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The education of aristocracy in Croatia and Slavonia in the 19th century

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THEMATIC ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

The author analyses the education of aristocracy in Croatia and Slavonia from the late 18th century until 1918. Education played a vital role in the mindset and lifestyle of aristocracy, and in retaining its elite position in the political, social, cultural, economic and military aspect, to name just some. Aristocrats were trained to become the pillars of society, they had private tutors and teachers, and often finished the gymnasium but did not necessarily continue their schooling at a higher level. Reforms of enlightened absolutism, which opened career chances for lesser nobility and burghers and the rise of well-educated and economically successful modern middle class after 1848, forced the aristocracy to keep pace. However, it still preferred traditional studies of philosophy, law or, to a much lesser extent, theology and was losing its dominant role in the field of arts as well.

KEYWORDS

aristocracy, Croatia, Slavonia, education

INTRODUCTION

Croatian lands (Croatia, Slavonia, the Military Border, Istria and Dalmatia) developed differently in political, cultural, economic and social aspect, and belonged to different parts of the Habsburg Monarchy. This also resulted in a different profile of its nobility. For this reason

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the focus of this article is solely on Croatia and Slavonia, which were parts of the Hungarian Kingdom. They enjoyed autonomous status since the beginning of the 11th century when the Croatian Kingdom entered the union with the Kingdom of Hungary, becoming thus *partes adnexae* (annexed parts i.e. countries). Major warrants of this old autonomy, based on the so called municipal rights (*iura municipalia*),[1] were the Croatian viceroy (the *Ban*), who held the third highest position in the Hungarian Kingdom, and the Croatian Diet (*Sabor*). Modern Croatian autonomy within the lands of St. Stephen's Crown was defined by the Croatian-Hungarian Settlement of 1868, according to which the Croatian government and the *Sabor* were in charge of internal affairs, justice, religion and education (Gross, 1993). Therefore the nobility in Croatia and Slavonia can easily be compared to the one in Hungary.

It was until 1848 a dominant part of *natio politica* enjoying privileges such as tax exemption, public offices, representation in the *Sabor* and the counties (*županije*, vármegye), which were *universitates nobilium*, defending interests of local nobility. The aristocratic elite consisted of magnates (barons, counts and the Odescalchi princely family) with large estates, followed by *bene possessionati* – well-to-do regional nobility (gentry), and the lesser, mostly peasant nobility (*nobiles unius sessionis*). A separate category was the new nobility, bestowed just with the title and the coat-of-arms. The social and ethnic structure of nobility in Croatia and Slavonia shows major differences; whereas in the latter nobility held huge landed estates, in the former lesser nobility holding small estates prevailed. The nobility in Slavonia was fewer in number and to a large extent of non-Croatian origin because the Vienna centre sold or donated large estates to nobility of various ethnic origin after Slavonia had been liberated from the Ottoman Empire. According to the census of 1785–1787, the first that encompassed noblemen, they constituted 4.4% of inhabitants, slighlty less than in Hungary. Out of 9.764 noblemen that came of age, almost 60% (5.759) came from the Zagreb county, followed by the Križevci county and the towns of Zagreb and Rijeka (Korunić, 2013, pp. 69–70; Štefanec, 2013, p. 93; Harmat, 2010, p. 1049; Péter, 2010, p. 340; Adamček, 1981, pp. 60–61; Budak, 2007, p. 132).

In the 19th century nobility was faced with national integration and modernisation. After 1848/49 nobility lost its traditional privileges and a portion of its land farmed by peasants, as was the case in the whole Habsburg Monarchy. Even though some noblemen accepted liberal ideas and the necessity of modernisation, most of them were rather conservative, willing to implement only inevitable changes. Unlike Hungary, in Croatia and Slavonia there was no noblemen's liberalism, meaning that no socially or territorially definable part of nobility advocated liberal reforms (Dipper, 1988, p. 175). The same applied to the national issue. Even though the role of the nobility in Croatia and Slavonia was important, it did not turn into the leader of the national movement and modernisation as the middle and lesser Hungarian nobility did. The rise of the middle class resulted in a partial restructuring of aristocracy in the late 19th century. On one hand, it encompassed some members of lesser nobility who rose to prominence and higher rank through administrative and military career or economic activities, on the other hand, a part of middle-class meritocracy.

