

Summary

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***The Structuring of the Modern Croatian Nation:
Nation and National Identity***

The problems in studying the nation. The issues inherent in the study of the origins of peoples and nations are challenging but difficult, resulting in the social sciences with a host of fantastic hypotheses, odd reconstructions and unbridled romanticism. Many social sciences have studied the phenomenon of the formation of nations, nationalism and identity and a great number of scientific conferences have devoted their time and attention to this phenomenon. Volumes of literature have been written on the matter. When discussing the phenomenon of ethnos and ethnicity, we need to, in each individual instance, answer firstly the fundamental question of whether a critical discipline dealing with nation, nationalism and identity has appeared and, secondly, whether critical science has answered the question of what a nation is, independent of subjectivity, ideology, stereotypes and myths.

Scholars have yet to agree on what a nation is. This agreement shall not be reached for as long as the meaning of the term, modern nation, is sought in the area of human subjectivity and emotions, i.e. in awareness, feelings, nationalism, spirituality, ideas and ideologies, tradition, ancestor cults, etc. In this respect, a Copernican, i.e. a full reversal, is required in our thinking. Instead of searching for what a nation is in subjective and emotional factors, the meaning of the word, nation, must be found in the real world which includes the structures of a population such as ethnos, culture, language, education, religion and social organisation.

Despite all theoretical ramblings, the social sciences have reached a consensus regarding the stages in the development of ethnic communities in a given region (including everything from clans, tribes and various segments of a people, its regions and provinces) to the nation and national groups which gather in a political entity the dominant people (nation) and, also, various ethnic groups and their subcultures. The prevailing consensus is that at the end of this long development process (of constitution, reproduction and transformation of ethnic communities) emerges a modern nation followed by a nation-state.

It may be said that social sciences have witnessed a degree of advancement in this respect. Experts agree that the nation and national state and nationalism (as terms and entities applicable to human society) represent historical phenomena that emerged in the modern era, from the late 18th to the end of the 20th century. Secondly, these historical phenomena marked the process of modernisation, integration and transformation of the traditional way of life in the modern era into a modern civil society with the implementation of modernity in all areas of life in the course of the Industrial Revolution and industrialisation, introduction of new technologies, emergence of capitalist-industrial entrepreneurship, building of modern communications, modern state and administration and modern political system, organisation of the school system, development of literacy and education, building of modern civil institutions (economic, cultural, political, educational, etc.), urbanisation, political and social movements, etc. Thirdly, modern nations and nation-states emerge in the course of formation of mass *collectives* and new

social relations that embrace all people and all population groups in a country in which relatively equal conditions of life have been established (in aspects of culture, education, politics, economy, social relations, etc.) that gradually build up into larger cultural, language, educational, political, territorial, economic, social, interest, institutional and other *entities*.

Furthermore, through substantial research experts have agreed that earlier uses of the term, *nation*, those stemming from the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age, understood the term in a much different way. Up to the 18th century, the term, nation, marked small, purposeful, local associations, teams, groups of people or subgroups within larger human groups and communities, or larger ethnic communities or states in a given region.

In view of this, social sciences rest their argument on the real world of the people and concur that only in the 19th and 20th century, i.e. in the course of the structuring of a modern civil society, made up according to the European model of modernity, *modern nation*, *nationalism* and *collective identity* became central historical phenomena, as collectives on the level of macro phenomena, with modern *integration processes* (integrating all segments, all regions and provinces of a people into a new national entity or into a new, so-called national "unity") in the fields of literary language, the language of literacy and education, language community, language identity, education system, high civil culture, industrial capital and monetary institutions, national market, modern political system, national institutions (political, cultural, economic, educational, etc.), and wholly new social relations and conditions, etc.

Ethnos and nation. One of the crucial questions is whether in the period prior to the modern era we may talk about nations and the so-called national feelings? In all periods, before the 18th century, there is the notion of the people (as population and human community in a country) that, from the point of view of the modernisation process and transformation of the traditional life of the population, precedes the modern nation that was to be built as the culmination of a long process ending in the 19th and 20th century. In earlier periods, in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, we find in a region a people as a human community, but also a very heterogeneous population in some stage of organisation (customs, culture, technology, agriculture and economy, institutions, everyday life, housing, etc.). Such a community of people, as mental beings, possesses an awareness of the community they belong to, live in and have 'feelings' for. The feelings, beyond dispute, include both those for the people in the community and for those outside it. The problem is how to study these elements of human emotions in periods so far distant in time. Critical writing espouses that human emotions of people in distant past are difficult to study, as we cannot bring this past to life and observe it. Such writing on the process of constitution and transformation of ethnic groups has, on many occasions, begun to undermine the myth of the self-understood nations and human emotions that go with the term, nation.

