862.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>7</sup> Rački's review of the book *Borba Hrvatah s Mongoli i Tatari* by Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski. *Književnik* 1 (1864), 131.

<sup>8</sup> Rački, F., Besjeda predsjednikova. *Rad JAZU* (Zagreb) 1 (1867), 45.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, 47.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, 46.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

All the motifs related to the concept of bulwark present in the works of Rački can also be detected in Strossmayer's writings.<sup>13</sup> In contrast to his younger colleague, the bishop uses more exalted rhetoric and associates the customary martyr-centered elements of the ideologeme exclusively with the Croats or the Triune Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia, whose boundaries used to be "wider and vaster to all four corners of the world".<sup>14</sup> Strossmayer also underlines more vehemently than Rački the presumed ancient and glorious past of the Croats, as well as their extraordinary heroism, self-sacrifice, and firm faith demonstrated in the wars against the Turks. He is confident that the contemporary residents of the Triune Kingdom have an appropriate reason to be proud of their ancestors and suggests that they should follow their example in the intellectual sphere, which has replaced the battlefield in modern times. As regards the neighbours of the Croatians, Strossmayer expects their gratitude for the exceptional favour that Croats have historically done for "European-Christian civilization", forming its "living bulwark" and shedding their blood "for the holy faith", neighbouring nations, Austria, and Europe in general.<sup>15</sup> In line with this image, he demands that all those who owe their salvation to the Croats should support their cause in return or, more specifically, directly assist in restoring the territorial integrity of the Triune Kingdom, which had been disrupted by Ottoman expansion.

Thus, the ideologeme about the bulwark of Christianity figures in the original ideology of Yugoslavism not only as a source of national pride and moral strength but also as a justification and consolation in confrontation with the factual cultural and economic backwardness of one's own national collective, as well as an argument used in the interest of promoting current national-political goals. One of the highest positions among these objectives occupied the imminent solution to the Eastern Question. It should be noted that Strossmayer and Rački were convinced that it was the Croats with the other South Slavs who were going to play the decisive role in settling this pressing issue. The bishop even states that the Eastern Question could be solved in the interest of "civilization, Christianity, and freedom" only by means of a "strengthened, fresh, and self-aware South Slavdom".<sup>16</sup> It was supposedly a mission to which "our nation" is predestined by God "in order to properly compensate its sacrifices brought to the altar of Christianity and European

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Strossmayer, J. J., *Izabrani politički i književni spisi*, Zagreb 2005, 89–91, 99–100, 143, 172–173, 188, 229–230.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, 89.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, 89–90.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, 132.

civilization”.<sup>17</sup> In this context, Strossmayer repeatedly expresses his opinion that Europe, Austria, and Hungary should lend their support to South Slavs in their current efforts, because the interests of all the mentioned parties are identical.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, he expresses his solidarity with Christians living on the other side of Sava and Una Rivers, who he considers to be an integral part of “our nation”.<sup>19</sup> The bishop states that for a long time, these people have been pinning their hopes on their fellow nationals in Austria, who have not been able to do much for them so far.<sup>20</sup> However, he intended to change this. This is the reason why in his speech in front of the Croatian diet in 1861, he pleaded for the foundation of a university in Zagreb, which could host South Slavic students coming from beyond the borders of the Monarchy. He supported his argument by stating his belief that it would not be long before the South Slavs would be summoned to intervene in the Eastern Question and to solve it “in the interest of Christian-European civilization”.<sup>21</sup> He adds that in order to achieve victory, the South Slavs cannot depend only on physical condition and “the heroic heart” anymore, as these days “wars are waged and resolved by spiritual rather than physical weapons”.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, Strossmayer strives to convince the delegates of the Croatian diet that it is necessary to establish a university in Zagreb by stressing the Croats’ obligation to the whole of Slavdom in the South including “the enslaved brethren” in Turkey,<sup>23</sup> some of whom were purportedly starting to feel the need for higher education themselves.

It was only a step from Strossmayer’s call for turning Zagreb into the educational and scientific centre of the entire Slavic South to the aforementioned conceptualization of the frontier position of Croatia as a bridge between the West and the East. According to the Croatian political scientist and sociolinguist Ivo Žanić, the ancient concept of bulwark gradually transformed into an opposite metaphor of “an inclusive bridge, which has been competing and intertwining with the exclusive bulwark ever since”.<sup>24</sup> As I have already noted, it was exactly the creators of the ideology of Yugoslavism who introduced this novelty to the Croatian ideological imagination and political thinking. If one gets back to their views on the role of the Croats and the

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, 90, 101, 143–144, 172–173.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, 101, 132, 144.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, 103.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, 101.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, 103.

<sup>24</sup> Žanić, I., Simbolični identitet Hrvatske u trokutu Raskrižje – Predziđe – Most, in: *Historijski mitovi na Balkanu*. Prir. H. Kamberović, Sarajevo 2003, 173.