In such a short survey it is difficult to provide information on the state of literature. Nobility had not been largely thematised during the socialist Yugoslavia. This situation changed in the

[1]They did not originally encompass the territory of Slavonia as defined after its liberation from the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 17th century.

post-communist period yet there are still many blank spaces. There are a number of recent contributions on individual families, women and children, everyday life, or the importance of art and education (e.g. Bagarić, 2016; Horbec, 2009; Horbec, 2017; Horbec, 2018a; 2018b; Iveljić, 2014, 2016, 2021; Najcer Sabljak, 2015; Najcer Sabljak & Lučevnjak, 2019; Shek Brnardić, 2009a, b; Štefanec, 2013). Still lacking are syntheses[2] and a wider implementation of new themes and approaches that will shed light on nobility without the interpretative frame of the national grand narrative. Of particular interest are transitions (from the Habsburg Monarchy to the Yugoslav state,[3] then to the Ustasha state in 1941, to the socialist Yugoslavia and finally to the independent Croatian state) which should show the fate of nobility in the postimperial era, but they have not yet been thoroughly researched. Some data on the first of these transitions can also be found in the literature dealing with the Yugoslav land reform or individual noble families (Kolar, 1995; Šimončić-Bobetko, 1997). In general, nobility in the 18th century has been much more researched than the one in the 19th and especially in the 20th century.

THE REFORMS OF ENLIGHTENED ABSOLUTISM

Education was crucial for the transfer not just of knowledge and skills, but primarily of a specific value system, intended to promote the eminence of nobility as a total elite, and the importance of its tradition. Until the late 18th century aristocrats did not necessarily continue their education at a high level. Most of 768 students from Croatia and Slavonia in Vienna from 1526 until 1750, finished the gymnasium or took a course on philosophy, only one studied law (Horbec, 2018b, p. 373). Reforms of enlightened absolutism enticed aristocracy to change this pattern, because many non-aristocrats and non-noblemen used the career chances education offered, especially the study of law. They mostly attended academies or universities in Zagreb, Vienna, Graz, Pest, Győr, Pécs, Pozsony, Trnava/Nagyszombat, Eger, Bologna and others. The Vienna centre regarded education as a means of „enlightening" the nobility opposed to reforms, especially in Hungary (Balázs, 1997; Haselsteiner, 1990; Horbec, 2017). New institutions such as *Theresianum* in Vienna were founded, whose most prominent Croatian student was the later Ban Baron Josip Jelačić, who spent ten years at this academy. Its goal was to properly educate young noblemen from all over the Monarchy enabling them to take on posts in the public administration or the military but also to enhance their loyalty to the regime. As a part of the overwhelming education reform, similar goals were foreseen for the universities, and the old Jesuite academies were turned into secular institutions. The Jesuite Academy in Zagreb thus became in 1776 *Regia scientiarum academia* offering the course on philosophy and the study of law and theology.

During the reign of Maria Theresa cameralism as science was promoted by influential individuals such as Joseph von Sonnenfels, Karl Anton von Martini or Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi. In this spirit, a study of political and cameralistic sciences was founded in Varaždin in 1769, but it was transferred to the Zagreb Academy in 1773. Cameralism promoted reforms

[2]Good overviews for the 18th century: Budak, N. (2007); Štefanec, N. (2013). For the 19th century Gross, M. (1978). Lalić, D. (2017) does not offer a proper synthesis. See the review: Kessler (2019).