In the course of emergence of the European model of modern civil and industrial society and the implementation of modernity, begun in the 18th century and continuing on, the notion of ethnos is gradually transformed to mean something new. The life of the people in earlier periods, in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, can be viewed in terms of heterogeneity (cultural, language, religious, social, political, etc.), massive illiteracy of

the population, rural conditions of life, undeveloped agricultural methods, life within a slave or feudal society, small regions and provinces divided up into numerous administrative units, poor housing and diet, frequent famines, poor hygiene, constant threat of infectious diseases, etc. This life was in every possible way (cultural, political, economic, educational, etc.) different from the life of a modern nation. The people and the life style in a Middle Ages community, anywhere in Europe, was entirely different from the life style of the people living in modern nation-states of the 19th and 20th century. Their social groups were different. People's identification with the group was different, one was with a community of people and the other with the national group (nation and nation-state).

To sum up, we may say that in all periods of human history, anywhere in the world where conditions allowed people to live, we find human communities (at some level of development) and, given sufficient historical sources, we can trace two processes and their interdependence: a) the *process* of constitution, reproduction and transformation of ethnic communities, from ethnic group, clan and tribe, to ethnos and modern nation, and b) the *process* of identification of the people with the groups they live in and the processes in their awareness of these groups and feelings for the group, for others and the identity of their ethnos and that of others (other ethnos, other nation, other people, etc.).

Scientific models. The question is how to approach the study of the phenomena such as ethnos, ethnicity and identity? Numerous theories discuss this issue. Despite the many differences, the theories boil down to two basic approaches: one studying the human subjective nature (awareness and special emotions, myths, ideologies and symbols related to ethnos, nation and nationalism), and the other in which emotional factors are not disregarded but they are believed to be impossible to study as they belong to a distant past. Thus this second approach focuses on the study of those historical phenomena and structures that we find in reality, outside of the human consciousness and subjectivity, but paramount in the process of modernisation and transformation of the traditional way of life, including such things as language, culture, economy, technology, political system, education, social relations, interactions, civic institutions, etc.

In the first model, scholars seek to find the foundation of the nation and nationality in human subjectivity, i.e. in consciousness, emotions, spirituality, ideas and ideologies, traditions, collective mental constitution of a people, ancestors cults, notions of nation and definitions of ethnos and nation, principles of solidarity, etc. This is a traditional concept dealing with the emergence of nations and leaning, by and large, on ideological and subjective factors, mostly upheld by the elites, that are, as a rule, too much generalised. There are enormous difficulties in researching these things, firstly because we cannot revive human subjectivity and emotions and, particularly, national awareness and special emotions relating to nation, and study them in a critical fashion. Secondly, these elements are frequently viewed through different ideas and ideologies of the elite, which are second-rate historical sources for the study of ethnos, ethnicity and identity. In addition, this approach is burdened with (a) a great deal of uncritical thinking and generalisation and, (b) a myth believing that nation, national awareness and feelings for nation and nationalism are to be treated as a self-understood category. Thus, the model is not sufficiently reliable for us to critically study the phenomenon of ethnos, nation, nation-state and nationalism.

In the second model, espoused in this book, the starting point is that in each case, with each people and in each country, we need first to study the *process of constitution, and reproduction and transformation of ethnic groups* from the original ethnic nucleus in the first hunting and gathering society (constituted of the family, clan and tribal group), into a complex ethnic community within the traditional agricultural and cattle-raising society (constituted of clans, tribal alliances and a growing ethnos, and organisation and development of ethnic groups), to the most complex ethnic group emerging as a modern civil society, i.e. through a gradual development of a modern nation and nation-state. Also requisite is the study of the plural world in permanent development including language, religion, ethnos, politics, social relations, etc., comprising everything that constitutes the identity of the 'first' and the 'other'. The world of the real life of a people must be studied through first-class historical sources and through the application of interdisciplinary study, scientific theories and models.

The two approaches differ significantly in their study of ethnos, ethnicity and identity. They constitute two entirely different models for study of the emergence of the modern nation and nation-state. The second model requires a Copernican reversal, in that in the study of the phenomena of ethnos and ethnicity and the emergence of the modern nation we need to start off from the facts of real life of a people.

