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CROATIA GOING GLOBAL CULTURAL CROSSOVERS: FROM PEASANT KERCHIEF TO THE BOURGEOIS CRAVAT

The 1990s were an intense period for the construction of the symbols of Croatian identity. One such project – the story of the Croatian provenance of the necktie authored by a non-profit institution named Academia Cravatica – is interesting analytically not only because they arranged some more or less spectacular cultural happenings, but because of their skilful handling of the iconic postmodern concepts of flexible identities, concentric circles and levels of identities, interactions and hybrid cultures, cultural relativism and the like. After presenting some "cravatologic" activities, I will analyse, through the history of the diffusion, transformation and changing semantics of the kerchief of Croatian peasants, the shifts to which that artefact was exposed from the 17th century to the present.

Key words: identity; kerchief; necktie; Croatia

Against the backdrop of the idea that "Croatia must 'become aware' of its identity and introduce it to the world" (Skoko 2004:17), nineteen-nineties Croatia was a period of the general *manufacturing of identity*. The buzz then was the "(renewed) birth/awakening", "discovering", "creating", "redefining", and sometimes the "sobering" of the Croatian identity. Those discussions and disputes were not only academic or induced by state institutions but also – not only then but in preceding years too – almost unavoidable topics of "ordinary" people in everyday life (cf. Skoko 2004:165).¹

Identity, the way we use it most often in everyday talk and politics, is based on acknowledgement of a common origin or the common characteristics of a certain group, from which follows a naturally arising mutual solidarity and affiliation among the members of the group. Arising from this

¹ The text was published with minor differences in Croatian language under the title "Znate li da kravata potječe od Hrvata?" (Čapo Žmegač 2008).

common origin or these common characteristics is the widely accepted view that identity unveils itself through history as *permanently the same and unchangeable*, pointing to a certain deep and, in historical processes, *untouched essence* of the group.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Croatian sociologist and politician Slaven Letica described the discovering of the Croatian national identity in a similar way: after the historical ideological sediments are removed from the consciousness of the people, Letica says, the "*preserved stone in its imperfection and beauty*" will become manifest.

Without a common ideology and their one and only leader, Tito, and their common enemies (of all colours), the people and nations will be revealed in all of their *differences, entities and identities* (Letica, according to Skoko 2004:163, emphasis added).

Therefore, identity is, in its common, and to the present day, its widest held opinion, stability and difference fixed in the moment of its origin (cf. Hall 1996), or, according to Letica, a "stone freed from the sediments of history".

This was the essentialist understanding of identity as used by most Croatian intellectuals, scientists and journalists of the 1990s who were trying to define the Croatian identity.² They were searching for the foundations of Croatian identity, i.e., its determining characteristics, in geographic locations, most often stressing the Adriatic/Mediterranean or Middle-European, and rarely Balkan setting of Croatia (cf. Skoko 2004; Rihtman-Auguštin 1999). They looked for foundations in the past, most often in the distant, medieval past and later, in the recent past, in the period of the Croatian War of Independence and after it. Those looking for deeper temporal roots believed that various versions of old Croatian military history were key, including the successes (and failures) of Croatian principalities and kingdoms; some reached even deeper by speculating about the Iranian origins of Croats or their original homeland behind the Carpathians. Common to all was the thesis that Croatia belonged to the West European cultural circle, i.e., western civilization (Skoko 2004:165).

After independence, and in the midst of attempts to define the Croatian identity, theses concerning the "Croatian vassal mentality" ("vassal" political culture, according to Skoko 2004:162) emerged, which some explained also as a "lack of identity" (ibid.:163); some talked about "thin identity" (ibid.:168) or about the "Croatian conflicting quality" (ibid.:169), while others opined that particularly the period of the 1990s was crucial for the birth of "Croatian self-confidence" – to make it possible for Croats to perceive themselves as a nation on equal footing with European and other nations of

² Božo Skoko (2004) collected and listed these attempts in the book *Hrvatska – identitet, image, promocija*.

the world (ibid.:163-165). Some authors strived to "determine precisely" Croatian identity because they considered that doing so would be the prerequisite for the economic and societal development of Croatia. This latter idea carries with it the need to preserve Croatian identity under conditions of globalization (ibid.:164).