[3]See the project: The Transition of Croatian elites from the Habsburg Monarchy to the Yugoslav state. https://croelite.ffzg.unizg.hr/?cat=3 accessed 15.11.2021. See also Iveljić (2018a).

aimed at strengthening the central authority, developing norms, rules and procedures and resulted in the long run in the institutionalisation and professionalisation of the public administration, and the new bureaucracy did not just gain structure but was endowed with a mission as well (Deak, 2015, pp. 19–25; Horbec, 2017; Horbec, 2018a). The state was seen as the result of organic, natural principles of social organisation. Even though many authors including Martini stressed welfare and happiness as fundamental for the state, in practice the benefits were limited to upper layers, and the position of the sovereign was still dominant. He was the ruler and the symbol of the state power, yet he had also obligations and responsibilities. Crucial in this process was the development of the public and homeland law (Horbec, 2018a). These ideas were accepted by some noblemen in Croatia and Slavonia, mostly belonging to lesser nobility. One of the most important ones was Nikola Škrlec Lomnički, who became the head of the newly founded supreme Croatian school authority (*Districtus studiorum Zagrabiensis*) exerting control over the Zagreb Academy as well. Škrlec accepted enlightened ideas and cameralism, supporting reforms of Maria Theresa, yet he thought that Joseph II took a too harsh course towards Croatia and Hungary. In his sermon at the Academy in 1776 he put an emphasis on capabilites and the education of useful members of the homeland who would make possible that Hungary reaches the level of developed European countries (Govor Nikole Škrlca Lomničkog, pp. 67–75). Škrlec studied philosophy in Vienna and law in Bologna and Eger but he and his brother were at first educated by Adam Baltazar Krčelić, a well-learned Zagreb priest and historian, supporter of at least some Theresian reforms and the first to introduce methods of eclectic philosophy in his private lessons (Shek Brnardić, 2009a, b, p. 30). Krčelić was also a private tutor of Count Petar Ivan Nepomuk Sermage, very much to the regret of Jesuits who thought that he would turn the young Count against them (Krčelić, 1952, p. 417). There were also some aristocrats who accepted reforms. An example of a learned and reform-oriented aristocrat is Count Josip Drašković, who studied philosophy in Bologna, political and cameral studies in Zagreb and finished his education in Vienna in 1773 with the thesis *Questiones de quinquaginta libris digestorum*. At the public assertion of Drašković's thesis dedicated to the queen (*Positiones ex universa scientia politico-camerali excerptae*… Zagreb, 1770), Nikola Škrlec stated that the feudal system was opposed to natural right and the principles of sound policy and thus contrary to general well-being (Lunaček, 1999, p. 437). Škrlec never again mentioned such radical ideas. No wonder since reform-oriented nobility was rather scarce and it was torn between the Vienna centre and the majority of Croatian and Slavonian *status et ordines*.

An influential reform lobby was freemasonry, whose ideas were introduced in Croatia by the officers returning from the Seven Years War. The first masonic lodge was founded by Count Ivan Drašković in 1769 in Glina in the Military Border, and soon the province was established with its own statute and rituals - the so called *Drašković's Observances of 1777,* based upon the idea of equality. The most represented group among free masons were officers (34.9%) and magnates and their legal advisors (20.5%) (Kolanović, 1995, p. 82). Free masons were also represented among the upper echalons of the Monarchy, but Joseph II put masonic lodges under control and later on they were forbbiden. At that time the lodges were fora of reform-oriented secular and church elite (e.g. the Zagreb bishop Maksimilijan Vrhovac). The impact of free masons on education was significant. Suffice it to mention that Baron József Ürményi, one of the architects of *Ratio educationis* of 1777, was a free mason, as well as Count István Niczky, who enticed the reform of the Tyrnau university upon the model of Vienna university and Sándor Pászthory, a Hungarian representative on the Educational Commission in Vienna

(Evans, 1989, p. 49). Their prominent like-minded noblemen in Croatia were free masons, such as Nikola Škrlec Lomnički or Adalbert Adam Barić, professor at the *Studium politico-camerale* in Varaždin and Zagreb. Barić, a student of J. Sonnenfels, used his handbook *Grundsätze der Polizey-Handlung- und Finanzwissenschaft*. Later on Barić moved to the Academy in Győr and finally settled at the University in Pest (Horbec, 2018a, pp. 248–249). Another free mason, Martin Juraj Kovačić, Hungarian archivist and historian of Croatian origin, in his survey of school reforms in Hungary mentioned the changed mindset of the Hungarian upper classes under the influence of more developed countries. The new spirit of rationality, free thinking and criticism was also observed by Count Adam Oršić and A. B. Krčelić who accused them of introducing atheism (Oršić, 1869; Shek Brnardić, 2020, pp. 125–126).