Modernity and the process of transformation of a human/ethnic group. This book focuses on the view that modern nations emerge within modern civil societies, as the culmination of the process of constitution of human/ethnic groups in the 19th and 20th century. Two processes should be noted: 1) the process of modernity, i.e. the implementation of modernity in all aspects of life of a people in a country and, also, the process of building a modern nation that, as a modern community of people, gradually grows in the modern era and then, and only then, into a modern, civil and industrial society, as a dominant ethnos in its political space, where the nation assumes its national sovereignty and transforms itself into a nation-state; 2) the process of modernisation and transformation of (a) the traditional life structures of a population and (b) ethnic society and all ethnic communities in a country.

To sum up, a new ethnic community, known as the **modern nation**, emerges (1) in the process of modernisation and transformation of the traditional life of a population (made up of the dominant ethnos and all ethnic groups in the country), (2) in the process of building a modern society and modern ethnic communities, (3) in the process of building larger and mass collectives (language, cultural, educational, political, economic, institutional, social, etc.), (4) in the process of implementing modernity in all areas of people's lives and, related to these processes, (5) only when new and different social relations and conditions between the people in a civil society and a relative social security of the majority of people have been built (both in cities and in rural areas) in a country and among its population. In that sense, given these factors, even the most evolved, the so-called modern European civil nations, emerge only in the 19th century and not before.

We must not ignore the fact that the new industrial civilisation and the modern society, modern nation-states and the new world order are not ideal worlds. This modern world is ridden with tension and radical religious, ethnic, national, political, economic, social and other conflicts. In earlier periods of human history, in antiquity and the Middle Ages, things were different and we need to approach the study of these periods from the

point of view of the constitution of ethnic communities, but also keeping in perspective the process of modernisation and transformation of the life structures of the population in a country, for only this kind of approach shall provide us with the tools necessary to understand the phenomenon of ethnoses and ethnicity.

Modernity and the creation of the modern Croatian nation. The emergence of a modern nation and national state, and nation-state in the international community, is related to modernity and the building of the modern society. Critical thinking is in agreement on this. As for Croatia, we need first to establish when and in what forms modernity emerged in Croatia. When can we begin to speak of the onset and the relatively steady process of building a modern world in the Triple Kingdom (Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia) and, later, in the united Croatia, of the process of building a European model of modernity, modern civil society, modern social systems and modern nation. In other words, when can we begin thinking of the process of modernisation and transformation of (a) the traditional society and living conditions and (b) traditional life structures (ethnic, cultural, religious, educational, economic and social)?

When we speak of modernity and the onset of the implementation of modernity, we mean the beginnings of the building of a modern world (which is the European model of modernity, modern civil society and modern nation) in Croatian provinces and the beginning of the transformation of a traditional society and ethnic communities, a transformation of the way of life of the largest segments of the population, life in the cities, life of the workers in factories and mines, and peasants in the rural areas. We also mean the construction of housing, modes of earning a living, diet, introduction of new technologies and cultures, etc. Here we need to be aware of two conditions and two processes. Firstly, the process of implementation of modernity (in industry, agriculture, industrial capital, monetary institutions, new technologies, civic culture, schools and educational system, administration, courts, food and housing, etc.) in the Habsburg Monarchy in which Croatian people lived and, secondly, the process of building modernity and a relatively steadily paced development in all Croatian provinces. The beginnings of the pre-modern foundations of this modern world in the Habsburg Monarchy go back to the reforms introduced by the Enlightened Absolutism, i.e. from mid-18th century onwards. We need to get acquainted with these reforms as they were a state project (including administration, economy, schools, education, etc.), and their implementation on Croatian territory. There can hardly be any doubt that the reforms, particularly in agriculture, economy (initiated by large state projects of physiocracy and mercantilism), those in administration, courts, schools and others, if viewed through their gradual implementation, announced and made possible the modernisation and transformation processes in many areas of life.

In drawing any kind of final conclusions we need to exercise great caution, as the processes of modernity and transformation of life (ethnic society, ethnic groups, housing, food, social security for most people, health care, etc.) were, neither in Europe nor in the Habsburg Monarchy, smooth. They were, in fact, very long and continued in their essential elements into the early 20th century and, in some segments, even later.