These (re)presentations of Croatian identity take some given characteristics of identity as complete, unchangeable, inevitably ending in fixedness, a proposition that is antithetical to the idea of identity as being in constant change or as a "changeable sameness". The essence of identity lies in the processes of identifications and re-identifications (Hall 1996). Therefore, every attempt at preserving some historical element of identity (which may be considered desirable from the present-day political-social perspective) for the benefit of an imagined past or ideology-clad image of a desired identity, actually suppresses new processes of identification in the present.

Further, identity is construed through *difference* and is constantly destabilized by what is left out. That is why identities are in constant flux; they are, in their essence, *changeable*. Identities are constituted because of specific historical circumstances, in specific places within specific discursive formations and practices, always in relation to some constituted others. Identities are less about what we are or where we came from, and *more about what we can become*, how we are represented and how we can re/present ourselves (ibid.). Because they appear within the context of specific power relations, identities are more the product of labeling of differences and exclusions and less a mark of identical, naturally arising unities. Therefore, they do not evoke common origins in history and the sameness of the present and past community, but present the *possibility and pledge of the future of a community*, that uses the sources of history, language and culture for its promotion. Or, according to Zygmunt Bauman (1996:19, emphasis added):

Though all too often hypostasized as an attribute of a material entity, identity has the ontological status of a project and a postulate (...) *Identity is a critical projection of what is demanded and/or sought upon what is...*

The projects of Croatian identity production that were developed in the 1990s suffer also from their historicist orientation; privileging antiquity, they reach into the past, most often the very distant past, whereas identities are always in the present. Indeed, they are a result of a creative relationship with the past, but that relationship is always determined by the present, by the relevant others (against which we – the group, position and identify, cf. Čapo Žmegač 2007) and by the power relationships of the moment. As the journalist and writer Jurica Pavičić wrote, we need an identity that is lived, but instead we were being served an "eschatological story about the outer wall of

Christianity, 'from the seventh century', about the seven branches of King Tomislav" (Pavičić, according to Skoko 2004:171).³

Somewhat more recent is the story that Academia Cravatica has given us of the cravat. Different than other contributions to Croatian identity of the last fifteen years, the story, although historically oriented, corresponds with the present day, is open to new meanings and interpretations and, by being inventive and even spectacular, attracts the attention of the public. Based on the necktie, Academia Cravatica is, to the present day, probably the most successful promoter of Croatian identity, more successful than any of the State's attempts⁴ at presenting Croatian culture to domestic or international audiences.

With the aid of the cravat a "small European nation" conquers the World

The orchestrated project of inventing the tie as a Croatian symbol of identity began in the mid-1990s. Potomac Inc., manufacturer of luxury ties, women's kerchiefs and other clothing accessories, founded Academia Cravatica in 1997 as a non-profit organization "that engages in the study, protection and advancement of the tie as a portable Croatian and world heritage".⁵ Academia Cravatica – whose name was obviously a play on *Academia Croatica* (short

³ Worth mentioning is one of the more recent contributions to the construction of Croatian identity, *Croatica* (Budak 2006), an undertaking aimed at "choosing what we can judge in our heritage to be exceptional not only by our own measures, but according to whether it would be included in similar selections out of the narrow confines of national culture" (ibid.:8). *Croatica* was written at the end of the 1990s, when Croatian culture, according to the editor's opinion, "was exposed to a deep crisis", when the "flood of kitsch and trash, simultaneous with the appearance of immoderate overestimations of the Croatian contribution to the European and planetary cultural heritage, caused disruption of the value system by which we would be able to gauge the production considered by us as Croatian" (ibid.). While preparing this selection the editor presented relevant questions and ideas: What is Croatian national culture? (ibid. 9) Are we allowed to look at the culture as national at all? (ibid. 10) What we consider ours, somebody else might consider his (ibid.). Answers are offered which may lead to polemics, but which, it must be accepted, offer up to now, the most thoroughly thought out attempt to determine and judge what is valuable in Croatian culture.