South Slavs in the history and the process of solving the Eastern Question, then it is possible to say that, while before 1878 the concept of bulwark prevailed in their approach to this issue, after the Congress of Berlin and the subsequent Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the opposite concept of bridge became the more frequently used metaphor in their writings.

In line with this observation, already in the autumn of 1878, Rački defines the Academy (JAZU) as a significant cultural mediator between the West and the East, when he claims that this institution should “forge the way for spiritual collectiveness among the Slavic tribes of the Balkan Peninsula and to help them with acquiring and digesting the healthy fruits of Western knowledge”, as well as make it possible for the West “to get acquainted with the language, past, way of thinking, and feelings of these nations”.<sup>25</sup> Most likely under the impression of the then colossal defeat of the Ottoman Empire on the European continent, Rački prophesies that the JAZU would reach even better results in the future because he expects the rejuvenation of national consciousness in “the regenerated and transformed East”, thanks to which the Academy will find “a more firm and wider base” there.<sup>26</sup>

A few years later, Strossmayer publicly presented his aforementioned vision of Croatia as the Tuscany and Zagreb as the Florence of the Balkans.<sup>27</sup> It is evident that he had also embraced the concept of bridge in place of the still dominant bulwark metaphor, which is understandable considering the current development of the Eastern Question. While most of the South Slavic territories in the Balkans dwelled under Ottoman supremacy, the creators of the ideology of Yugoslavism exploited the ideologeme about *antemurale christianitatis* in order to support a moral claim of the Croats and the South Slavs on freedom, national territory, and political sovereignty. However, 1878 represents a radical turning point in this respect because most of the Slavic Balkans got rid of Turkish dominance at the time. In light of this, it is hardly surprising that since that time, Strossmayer and Rački began operating with the concept of bridge in their speeches, writings, and correspondence. As I. Žanić observes, the concept of bridge does not abolish the understanding of Croatia as a frontier, but since this moment it was “bidirectional, permeable, belonging to two worlds, and [...] naturally permeated by both of them”.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, it should be stressed that both ideologues consistently continued to advocate the right

<sup>25</sup> Rački, F., Besjeda predsjednika dra. Fr. Račkoga, *Rad JAZU* (Zagreb) 45 (1878), 227.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Strossmayer, J. J., *Izabrani politički i književni spisi*, 292–293.

<sup>28</sup> *Historijski mitovi na Balkanu*, 174.

of Zagreb to participate in deciding the further course of the Eastern Question or, more precisely, its South Slavic and Bosnian segments.

Their approach to these issues was heavily marked by their extremely negative stance towards Islam. Both Strossmayer and Rački virtually reduced the essence of the Eastern Question, and also of the more general relationship between the East and West, to the clash between Christianity and Islam, which they interpreted as a duel between good and evil, or civilization and barbarism. This simplifying perspective stemmed undoubtedly not only from the fact that they were both Christian clerics, but also from the pan-European and, in particular, domestic cultural tradition of the stereotyped views of Islam, Muslims, and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>29</sup> In any case, the regular epithets tied to these interrelated terms in Rački's and Strossmayer's writings are: fanatical, belligerent, barbarian, despotic and the like. They both adhered to the opinion that Christianity and Islam represent two incompatible principles and that states that do not stand on Christian foundations are not viable in the long term. Therefore, they repeatedly emphasized that it was not possible to reform the Ottoman Empire and prophesied its unavoidable downfall because it was not built on the alleged state-building values and principles contained in the Gospel, to which Christian countries owe their stability as well as their achievements in the sciences, arts, economy, and knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

Needless to say, hostility towards Islam prompted Strossmayer's and Rački's rather reserved attitude towards Slavs of the Muslim faith. Even though they did not exclude them from the South Slavic national collective, in their eyes, the religious affiliation and related cultural characteristics of Bosnian and other Slavic Muslims represented a certain "stain" and an unequivocal handicap in relation to the Christian members of the imagined national community.<sup>31</sup> In fact, it could be concluded that their perception of Slavic Muslims was truly in the spirit of a popular South Slavic proverb – "*Poturica gori od Turčina*" (The Turkified is worse than the Turk) – which Rački directly mentions on one occasion with regard to "the renegades from the life, endeavours, work, and hope of the South Slavic nation".<sup>32</sup> In any case, it is not possible to find even the slightest hint of admiration for the Muslim milieu, habits, or rituals in the works of either ideologue despite the fact that such fondness

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Jezernik, B. (ed.), *Imagining 'the Turk'*, Cambridge 2010; Wheatcroft, A., *Infidels: A History of the Conflict between Christendom and Islam*, London 2003.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. e.g., Rački, F., Misli. *Pozor* (Zagreb), br. 199, 30. 8. 1862 or Strossmayer, J. J. – Rački, F., *Politički spisi: rasprave, članci, govori, memorandumi*, Zagreb 1971, 144.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Stehlík, P., *Bosna*, 119–125.