The process of implementing modernity and building of a modern world in Croatian provinces may be traced to the late 18th century with first shy attempts to modernise the economy into a new, capitalist economy and continue its gradual development. It

constitutes the beginnings of the first modern economic movement on Croatian territory that will be felt both in the cities and in the rural regions in the 19th and 20th century. This relatively continued process, marked by the first nationally based projects and their gradual realisation in the economy (trades, crafts, industrialisation, agriculture, introduction of new technologies), emergence of a language of literature, middle-class culture, schools and education system, administration, courts, emergence of civic institutions and civil public, new forms of communication (newspapers, magazines, leaflets, brochures, books, cultural societies, political parties, telegraph, etc.), begins only with the appearance of the cultural and political movements beginning in Croatia with the Croatian National Revival (the so-called Illyrian Movement) in the 1830s.

In view of this, we can trace the various processes from the beginning of the Croatian National Revival, i.e. from 1835 onwards and, in particular, from the revolutions in 1848/49 and 1860/61, all the way to the early 20th century. This period was marked by gradual change and laying of the key foundations of European modernity in Croatia, so that on the Croatian territories and in the public domain, we can observe the emergence of a modern capitalist economy, industrialisation and implementation of industrial technology, emergence of industrial capital, monetary institutions, advances in agriculture (new technologies and methods) and changes of life in the rural regions in general (new methods in house building and style of living, food preparation and diet, manufacture of clothing, footwear and national costume, developments in the school system, literacy and education in general, etc.), emergence of a new industrial civilisation, new literary language, new language community, emergence of a modern middle-class culture, modern schools and education system, modern political life (that will eventually gather all Croatian provinces into a single political entity), modern administration, courts, growth of new urban centres, new national and civic associations and institutions, etc.

The process of gradual structuring of a modern civil society and modern social system was long and included modern industrial and capitalist economy, monetary institutions, high culture, schools and education, political and government system, etc. It gained momentum particularly after the overthrowing of the feudal system (legal, social, political, institutional) during in the revolution of 1848/49 and especially after 1860/61, when the foundations of a modern civil and industrial society were laid in Croatia.

The process of transformation of Croatian people and their traditional society was long. For the most part the population was illiterate (at the end of the 19th century 90% of Croatian population was illiterate). This would change in the 20th century with the percentage of literate people sharply higher and with a higher general level of education. A traditionally agricultural society, living in traditional communities, was to be restructured into a modern middle-class society and the largely rural population would assume the characteristics of a civic world (in late 19th century Croatia ca. 90% of the population lived in the rural regions). The individual regions and provinces were gathered into larger national entities and new national collectives (Croatia's ethnic and political territory was divided into many provinces, regions and administrative units). These times meant the beginning of the most profound transformation of the Croatian people in their entire history. It was the beginning of the structuring of a modern Croatian nation and national state. A fact that must not be ignored is that these processes of structuring a civil society and modern Croatian nation throughout Croatian provinces did not proceed at an

even pace. They were a gradual, step-by-step phenomenon, occurring in altered social and political conditions, that continued into the 20th century.

In addition to the gradual structuring of the world of modernity and modern civil society, and an industrial civilisation society, this period was also marked by the emergence of a new and multiple identity (language, cultural, political, ethnic, national, etc.) and people, more intensely than ever, identified with this newly emerged world that was growing around them. The crucial factor affecting this identification process was the modern state with upgraded administration, political system, courts, military, census, introduction of personal identification documents, etc. At the same time we can follow two processes: the process of a gradual implementation of modernity and the structuring of a modern civil and industrial society and modern nation, and the process of modernisation and transformation of traditional structures (ethnic, cultural, educational, religious, economic and social), and the creation of multiple new identities on the Croatian territory in the 19th and 20th century.

The period was marked by permanent change (in literary language, national culture, modern economy, schools and education, political system, civic institutions, social relations, social security, social mobility, housing and diet, etc.), reflecting the European model of modernity that would lead to the structuring of a modern civil society, modern nation and national state. In other words, the implementation of modernity in all areas of life and the creation of a world of modern society, in the country where it is implemented, gradually changed the structure of ethnic groups and transformed all levels of ethnic communities. Therefore, in every country and with every nation we need to trace (a) the process of constitution and reproduction and transformation of ethnic groups (both of the dominant ethnic group and all minor ethnic groups), (b) the process of modernisation and transformation of traditional structures of a population, and (c) the phenomenon of ethnos and ethnicity, and identity in its overall complexity.