⁴ Strongly supported by the media, but quite soon infamously failed, was the attempt of a few government and independent experts of various profiles, pronounced the "task force of the President of the Republic", to set into motion the coordinated creation and promotion of Croatian identity, published in Author's Notebook (*Autorska bilježnica* 2000). Frustrated with the dilettante writing of the associates of Author's Notebook, one ethnologist proclaimed as a motto, i.e. anti-motto, of that project, one splendid poem of the Croatian émigré writer Boris Maruna with the ironic title, *Croats are getting on my nerves* (Pleše 2000).

⁵ Unless otherwise stated, all citations given here are from the web pages of Academia Cravatica: <http://academia-cravatica.hr> (October 2007).

in Latin for the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts) – relies on the work of a few regular and occasional associates.

Before founding Academia Cravatrica, Potomac Inc., began the promotion of its product, ties, with the question: "Did you know that the cravat originated from Croats?" It offered the following answer, which was printed in more or less the same translation in several languages, including German, French, Italian, Japanese and English, as given here:

During the European Thirty Years War (1618-1648), the Croatian legendary light cavalry reached all the way to Paris. It is interesting that the Croats, as part of their traditional national costume, tied lively colored scarves around their neck in their own special manner. In the time of Louis XIV, this beautiful Croatian style impressed the fastidious Parisians so much that they adopted this new fashion item worn *à la manière croate* (in the Croatian way). This is the story of the cravat's entrance into the fashion of the time, the story of Europe and the whole civilized world, conquered by the cravat as a symbol of culture and prestige.

Further in the text, this explanation plays on a negative German stereotype (Dronske 2006:127ff)⁶ of Croats who conquered the world with the tie instead of by the sword:

Old and wise books also attest that one small European nation conquered more of the world than Batu Khan or old Romans. In the mid-17th century it started silently, without hatred and arms, from its cradle between the Pannonian Valley and the Adriatic Sea, and arrived to innumerable places of the known world. Traces of that conquest are visible even today. Already, the symbol of my people is worn by the people of the whole planet.

In what follows I will analyse how one private initiative, by Academia Cravatrica, supported by one for-profit undertaking, by Potomac Inc., transformed its activity of promoting ties into a cultural act. These two institutions created a Croatian and international brand of ties called *Croata*,

⁶ We know of a negative characterization of Croats in Schiller's *Wallenstein*, in which Croats were depicted as "robbers, somewhat narrow-minded Catholic soldiers" (Dronske 2006:127). Dronske explains that recently Hans Magnus Enzensberger continued that tradition. In his youth novel *Where have you been, Robert?*, in which a boy travels through time and is accidentally brought to The Thirty Years War, Schiller's Croatian soldiers-plunderers come to life as the robber named Krawatta, who, according to the plot, tries to convince one owner of a large estate to begin to speak by threatening him with cutting out his tongue, and after a little while, together with his affiliates, "throws himself on a girl" (Enzensberger 1998, according to Dronske 2006:127-128). Analyzing the image of Croats in the literature of the German speaking areas, Ulrich Dronske still concludes that in contemporary German literature one cannot talk seriously about the existence of a cultural stereotype of Croats; various mental images of Croats circulate, but those are individual perceptions without meaning outside of a private space, and are the result of various ideological positions of their authors.

having an economic value (luxurious materials, fine craftsmanship, exquisite design), but also carrying an emotional charge and a philosophical message.

History, philosophy and the promotion of the tie

On the web pages of Academia Cravatica we find that they set out "from the authentic historical fact that the tie arises as an expression of the genius of the Croatian people, and that this fashionable item is a medium through which it is possible to send many discreet messages to the world".⁷ They start by giving the etymology of the word (Croat – French for Croat, cravate – French for tie, cravat) given in Encyclopaedia Britannica and in some French and Italian writings and historical accounts about the presence of Croats on European battlefields during the Thirty Years War:

Since the year 1635 Croatian soldiers served in France, so that in 1667 the special regiment 'Royal Cravates' was formed, getting its name after the Croats.

And then they continue with picturesque details added to these historical data:

The French were enthused with the kerchiefs that they saw on the chests of Croatian soldiers. Simple, picturesque, fluttering and also elegantly tied, those kerchiefs were a real contrast to the stiff, high collars of that time. After Croats, they named that kerchief – cravat.