At the lower levels of public education the influence of free masons was more limited, but it was present in the private education of reform-oriented nobility in the choice of teachers and acquisition of books. Noblemen's libraries, available to the younger family members and their teachers, contained works of authors of Enlightenment. Therefore it was no coincidence that in some families masonry and reforms were adopted and even passed on to the next generation (e.g. masons were Counts Ivan and Franjo, in the next generation Juraj V and Janko Drašković).

In short, reforms launched during enlightened absolutism resulted in the improvement of the school system at all levels, but they were by no means intended to weaken the position of nobility (Cerman & Velek, 2006).

EDUCATIONAL GENDER PATTERNS

Education of aristocrats was following gender patterns, traditionally preparing noblemen to fulfill the role of a grand-seigneur and landowner and/or to pursue a career in administration, military, diplomacy or the Church. However, in the modern era noblemen were less interested in becoming priests, and high diplomatic post were held only by a few aristocrats from Croatia and Slavonia (Godsey, 1999). Military career was still an option, mostly for younger sons and often for a limited period, but many Croatian officers belonged to the new nobility, stemming from the Military Border (Shek Brnardić, 2017). High administrative functions were still attractive, but apart from positions such as county prefects, aristocracy was losing ground in this field as well. The catalogue of virtues was largely based on gender roles, though qualities such as honour, refined manners or loyalty were set as standard for both sexes.

Noblewomen were supposed to support their male relatives and husbands, to run households of big country houses and town palaces, to organise the care and education of children and to socialise at the elite level. They had private tutors, receiving lessons in religion, music (singing and piano playing), languages, handicraft, painting, reading of carefully chosen titles of *belles lettres*, and were taught the basics of history - mostly in the form of legends, myths and stories on important personalities or events. As adolescents they could also be sent to boarding schools traditionally situated in the monasteries of women's religious orders (Salesians, Poor Clares or Ursulines). One of the most prestigious schools was run by the Salesians in Vienna. After secularisation reforms in Europe, new education-oriented congregations appeared, such as *Dames du Sacré Coeur,* since 1840s present in the Habsburg Monarchy, or the *Congregation of Our Lady of Sion (Congrégation de Notre-Dame de Sion).* In 1848 Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul opened a girls school in their newly built convent in Zagreb, but it was

not attended by elite noblewomen since it was oriented towards the education of female teachers. The Holy See had an ambiguous standpoint towards those congregations, because they did not require closure and had rather simple vows (Jedin, 1987, pp. 246–249). All the mentioned schools had similar goals: to instill Christian values and educate girls to be pious, submissive to all kinds of authorities, to cherish spiritual values and suppress the physical, namely their bodies. In spite of their Christian education, girls were often taught to be socially exclusive. Lower social layers could be recipients of their charity, but were not their equals (Iveljić, 2016). Girls were thus during their teenage years often far away from their families, and upon their return, they were supposed to get married to a proper husband. For example, in the 1840s, Countess Antonija Sermage spent ten years at the Salesian boarding school in Vienna, not coming home even for holidays (Steeb, 2007, p. 132). Things were changing since the late 19th century and noble girls could more easily get hold of literature previously thought of as not suited to them. For example, Countess Dora Pejačević, who became a reknown composer, in her book diary (1901–1921) listed 465 titles in German, English and French (just one in Croatian!) of authors such as Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Kant, Goethe, Tolstoy, Ibsen, Kraus or Rilke, but also by women who advocated women's rights (Beatrice Harraden) or wrote erotic novels (Evelyn Glynn) (Župan, 2012). Nevertheless, daughters were still primarily educated at home or at women's boarding schools, lagging thus behind middle-class women who made use of new institutions such as Women's Lyceum in Zagreb (1891) or enrolled at a university (they were admitted as irregular students at the Zagreb Faculty of Philosophy in 1895, as regular in 1901).

