

**PILGRIMAGE SITES IN THE BRATISLAVA REGION
AND THEIR REFLECTION IN THE LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF A CROATIAN FOLK CHRONICLER**

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The Bratislava Region witnessed one of the largest migrations of peoples in the Austrian Empire and Hungarian Kingdom due to pressure from the Ottoman invasion in the 16th-17th centuries. Among the migrating peoples were Croats of all social strata, nobility as well as peasants and craftsmen. Some of the Croat noble families owned estates in Upper Hungary, some of the people settled in already existing towns and villages, and yet others founded new settlements. The presence of the Croats is still evident in the southwestern villages of today's Slovakia thanks to many people who still identify themselves as Croats. There are several surnames, family names of Croat origin, linked with place names in the Croat homeland. Many names also bear the traces of Croat origin in terms of form, mostly by their use of the suffix -ić, written in various forms of transcription (in Hungarian -its or Slovak -ič) and carried from generation to generation through the centuries.

Most of the people who still proclaim their Croat identity (actually according to the census of 2011 there were only 1 022 people claiming their selves Croats; anyway according to our field research there is still a strong identity of having Croat ancestors, being of Croat origin) reside in several villages in the Bratislava area. What were or continue to be the specific expressions of their culture which have helped to the people's identity with this minority group? The process identity preservation over centuries has interested historians and ethnologists, who have monitored the persistence of a number of cultural phenomena in both the everyday life of these communities, as well as in ceremonial situations and the maintenance of special spiritually-linked places, that is, places of pilgrimage. The preservation of identity has been apparent particularly in the maintenance of the Croatian language in written form and in the specific form of the people's spoken dialect, in various forms of cultural behavior, and also in the Croat faithful belonging to the Roman-Catholic church.

In the following text we shall concentrate on a special case of identity preservation – by introducing an individual both outstanding in this environment and also representative of it – a particular member of the Croatian community at the

turn of the 19th into the 20th century in Slovakia, the folk chronicler Jure Treuer. His personal story is a productive case study by means of which we can examine issues of cultural-historical, ethnic, social, and religious significance. In this paper we shall concentrate mostly on the religious life of the Treuer's family and partially that of the village community, especially in connection with pilgrimages. In the example which Jure Treuer's life offers, the importance of the self-educated middle class peasant's activities in organizing pilgrimages is clearly evident. Also, the issue at hand is not only that of prestige for Treuer as an organizer, but also in that pilgrimages were important for maintaining the Croat identity of Treuer's family and his community which survived in the conditions of an ethnic enclave as a minority for centuries separated from their homeland.

It is useful to approach this study by considering various contexts individually – historical, ethnic, social, religious, and cultural. While such an analysis separates multifaceted phenomena and creates a simplified scheme, on the other hand it points to the complexity and multilayered nature of the phenomena studied.

The historical and ethnic context

Croat settlement in Slovakia has been documented by a rich historical and ethnological literature. In the 16th century, the Ottoman Turkish invasion pushed approximately 200,000 Croatians northward from their homeland. Members of the Croat nobility had property in several parts of the Hungarian Kingdom, and thus they were able to move their subjects into a relatively safe environment, which constituted nearly 200 villages, a quarter of which were and still are situated on the territory of present-day Slovakia. The settlers formed their own villages, but several families settled in already existing communities. The village of Jarovce is situated on the right bank of the Danube River. The name, Jarovce, has existed only since 1947 when the village, together with two other villages – Rusovce and Čuňovo– were incorporated into the territory of Czechoslovakia, now the territory of Slovakia since 1993. The village represents a case when the colonists actually re-originated the settlement. The strong Croat population is mentioned in historical sources by the name Horwathfalu (that is “Croat Village”) in 1522. The ethnonymic form was used in official documents until the first half of the 20th century in three versions (Hung.) Horwathjáfalu, (Germ.) Krabatisch/ Kroatisch Jandorf and (Croat) Hrvatski Jandrof. In its history the village belonged to the estate of Köpcsény/Kittsee/Gieca owned by the noble families Listhy, Eszterházy, and Batthány. With the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, this territory on the right bank of Danube became a part of Hungary, which subsequently in 1947 became part of Czechoslovakia, as we already mentioned. The Croat population maintained a strong majority here, even though settlers from other ethnic groups entered the village over the centuries. While in the 16th century the re-populated village was solely Croat, from the 18th century on, German and Hungarian families also began to settle there.