The inventiveness in the story of the cravat is not without poetry, for "in the beginning of the cravat there was love, a story about a romance whose power and beauty lies in a faithfulness that abridges all difficulties and dangers". In one promotional text, the Croatian writer Božidar Prosenjak tells the story of a tie that appears "in the heart of a girl in love". The kerchief also allegedly appears as part of a festive peasant costume:

At the moment of her parting with the young man, who had to leave for some time, the girl removed the kerchief from her shoulder and tied it around her fiance's neck as a token of her fidelity. The young man wore the kerchief with pride and the beauty of that lovely ornament was the reason that similar kerchiefs found their way on the chests of young Croatian men and women of that time. In that way, it became part of the holiday clothing of the Croatian people... (Prosenjak 1998).

In the recounting of the evolution of the final form that the tie took, the authors of the idea of the Croatian tie as "ornament to the world" did not fall into the trap of national self-pride and the negation of the contributions of other nations and cultures:

⁷ See note 5.

By acknowledging the significant role of, in the first place, the *French people* in the history of the cravat, who recognised that ornament on the chests of Croatian soldiers in the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and later developed it and improved upon it, by acknowledging also the role of the *English people*, who took it to the world ten years later, and all others who fell for the cravat and experienced it as their own, we support the principles of cooperation, between the Croatian people themselves and between other peoples, on which principles are built the foundations of the highest forms of civility (emphasis added).

The participation of other nations in the final shaping of the artefact's looks is also stressed on the web pages of Academia Cravatica:

Later, the *American* textile manufacturer Jesse Langsdorf took a revolutionary step by cutting the cloth into three pieces and then sewing it back in a way that facilitated tying and industrial production. *Italians* added new art elements in the design of the tie... (emphasis added).

It is apparent that promoters of the tie acknowledge the centuries-old transcultural and transnational *bricolage* to which the artefact was exposed, emphasizing that the tie is an example of the "creative interaction and cultural exchange between various peoples and cultures". While not negating its West-European shaping, especially in the English and French elite circles of the 18th and 19th century, they still stress the Croatian lineage of the tie and call Croatia the *Homeland of the Tie*, promoting the tie as a symbol of Croatian identity. The Croatian origin of the tie is just one element of that European and world cultural asset; the cravat is to them a metonymy of Croatian culture, a sign of Croatian inventiveness and at the same time an affirmation of belonging to the West-European cultural circle. The director of Academia Cravatica, Marijan Bušić, talks about the metaphoric circles of Croatian affiliations in that sense: from local, over regional, and up to Croatian, European and planetary circles, "which do not obliterate mutually, but expand and complement each other".

In its texts Academia Cravatica assigns meanings that extend out of the national sphere: The tie is "a symbol of male elegance", "a symbol of success, belonging to a certain elite, some social group or community", and at the "deeper symbolic level, the tie mediates two key values of Western Civilization: The virtue of the joy of life and the virtue of moderation". The director of Academia Cravatica, prone to philosophizing, explains this latter semantic twist offered by the cravat:

The picturesqueness of a tie, its breeziness, richness of motifs and samples, play of colours – that is a picture of life's buoyancy, joie de vivre and spontaneity. Tying a knot is, at the same time, a rational process, a procedure, a sign of the virtue of moderation (discipline, limits). Those two virtues – joy and moderation, seemingly opposite but still

complementary, are foundational to the values of Western Civilization, stemming from the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian cultures.

The tie is therefore decoded as a "medium that transmits feelings and values" that are supranational, inscribed in the foundations of western civilization itself; it is re-semanticised as an indicator and affirmation of human dignity and high moral criteria, and in the words of M. Bušić:

The vertical of the tie symbolises a human vertical – human dignity, self confidence, festive moments and moments of celebration.

That is why the promoters of ties quote the words of more or less famous people on its internet pages. "The tie is a principle of moral order. It is one kind of confirmation of what you are or what you would like to be" (Domenico Rea),⁸ or "La cravate, c'est l'homme" (Honoré de Balzac).

As a symbol of the values of Western Civilisation and humanness in general, the tie is construed as a means of initiation. For a young man, the first wearing of a tie is a *rite of passage*, a rite for attaining maturity, or, as Oscar Wilde put it:

A well-tied tie is the first serious step in life.