ARISTOCRATIC CULTURE

In the late 18th century Croatian and Slavonian nobility was no longer engaged in constant warfare and could lead a more sophisticated and lavish social life, indulge in arts, and practice a new culture of reading and writing letters, memoirs, diaries, travelogues or other literary, philosophical or educational works. From their childhood days, aristocrats made annotations from various kind of literature, often available in their family libraries, which contained books on religion, history, literature, philosophy, geography, economy, arts, astronomy and natural sciences. They were also used to recording events during their military, administrative, political or diplomatic career and they sometimes wrote down their family history or composed historical and political works. They had to keep up official and private correspondence practically on a daily basis, and to hold speeches in the Croatian and the Hungarian Diets, the county assemblies or various celebrations (Iveljić, 2022, pp. 102–103).

Since aristocrats spent more time in urban milieus, the culture of salons spread as well, with an important role of women as sophisticated hostesses - salonnières. For example, Anna Louise Barbara, daughter of Count Karl Keglević Bužimski, was a pupil of Beethoven, who payed visits to her salon in Pozsony and devoted some of his work to her, such as his sonata in E flat (Kinderman, 1995, p. 136). However, Croatian and Slavonian salonnières did not always meet the requirements of intellectually or artistically sophisticated Western European salonnières.

All branches of art were integrated in aristocratic education, fulfilling spiritual, moral, aesthetic or social i.e. representative functions, but arts were also practiced during leisure („otium"), bringing entertainment. They thus presented a part of a common cultural code,

shared among European aristocracy. Aristocrats could engage reknown artists to paint their portraits, to play or compose music for them, design their castles or manors or even to teach their children; they were patrons of artists, owners of significant art collections and libraries. They certainly knew how to present themselves, being true masters of visibility (Leonhard & Wieland, 2011).

Aristocracy was entangled in closely knit and widespread webs of familiar, political, economic, military, educational and cultural connections. It led a distinctive way of life which transcended provincial boundaries and bound it on European level, yet enabling it at the same time to practice some specific traits. Aristocracy cherished pluriculturalism, which means the entanglement of elements of various cultures not just their coexistence (Bhatti, 2016; Csáky, 1996, 2019). It was exposed to internal and external polyglossy and was itself ethnically heterogeneous (Croatian, German, Hungarian, Serbian, French, Italian, Irish). It was raised as a rule in German, had to learn Latin (the official language until 1847) and French, the *lingua franca* of European aristocracy. During their schooling noblemen also learned classic Greek, and often Italian, and in Slavonia not few of them were fluent in Hungarian. Many aristocrats, both men and women, were fluent in Croatian, except for the ones of foreign origin, yet even a part of them learned the basics of this language. However, Croatian was often regarded as a sheer vernacular. This viewpoint, which was not shared by all aristocrats, was strengthened by the non-existence of the standard language until the beginning of the Croatian national movement in the 1830s, when the Štokavian, as the most widespread dialect, was chosen as the basis of the new standard. Nevertheless, Štokavian was not spoken in Civil Croatia, the centre of the movement, which caused difficulties in its acceptance. (Croatian became the official language in 1847, then lost this status during neoabsolutism only to regain it in 1860). Polyglossy had also a sociolinguistical function, the choice of the language depended upon situational or social factors. For example, in the villa of Count Stjepan Keglević in Abbazia (Opatija) at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century Croatian, German, Hungarian and French were spoken. The Count spoke Hungarian or French with his wife or his guests to avoid the servants eavesdropping, and Croatian when he did not want his Hungarian spouse to understand.

Croatian national movement divided the aristocracy, which took different stands in the nationalist debate and had in general difficulties to identify itself solely in national terms (Iveljić, 2019, 2020). Its mindset was based on multi-layered identities therefore even the aristocrats who supported the national movement still maintained their transnational connections. For example, one of the leaders of the Croatian national revival, Count Janko Drašković, educated in Vienna, served as a military officer in Hungary and Galicia. He was a member of the Croatian and the Hungarian Diets and was fluent in Latin, French, German, Italian, Hungarian, Romanian and some Slavic languages. His preserved letters encompass around 100 correspondents (Dobrica, 2016).