In general, the Croatian population occupied a landscape that was previously devastated in terms of population and economy. On the other hand it is important

to remember that the territory in which the Croats settled was (and actually still is) a zone of contact between various peoples: the German/Austrian population from the west being the largest; Slovaks from the north; and Hungarians from the southeast. In the historical period under consideration, the geographical proximity of the Croats and other groups played a role in the shaping of the local culture. Still, Jarovce is one of the best-preserved sites of Croat settlement in Slovakia, even though at the beginning of the 21st century only 20% of the population claims Croat identity according to census data.

Looking back, at the beginning of the 18th century some 75% of the inhabitants identified as Croat. To the end of the 19th century their number in the village grew to more than 80%. During the 20th century, then, their number gradually lowered to some 20% by the end of that century. This is, of course, a complicated demographic question having to do mostly with historical and political changes of that particular period of time. In any case, Croats in Jarovce formed a majority (60%) until the 1960s, which is approximately the time of the first generation born after the village was joined to Czechoslovakia.

The social context

The presence of a Croat population in Slovakia's southwestern region is significant not only in the rural but also the urban landscape. Here, in terms of the social differentiation, virtually all segments of the population were preserved, from higher and lower nobility and burghers and craftsmen, through representatives of the intelligentsia. Most numerically represented was the peasant population, which, thanks to favorable natural conditions of the region, achieved strong economic prosperity, and in the second half of the 19th century also achieved higher social differentiation within the local communities. The village of Jarovce represents one of those proper peasant, rural settlements of the area. Socially this meant good conditions for homogamy, social and economic isolation, and a good base for using and preserving the local form of Croat language in everyday communication. This was important not only for the village itself, but also for the wider area of the neighboring villages belonging to the same feudal estate or at least to the same geographical – cultural region of the Gradisce Croats.

The religious context

The Croat immigrants who came to the territory of today's Slovakia were largely Roman Catholics. However, there were periods when some aristocratic families identified with the ideas of the Reformation (e.g., at times, the Horvat-Stančič, the Ostrožič, Zay – see Botik, 2001: 48-50). Yet the most important positions in the former Habsburg Empire in Upper Hungary were occupied by Croat noblemen who were Roman Catholic and who often acted as zealous agents of the Counter Reformation. For example, in the 17th century Cardinal Leopold Kolonić was rector of Trnava University and founder of the local university press, which published more than ten books in Croatian, including a volume of the Four

Gospels (Evanjeliár) which became the template for its many other later editions (Botík, 2003:6). In terms of religious life and the preservation of culture, in the Croat-occupied territory of Slovakia, the church and religious faith helped to maintain the ethnic identity. Several of the Croatian villages were served by Croat priests, among them many holding firm to the ancient Glagolitic liturgy. This represented a very significant contribution to maintaining the Slavic/Croatian nature of worship life in these communities. Even if in most of the places, the church liturgy might have been in Latin, sermons were delivered in Croatian (Botík, 2001:78-79).

This was also the case of the village of Jarovce. Local church evidence proves there had been Croatian priests in this village since the half of the 16th century who served the liturgy in the Croat language. Slovak priests appeared in Jarovce from 1949. That is the year when the language of the church ceremony was naturally replaced by Slovak. The situation was very similar in the local school. Originally, from the middle of the 17th century it was a church school, and the language of instruction was Croat until 1918. From 1918 – 1947 instruction was in Hungarian, with an additional sort of Sunday school taught in Croatian. Since 1947 children in the village of Jarovce have attended Slovak schools. Yet, in many households in the village it is possible to find old school textbooks in Croatian. It is perhaps important to mention that a book *Zsitak Szveczev* (Lives of the Saints), for instance, published in 1864 in Bratislava has a list of subscribers, and 56 of them came from Jarovce. It is clear that reading, and especially reading in their native Croatian language, was an important part of the nurturing and preservation of ethnic and cultural identity. There is also other kind of evidence for the strong maintenance of Croat identity, and that is that the language of the ancestors could be seen also faithfully preserved in the cemetery. From the number of 461 gravestones in the local cemetery in the time of our research, 169 of them had inscriptions in Croatian, that is, some 40% of all the gravestones. And last but not least, more than one thousands pages of various manuscripts, mostly copies, largely the rewriting of religious texts were found in the village, written by local educated peasants during the period between 1850 – 1950. Besides texts with religious content, people also kept diaries, preserving evidence of the economic, church, family, and community life. One of the most active writers was Jure Treuer, the man on whose activities we will now focus.