This is why one of the activities of Academia Cravatica is its various educational programmes, outlined already in 1995, through which they wished to give the tie a prominent place in the upbringing and education of children.⁹

Academia Cravatica consistently promotes ties as an element of Croatian cultural identity and as a part of world cultural heritage through its creative installations.

For instance, on October 18, 2003, the "biggest tie in the world" (808 meters long) was installed, with the help of mountain climbers and citizens, around an antique monument, the Arena in Pula. Regional (Istrian) and state dignitaries recognised the event as an important cultural project and backed it financially and with their presence. Also, as Academia's internet portal states, publicity on world TV-networks was not absent, since it is estimated that one billion people saw the installation! The creator of the installation, the already mentioned Marijan Bušić, gave the following interpretation of the undertaking:

⁸ Italian writer and journalist.

⁹ Compare the explanation of the project "A Tie in the Upbringing and Education of Children and Youth": "In that process a tie has an important role as a universal symbol of festivity and success, dignity and civility, and at the same time represents an epochal Croatian contribution and the most distinguishable sign of the image of Croatia in the world. That process of upbringing for identity, with an emphasis on creativity, interests and ideas of children, involves also upbringing in the recognition and appreciation of other people, as well as cultural identities of other nations."

Today, under the conditions of globalization, with the tendency of levelling cultural differences, by this Installation which links antiquity, the modern age and Croatia, I want to emphasize, among other things, the existence and value of different cultural identities.

Red, the colour of the mega-tie, was explained as polysemic: simultaneously a token of love (as in the story of its origins) and the colour of the Croatian coat-of-arms and of Istrian soil, with which Bušić wanted to stress "Croatian cultural identity and simultaneously its openness and belonging to the wider European cultural circle".

Three years later, the same person undertook an even more grandiose action permeated with national and transnational symbolism. Titled "A Tie around Croatia", he organised the girdling of Croatia by a red thread (about 4 000 kilometers long). The action symbolised the linking of Croatian cultural and geographic differences into a single whole. In the project proposal it was written that using the "tie as a medium" he wanted to "make its citizens and the world aware of" Croatia. The thread that substituted for the tie was coloured red to carry "multiple symbolic messages of love (from the love between man and woman, to the love towards one's homeland, to calls for coexistence and community among peoples of the world)". The goal of the project was not only to unite Croatian differences, stressing the cultural identity of Croatia and promoting Croatia as the Homeland of the Tie, but also to establish "closeness with the inhabitants of neighbouring countries". The newspapers and Croatian television reported on the action, especially its beginning and end, both staged in Dubrovnik at the height of the tourist season (July 10th) and at its end (September 8th).¹⁰

In all places through which that red thread-tie passed, it served as an impetus for the organisation of various local events, including the participation of associations for the promotion of traditional heritage and the presence of local people of power. At one point in its journey, in the town of Zadar in Dalmatia, it was stated that "this thread that has passed through the whole of Croatia will soon (...) bring us into the European Union".

Another major undertaking that Bušić brought to fruition occurred in the middle of a 25 hectare field of wheat, outside the village of Davor near Nova Gradiška. A tie, covering 10 hectares, 850 meters long and 230 meters wide, was formed by harvesting wheat. First, Bušić, joined by Slavonian women in folk costumes, began the wheat sculpture by harvesting by hand. Then the machinery finished the job. Songs by members of a local folklore

¹⁰ The end itself was spectacular. One of the best known Croatian mountaineers climbed the city's watch tower at the eastern side of Old Town in Dubrovnik and hung the 12-meter long red tie. Parachutists of Aero-club Split also participated, and, carrying a three-meter long red tie and the Croatian flag, landed on the nearby Dubrovnik beach, Banje, one of the "nicest beaches in the world", as stated on Academia's internet pages.

society rounded out the event, as did horsemen in the robes of 17th century Croatian soldiers.

The action, "The Tie in the Rye", was characterised by commentators on the pages of Academia Cravatica as the continuation of Marijan Bušić's "intensive communication with the world (...) through a new cravatological creation", as an "ecologically aware action", and as a "piece of art" (so called landart). New installations were announced at that time, "Cravat around Pannonia" – the symbolical linking of ten countries in the area of the former Pannonian Sea, and the tying of a cravat around Dubrovnik.