MODERNISATION OF EDUCATION

Modernisation and the rise of the middle class after 1848 weakened the position of nobility in the long run and a part of the new plutocracy bought landed estates, often for the sole purpose of demonstrating their elite position. Some of them were ennobled and imitated elements of traditional noblemen's culture (hunting, keeping a big household with servants, an opulent everyday life). A good example is the Pongratz family which moved from the Austrian to

Slovenian Styria, and in the 1850s a part of the family settled in Zagreb. The Pongratz family practiced luxurious everyday life which was in part an imitation of aristocratic life. Their Zagreb villa, renovated by the reknown architectural bureau *Fellner & Helmer*, was so representative, that since 1930 it became the Zagreb residence of the Karađorđević dynasty. The family also built three villas in Bled, in Slovenia (Damjanović & Iveljić, 2015).

Thus the restructuring of aristocracy took place in the late 19th century. A part of the ennobled middle class and of lesser nobility rose to the ranks of new aristocracy, powerful but often not admitted to the private circle of the old aristocracy, the so called „erste Gesellschaft" (the first society). The overall change of the position of nobility put forward its way of life and culture as important ways of identification and representation (Iveljić, 2011, 2021). Aristocrats were no longer privileged feudal lords exerting many regal rights, they had to assert their elite status in the modern society. They did so by stressing their historical role, tradition and a characteristic way of life as elements that enabled them to cherish important virtues such as honesty, heroism, interest in the greater good and broad perspective. The importance of spiritual values and culture (in the broad sense of the way of life), should show that nobility was capable of transcending the individual, particular level. These ideas would be further developed in the postimperial era (Glasheim, 2005, pp. 115–120).

Aristocracy was losing ground in education as well. Even before 1848, the social structure of the students of the Zagreb Academy showed a major rise in the percentage of the sons of burghers and peasants, who were as a rule more eager students then aristocrats. From 1791 until 1830 the percentage of noblemen studying philosophy at the Zagreb Academy dropped from 31.1% to 6.1%. At the same time the percentage of the sons of burghers rose to 48.7% and peasants to 33% (Nemeth, 1957; Šidak, 1969). It seems that the social structure of the Zagreb students differed from the values for Hungary precisely in a lesser percentage of nobility (Durovics & Szögi, 2019). The percentage of noblemen in gymnasia was also in decline. In 1877/78 of altogether 1932 pupils of 8 gymnasia in Croatia and Slavonia, 2% (but 5% in Rijeka and 4% in Osijek) were the sons of major landed estate owners. Pupils mostly came from the families of artisans and merchants (40%), public servants (25%), peasants (20%) and intellectual professions (10%) (Szabo, 1988, pp. 161–164).

Nevertheless, young aristocrats were still used to enjoying their privileged position and they often embarked on grand tours, codified in the 18th century, which had an educational (paying visits to monuments of culture, practicing foreign languages, especially Italian since the tour as a rule encompassed Italy) but also a purely hedonistic aspect. Even in the late 19th century they still preferred traditional studies at the faculties of law or philosophy, avoiding medicine and natural and technical sciences, which were regarded as inappropriate partly because of physical work they involved. Aristocrats were rarely attending high agrarian schools in Austria and Hungary, even though they would provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary to run their estates.[4] Exceptions are Baron Bela Adamović Čepinski and nobleman Antun Vancaš, who studied at the agrarian college in Vienna (*Hochschule für Bodenkultur*) but were personally

[4]The first Croatian Agrarian College was founded in 1860 in Križevci, but it was not frequented by aristocracy since it was oriented toward the education of agrarian employees or even peasants. More attractive was *Georgikon* in Keszthely, the agrarian college founded by Count György Festetics, whose family originally stemmed from Croatia. From 1805 until 1847 27 students from Croatia and Slavonia attended this college, but their social structure is unknown (Durovics & Szögi, 2019).