<sup>32</sup> Strossmayer, J. J. – Rački, F., *Politički spisi*, 353.



constituted an integral part of the writings of other proponents of South Slavic mutuality: Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, Luka Botić, and the like. Whereas, for instance Kukuljević in his Bosnian travelogue admires the beauty and impressiveness of the Muslim call for prayer (*adhan*),<sup>33</sup> Rački labels it as “the muffled voice of the fanatical *muezzin*”.<sup>34</sup>

This means that the main ideologues of the original Yugoslavism were immune to exoticism, elements of which could be traced in the works of some of their predecessors, which reached its peak in the idealization of Bosnian Muslims and the situation in Turkey by their political opponent and the creator of the rival (exclusively Croatian) national-integrational ideology, Ante Starčević. In spite of this lack of exoticism in their writings I consider the attitude of Rački and Strossmayer towards the world of Islam to be Orientalist in the sense of the groundbreaking conception of Orientalism by the literary theorist and comparatist Edward W. Said.<sup>35</sup> I find it evident that these ideologues are actually acting in line with the West European tradition analysed by Said, consisting of the portrayal and construction of the Orient as the mirror, and essentially inferior opposite, of an allegedly more developed, civilized, and cultured Europe, as well as the West in general. Strossmayer and Rački attribute the Islamic East with characteristics such as cruelty, lawlessness, irrationality, sinful sensuality, and *a priori* postulated constancy, on the basis of which they demagogically deny any potential for regeneration, democratization, and progress to Muslim states and societies. They are both convinced that these entities are not capable of independently developing towards a greater plane of enlightenment, freedom, or justice because these values are only immanent in states and societies based on Christian foundations.<sup>36</sup>

As Rački states in his speech delivered to the members of the JAZU in November 1878,<sup>37</sup> i.e., immediately after the end of the Great Eastern Crisis and the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia: “While the East has remained practically stagnant under the dominance of Islam, living solely off the legacy of earlier achievements and the juice of folk traditions, the West has ceaselessly endeavoured to collect great reserves of diverse knowledge and skills, while it has organized its public affairs in line with the new principles.” Therefore, the author endows the

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Kukuljević Sakcinski, I., Putovanje po Bosni, in: *Izabrana djela*. Prir. I. Kukuljević Sakcinski, Zagreb 1997, 337.

<sup>34</sup> Rački, F., Misli. *Pozor* (Zagreb), br. 198, 29. 8. 1862.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Said, E. W., *Orientalism*, New York 1978.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Stehlík, P., *Bosna*, 119–125.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Rački, F., Besjeda predsjednika dra. Fr. Račkoga, *Rad JAZU* (Zagreb) 45 (1878), 224–227. All citations in the following paragraph are quoted from this source.

more advanced West with the role of “the resurrector of the East” and highlights the case of the Balkan nations, which serves him as proof of the West’s successful mission. He considers that these nations started readily and beneficially to draw from the well of Western knowledge once they “managed to free themselves from the supremacy of Islam”. However, Rački warns the West that the “nations of the East” are only going to accept its “spiritual treasure” if it is offered without selfish intentions that would lead to the conquest of the East “under the cloak of culture”. In short, the West must not repeat the mistake it had made at the time of the Crusades, when it “embarked on conquering the East and inflicting its own social and political system on it”. Rački expresses hope that the West would learn a lesson from this historical experience and that “our enlightened century will slowly eliminate any seed of a new conflict between the progressive West and the newly awakened East, so that culture will cease to be a stumbling block, but rather a bond between the nations”. In this way, cultural relations between the West and the East would gradually become more balanced, and the equilibrium between Western and Eastern knowledge that allegedly existed in the Middle Ages would be restored. Nevertheless, such an outcome would require the victory of Christianity over Islam, which Rački actually predicts. He does so under the impression of current events, which he finds to be a source of joy for “any sincere humanitarian” for they are proof of “the indestructible power of the ideas to which the West owes its greatness and glory, and the East its salvation and resurrection”.

As one has seen, in accordance with his Christian and Eurocentric worldview, Rački authoritatively defends the civilizational superiority of the “advanced” West over the “backward” East, while denying the East any capability for progress unless it is freed from the supremacy of Islam and accepts the achievements of Western culture. On the other hand, he stands up against the political hegemony of the West over the East. This stance defies Said’s definition of Orientalism as means and a tool of colonialism and imperial expansion. I consider it to be one of the specific displays of the Croatian Orientalist discourse, whose distinction stems primarily from the fact that Croats, for obvious reasons, lacked imperial ambitions cultivated in the countries that are focused on in Said’s analysis (the UK, France, the US). However, if one takes into account the aforementioned belief of Rački and Strossmayer in the exceptional role of the Croats and Zagreb in spreading Western culture and knowledge to the Balkans, then it becomes apparent that even in the Croatian context, it is possible to detect a conviction about one’s own nation being predestined for a civilizing mission for the benefit of a less advanced part of mankind, which in this case embody the South Slavs living beyond the borders of the Habsburg Monarchy.