Academia Cravatica collects tie-inspired visual arts pieces. From the first exhibition in Pula in 2003, consisting of about twenty works of art, the number of pieces has grown many-fold. The exhibition, under the name, "Challenges of the Tie: The Tie as a Croatian Contribution to Global Culture", was co-organized with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration¹¹ and has been arranged, so far, in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mostar and Sarajevo), Egypt (Cairo and Alexandria), the Republic of South Africa (Pretoria and Johannesburg), Poland (Krakow and Gdansk), Austria (Vienna), Bulgaria (Sophia and Ruse) and Germany (Berlin). The holdings of the exhibition contain at the moment around 120 works of art by artists from fifteen nationalities. The exhibits will become part of the future Museum of the Cravat, where Academia Cravatica wants to show the "historical development of the tie as a distinctive communication medium" and answer the question, why is "the tie essential in the culturological context of Western civilization, and nowadays, even of the whole world?"

The inventiveness of Academia's team is inexhaustible and it cannot be presented in its entirety. I will therefore mention here only the latest idea. According to internet sources, leading Croatian politicians have agreed to mark October 18 World Day of the Tie. In 2007, the event passed relatively unnoticed, but in many places in Croatia, red ties did appear on public monuments.

The images employed by Academia Croatica systematically present the tie as both a Croatian and a global symbol. Now and then some inconsistency slips in, or perhaps they do not know how to reconcile these two aspects, calling Croatia the Homeland of the Cravat and at other times saying that although Croats did not "copyright" it, they are the ones who "spread it across Europe, so that it came under the Croatian name, and became an unavoidable

¹¹ This is, to my knowledge, the only time that a State institution was involved in the promotion of the tie, which was organised by Academia Cravatica. Whether its involvement was financial or only supportive – remains unclear. It should be added that in the early 1990s, before these organised efforts by Academia Cravatica at promoting the tie, the latter had already been used as a State gift.

fashion accessory". Both, the perception of Croats as the "inventors" of the tie and as its disseminators enabled designer Boris Ljubičić to come up with the motto, "Croatian is global". This reputable Croatian designer believes that the tie is an "exceptional example of a Croatian design of planetary value". Moreover, as interpreted by Academia Cravatica, it becomes a bridge, exemplifying the cooperation between the nations whose people wear it, Bušić would say, a "medium" on which can be inscribed numerous meanings, systematically investigated and complemented by Academia Cravatica.

The tie – peasant and bourgeois, regional, national and global

As we know from the ethnographic literature (that, to be accurate, did not deal specifically with the origins of the tie), wearing a kerchief around the neck was a detail of clothing of Croatian peasants in northern Croatia (in villages around Zagreb, in Slavonia and Baranja; see Muraj 1998).¹² Therefore, a kerchief or scarf was a regional clothing item, socially limited to the peasant strata of the population.

One recent historiographic interpretation mostly confirms the story offered by Academia Cravatica, that Croatian soldiers fighting on European battlefields brought their neck bandage to Europe in the 17th century (Cvitan Černelić 2006). The first to adopt it from Croatian soldiers were other military ranks (*ibid.*:364). The kerchief of Croatian soldiers/peasants arrived to West European civilian wear around 1670 and since then "grew in detail of an exceptional complexity" (*ibid.*). Contexts of its usage changed often: The kerchief became part of gentry fashion attire, and then later, of city-dwellers, changing shape, colour and meaning, according to the various social groups using it. At the end of this historic process, here quite fragmentarily retold, the tie became a mandatory piece of urban men's dress, spreading from European culture to the whole of Western Civilization. Only then was it reintroduced to Croatia, in the shape that is now known to us!

The following interpretation offers a somewhat more complex rendition of the Croatian conquest of the world by the tie. If we want to be correct in interpreting historical processes, it must be said that the tie did not arrive to Croatian bourgeois fashion directly by the acceptance of a detail of the peasant wear of northern Croatia, but indirectly, first passing through

¹² The associates of the Academia Cravatica are working laboriously in that field too, looking for historical data that would confirm the earliest appearance of the kerchief/scarf in Croatian folk costume. They have learned that "in Croatian traditional culture, in Croatia and in other lands where Croats live, there are forty different men's and women's folk costumes that have as a mandatory element a scarf-tie". On the internet pages one can also read that a scarf is tied around the neck of Roman soldiers depicted on the Trajan's Column in Rome.