interested in music. The same can be said for the diplomatic academy in Vienna, attended by some non-aristocratic noblemen, but without major aristocratic names among its students (Die k. und k. Konsular-Akademie, 1904, pp. 93–99). Few aristocrats entered the diplomatic service, one should mention the members of the Drašković, Pejačević and Khuen-Héderváry families. They were often Orient or the Balkans specialist. For example, Count Ljudevit (Ludwig) Drašković traveled at the turn of the century through present day Bosnia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Macedonia, making charts and taking pictures; he attended Theresianum and the Military Academy, could speak Bulgarian, Albanian, Turkish, Arabian, Persian and Romani and became Vice-consul in Konstantinople (Elsie, 2015; Janjić, 2010). The most influential diplomat was Baron Aleksandar Musulin, a new nobleman of Serbian descent. He studied law in Vienna and was stationed in St. Petersburg, Bucharest, Athens and Belgrade before becoming one of the most important Balkans expert of the Foreign Office on Ballhausplatz under Count Aloys Lexa von Aehrenthal (Godsey, 1999, p. 61; von Musulin, 1924).

Lesser nobility and non-noblemen took education more seriously often out of material reasons. They could not afford to abandon the study, and often had to fulfill the requirements of stipends they obtained. *Peregrinatio academica* was still vibrant, and students of all ranks took part in it. In the second half of the 19th century students from Croatia and Slavonia mostly studied in Vienna, Graz, Pest, Innsbruck (theology) or at the German university in Prague, and since the end of the 19th century at the Czech university in Prague (Agičić, 1998; Heppner, 1983; Iveljić, 2015; Luetić, 2015; Suppan, 1983). The social structure of the students of philosophy in Zagreb from 1874 to 1914 shows that around 7% of them were sons of landed estates owners, but not all of them were of noble origin (Luetić, 2012, p. 67). It is clear that modernisation brought about better education chances not just for petty middle class but also for peasants and even lower urban layers. Important factors were the founding of the university in Zagreb in 1874, a more elaborate system of stipends and the awareness that education is a means of social promotion. Women were for long not encouraged to study, so there are very few noble women who did so. Out of 158 female students of philosophy at the Zagreb university from 1895 until 1914, just eight were of noble origin, the only aristocrat came from Dalmatia (Luetić, 2002, pp. 180–182). The onset of the modern era with its major educational reforms (secularisation, compulsory primary schools, availability of primary and secondary and even high education to non-elite layers, a shift from classical education in humanities etc.) opened a way for the democratisation of education. The old aristocracy was as a rule not a match to the new self-made men, talented scientists, intellectuals, entrepreneurs, to mention just some. Even the arts were no longer an aristocratic domain. In short, it can be said that in Croatia and Slavonia aristocracy was losing ground in this field as well, with only some exceptions such as the series of talented women paintresses. Dominance of the middle class was especially evident in literature (Iveljić, 2018b).

From politics to literature, from running the landed estates to riding, from fighting to playing music or writing political, historical and literary works - aristocrats had to master it all, or at least pretend to do so. This wide scope of interests and their ambitions to still present themselves as leaders of the whole society, eventually turned out to be a disadvantage. In general, aristocrats were not focused on any particular activity and they were not supposed to become modern professionals, since that signalled a non-elite status to their peers. As a consequence, they often lacked expert education and a continuous professional activity (Iveljić, 2022).

The fall of the Habsburg Monarchy meant the end of the world of the aristocracy, turning it into a limited group unable to fill its ranks with new members. Croatian and Slavonian

noblemen who decided to stay in the new Yugoslav state, were deprived of their titles and their overall elite position, and the new regime treated them as political, social and national adversaries. They tried to hold on to their way of life, their landed estates, castles and manors, they cherished ties to their extended family and other noblemen, but they did not found noblemen's associations, like their counterparts in Austria, and they were far less present in the public than before the Great War (Iveljić & Preinfalk, 2022).

To conclude with, the important role of education was to enable aristocracy to achieve and maintain its elite position, and thus to distinguish itself from the rest of the society. The reforms of enlightened absolutism opened educational and career chances to non-aristocratic layers and the nationalisation and modernisation brought about the loss of nobility's traditional privileges and the emancipation of the middle class. Even though aristocracy tried to keep pace, it was in the long run no match to ambitious and diligent self-made men from this class, who became the core of modern professionals especially in natural, technical and medical sciences, precisely the studies the aristocracy still avoided.

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