Even though the creators of the ideology of Yugoslavism consider these people to be an integral part or close relatives of their own nation – so there is no direct parallel to the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized – Strossmayer and Rački implicitly appropriate the right to speak in the name of these “brethren” of theirs and to determine what is beneficial for them – be it resistance to Ottoman power, acceptance of the Christian faith and values, acquiring of Western culture, or an ecclesiastical union.<sup>38</sup> In fact, they usually perceived the South Slavs living under Ottoman supremacy either as poor victims of Turkish despotism who yearningly fix their eyes on their fellow nationals in Austria (Christians), or as corrupt and untrustworthy renegades (Muslims).<sup>39</sup> In my opinion, such paternalistic and stereotypical attitudes can be marked as essentially Orientalist although they differ in certain aspects from the image of the Orient construed in the West European and North American context, which was analysed by Said. The Croatian Orientalist discourse of the 19th century basically stems from an entirely different historical tradition and experience, which, together with period factors such as the small size, limited significance, and politically dependent status of the Croatian nation, shaped its numerous specifics.

Croatia belongs to a group of European countries, which – due to their frontier position – have been in direct centuries-long contact with the Muslim world. However, in contrast to the other South Slavic states, Croatia has never been fully integrated into it. This is a historical experience that Croats share to a certain extent with a number of other European nations such as the Slovenes, Austrians, Russians, and Spaniards. Austrian anthropologist Andre Gingrich has shown that this historical experience has brought forth “a relatively coherent set of metaphors and myths”<sup>40</sup> which constituted an integral part of both the folk and elite cultures of these ethnic collectives even before their transformation into modern nations.<sup>41</sup> In this context, Gingrich speaks of a *frontier Orientalism* that differs from the classical colonial Orientalism defined by Said, e.g., with its mentioned simultaneous embeddedness in both elite and folk cultures; by portraying the Oriental not only as the subdued and incompetent other, but also as a lethal threat (the Turk); or by the fact that it ascribes a timeless mission to the given country and its population which

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Stehlík, P., *Bosna v ideologii jihoslovanství Franja Račkého a Josipa Juraje Strossmayera. Slovanské historické studie* 37 (2012), 411–464.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *ibidem*.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Gingrich, A., *Frontier Myths of Orientalism: The Muslim World in Public and Popular Cultures of Central Europe*, in: *Mediterranean Ethnological Summer School, Vol. II*. Eds. B. Baskar – B. Brumen, Ljubljana 1998, 119.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, 99–127.

consists in defending Christianity and civilization against their enemies. The mentioned metaphors and myths, including the central bulwark ideologeme, are deeply rooted in the collective consciousness, and as such, they practically offered themselves up to be utilized by the national ideologues of the 19th century. As evidenced in the dual conceptualization of the frontier position of Croatia in the ideology of Yugoslavism, the Croatian national movement was no exception in this regard.

## ABSTRACT

### **Both Bulwark and Bridge: The Symbolic Conceptualization of the Frontier Position of Croatia in the Original Yugoslavism**

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The paper examines the symbolic conceptualization of the frontier position of Croatia in the original form of the Croatian national-integrational ideology of Yugoslavism formulated at the beginning of the 1860s by Josip Juraj Strossmayer and Franjo Rački. For centuries, Croatia was a territory on the border of two worlds: Western Christian Europe and the Islamic Orient, i.e., the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire. This position attained its symbolic dimension in the form of an ideologeme about Croatia as the bulwark of Christianity, which played an important role in the self-perception of the Croats. However, in the second half of the 19th century this ideologeme transformed into a conception of Croatia as a bridge between West and East. This change was initiated by the aforementioned ideologues of the original Yugoslavism in their articles and public speeches after the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Hercegovina (1878). On the basis of an analysis of their texts, the author strives to follow, describe, and explain the transformation of the symbolic conceptualization of the frontier position of Croatia. He pays particular attention to two aspects of the researched subject: 1) the conceptualization of the role of the Croats in the history and the process of solving the Eastern Question as well as in mediating and spreading Western culture to the Balkans, and 2) the specifics of the Croatian Orientalist discourse which is implicitly present in such interpretations of the historical and cultural mission of one's own nation.

**Key words:** Croatia, Eastern Question, *antemurale christianitatis*, Yugoslavism, Strossmayer, Rački, frontier Orientalism