European bourgeois culture. In the language of marketing, from what was originally an export product, the kerchief of Croatian peasants, it returned as an import product from Europe to Croatian bourgeois culture after having undergone significant changes in shape, meaning, social carriers etc. Now, Croats, or more precisely, Academia Cravatica and Potomac Inc. are trying to export it again, this time as a brand, *Croata*.

More reliable data about when and how the reception into Croatian bourgeois culture took place still do not exist, but according to the recently held exhibition "Knot in Stone – Cravat Imota" (organized by Academia Cravatica), it seems that the tie was a part of the inventory of town and festive peasant wear in some Croatian lands as early as the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries (cf. Lončar and Budimir 2007).

Through the diffusion, transformation and re-semanticisation of the kerchief of Croatian peasants/soldiers, changes occurred at several levels. In a societal sense, from peasant/military cloth it became a part of bourgeois attire. In a spatial sense, it spread from a relatively narrow geographical space throughout the social space of the contemporary bourgeoisie, a space that cannot be precisely determined geographically (territorially) because of its globality. If we look at the ethno-national scale of the change, numerous re-semanticisations can be seen: from an artefact of the regional culture of one Croatian ethnicity, it becomes a national label due to the meeting of Croatian soldiers with their European counterparts. Subsequently, by being appropriated in European dress styles, it becomes an international or transnational cultural asset in which various traditions, wants and contexts meet and meld. Finally, from the 1990s on, especially through the endeavours of Academia Cravatica, national, Croatian content is being imprinted on the artefact, thereby, being re-semanticised as a national tag. Its content is, at the same time, inter- and transnational, because it is being proclaimed a symbol of the European,¹³ i.e., bourgeois culture and a sign of some fundamental civilizational and universally held human values (human dignity, freedom and responsibility).

At first glance it seems that the actions through which Academia Cravatica promotes its philosophy (and indirectly Potomac Inc. and the brand *Croata*)¹⁴ are well thought-out because they script a desirable project of Croatian identity, in the sense that Bauman and Hall, mentioned earlier, talk about identity as a project. On the one hand their actions present Croatia as

¹³ According to Nikola Albanež, museologist and the associate of Academia Cravatica, the tie has been adopted as a symbol of the European Union, so much so that it has become customary for the EU president country to present its tie at the beginning of its mandate.

¹⁴ Just a reminder that a for-profit organization, Potomac Inc., a manufacturer of ties and other luxury accessories, is in the background of the activities of Academia Cravatica, as mentioned earlier.

"unity in diversity", on the other, they teach Croats tolerance towards other nations. Therefore, they educate Croats about how to be ethnocentric (in the sense of valuing their own cultural heritage, cf. Bernardi 1994), but at the same time, to go beyond ethnocentrism (in the sense that the organisers of Academia's projects strive towards human values surpassing the conventions of their own culture, for tolerance, respect and cooperation between nations and peoples, cf. Spradley and McCurdy 2000). Those projects promote, in parallel, certain values as both national (Croatian) and transnational (bourgeois), demanding an equal place for Croatian culture within the contemporary multicultural world.

However, there are some limits to this. Is it really about an attempt to build into the tie some universal human content and values? Are they not reduced to western bourgeois ideas, proclaiming a European universalism of sorts and an evolutionary idea of hierarchical cultures with the European culture standing at the peak of human development?¹⁵ In these efforts to present the tie as a symbol of certain values of bourgeois civilization, we can recognize the *eurocentricty*, or, to be more precise, the centering around the West, of its promoters and of the whole imaginary into which they have packaged the artefact. This orientation stems from the geographical situatedness of Croatia and a momentarily dominant idea that Croats and Croatia belong to West European culture, and also, from the fact that the tie emerged within western bourgeois culture. However, that eurocentricty is problematic from the anthropological, culturally relativistic paradigm. Namely, when the tie is being equated with certain "basic human values" and "human dignity", then to all those who are not wearing it, whether they belong to the western bourgeois circle or not, "basic human values" and "dignity" are being denied.¹⁶ Therefore, despite the universalistic terms in which it is couched, a critical shortcoming of the discourse of Academia Cravatica is that it is evolutionary and eurocentric.

In the end, it is possible to identify yet one other problematic spot in the promotion of the tie as offered by Academia Cravatica. Promoters of the tie have lost sight of the female part of the Croatian (and the world's) population. Their construct reduces humanity to males (although ties are occasionally worn by women too, something that the associates of Academia Cravatica gladly emphasize). Aside from presenting the Croatian national identity through a masculine prism, the philosophy of the tie is presented from the

¹⁵ As explicitly presented on the web pages of Academia Cravatica, in a photomontage displaying the development of humankind from, one guesses, *Homo neanderthalensis* (actually also excavated in Croatia) to a modern human wearing a tie!

¹⁶ This caused a comment from one art historian here in Croatia, not prone to putting on a tie, that he puts on and wears his tie "invisibly" (cf. Šimat Banov 2007:308). Witty remark, based on the popular saying *Habitus non facit monachum*, i.e., Clothes do not make the man.

patriarchal standpoint: namely, a woman's only role is that of lover and wife who sends her man off and serves him (by tying his tie).

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HRVATSKO POSTAJE GLOBALNO KULTURNI MÉTISSAGE: OD SELJAČKOGLA RUPCA DO GRAĐANSKE KRAVATE

SAŽETAK

Devedesete su godine prošloga stoljeća razdoblje intenzivne konstrukcije simbola hrvatskoga identiteta. Jedan između tih projekata – kreacija priče o hrvatskoj provenijenciji kravate – koju potpisuje privatna neprofitna ustanova nazvana Academia Cravatica – analitički je zanimljiv ne samo zbog priređivanja manje ili više spektakularnih kulturnih događanja nego i zbog vještoga baratanja s ikoničkim postmodernim konceptima fleksibilnih identiteta, koncentričnih krugova i razina pripadnosti, interakcije i miješanja kultura i sl.

U radu su predstavljene odabранe "kravatološke" akcije u organizaciji Academie Cravatice, a potom se kroz povijest širenja, promjena i resemantizacija rupca hrvatskih seljaka analiziraju mijene kojima je taj predmet bio izložen od 17. stoljeća do danas.

Kroz povijest difuzije, transformacija i resemantizacija rupca hrvatskih seljaka/vojnika mijene su se događale na nekoliko razina. U društvenom smislu, od seljačkog (vojničkog) odjevnog predmeta postao je dijelom građanskog odijela. U prostornom smislu, s relativno uskog zemljopisno definiranog prostora raširio se društvenim prostorom suvremenoga građanstva, koje se zbog globalnosti zemljopisno (teritorijalno) ne može pobliže odrediti. Promotre li se etno-nacionalni razmjeri mijene, uočavaju se brojne resemantizacije: od predmeta kao dijela regionalne kulture jedne hrvatske etnije u susretu hrvatskih vojnika sa svojim europskim kolegama postaje nacionalnom oznamkom. Potom, preuzimanjem u europske odjevne stilove biva inter-nationalnim ili trans-nationalnim kulturnim dobrom u kojemu se susreću i kreoliziraju različite tradicije, htijenja i konteksti. Konačno, od devedesetih godina 20. stoljeća naovamo, posebno nastojanjima Academie Cravatice, u predmet se upisuju nacionalni, hrvatski sadržaji, dakle ponovo se konstruiru kao nacionalna oznamka. Istodobno dobiva i inter- i trans-nationalne sadržaje jer se proglašava simbolom europske, odnosno građanske kulture i znakom nekih temeljnih civilizacijskih i općeljudskih vrijednosti (ljudskog dostojanstva, slobode i odgovornosti).

Autorica zaključuje da akcije kojima Academia Cravatica promovira svoju filozofiju (a preko nje Potomac d. d. i marku *Croata*) samo na prvi pogled ispisuju poželjan projekt hrvatskog identiteta (u smislu u kojemu Bauman i Hall govore o identitetu kao o projektu). Međutim, o njima valja govoriti i kritički jer implicitno ili eksplicitno koriste evolucijski, europocentrični i patrijarhalni diskurs.

Ključne riječi: identitet; rubac; kravata; Hrvatska