All of the above constitutes the environment in which the life and work of an educated peasant chronicler, the scribe of Jarovce, Jure Treuer, developed. Documents about his life and activities were obtained in the Documentation Center of Croatian Culture in the Slovak National Museum, as well as in field research undertaken in the village of Jarovce.

To understand the life of Jure Treuer it is essential to know something about his family background. Among his writings, a separate volume is devoted to the genealogy of the Treuers. Jure Treuer himself (1873-1948) was the fourth generation of the Treuers from Jarovce. His ancestor who settled in the village from the nearby Austrian Gattendorf in 1819 was Andrew, who married a resident of the village Jarovce, Rozina Bojnesičová. As is clear in the genealogy, there

must have been some kind ethnic confrontation connected with this wedding. Rozina was willing to marry Andrew, whose family was probably German, only if he wore traditional Croatian clothing to the wedding. Because he did so, the wedding took place. The writer of this episode may have also wanted to suggest that the Treuers of Jarovce in subsequent generations considered themselves to be Croats.

Jure Treuer belonged to the class of wealthier peasants. According to records from 1943, his family owned 16.5 hectares of land. There were also servants belonging to the household, as documented in the records of expenditure for grooms, a nanny, and also seasonal workers in times of need. With such a large farm, it is understandable that many of the written records covered the family expenses and details of the household management. In his economic diaries, he provides an overview evidence of the sowing of the seeds and the harvest and profit he gained. The notes are divided according to the kinds of grains he grew – wheat, barley, oats, corn, and rye – as well as other products such as grasses for fodder, walnuts, timber, and animals. At the end of the year's economic report a prayer was written expressing thanks for the good profit of the work and the thrifty management. Elsewhere, Treuer summarizes the work order month by month and includes ideas on how to improve the work and make it more efficient. These ideas concern new machines to be used for planting and sowing, and threshing, as well as experiments with new seeds and plants.

Jure Treuer was also a beekeeper. Special information he recorded relates to the hives' range, labor, income, and other expenses associated with beekeeping. Similarly, other records indicate the economic prosperity of this peasant family (e.g., the purchase of cane for roofing, instructions on the treatment of humans and animals, etc.). Treuer noted interesting facts observed not only within his family and farm, but also within the life of the whole community of Jarovce, and even of the surrounding villages.

Treuer was a deeply religious Christian. He belonged among the dignitaries and the most active members of the Roman Catholic parish in Jarovce. His special relationship to his faith, as well as to the church community was attested on December 21, 1897, when he became the sexton of Jarovce. At that time he was still only 24 years old. He functioned in this challenging role for more than three decades, always dedicated and responsible, as further evidenced in a letter by the priest in Jarovce, Ivan Blazovics, who wrote to the Győr Bishop Anthony Fetser on July 4th, 1927, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of Treuer's calling as sexton. The letter describes the long and exemplary performance of his obligations. Particularly important is the information that Treuer, despite being a farmer, mastered the Latin language in order to understand the content of religious ceremonies, prayers, and other texts. Besides Croatian, German, and Hungarian, Latin was the fourth language which Treuer could use both orally and in writing. He may have been motivated also by his profound interest in the history of the local church in Jarovce, as well as old manuscripts and printed documents, and the religious buildings and sites which for further study required knowledge of Latin.

Treuer also used Latin to record his various observations, which are linked with church and religious life in Jarovce and which he gathered in a booklet, entitled “Cirkva Našša, Farra, Svetjanya, od zvonov i zvonarov, od škole” (Our Church, Parsonage, Parishioners, from the Bells and Bell Ringers, from the School). In this document we also learn how pilgrimages and processions were organized; who, among the Jarovce community, were the organizers; who offered a carriage for transportation; how large the pilgrimage groups were; as well as other further details on visits to the pilgrimage sites.

Pilgrimages sites in the region: the cultural and historical context

In the vicinity of Bratislava (Germ.: Pressburg; Hung.: Pozsony; before 1918 in Slovak: Prešporok) important pilgrimage sites emerged. This development was particularly strong in the 18th century during the Counter Reformation. These pilgrimage places were connected mostly with the cult of the Virgin Mary, but also with the cults of other important saints and with miracles. Several small western Slovak localities, and more specifically their local churches, became places of miracles, both visual and auditory apparitions, and therefore pilgrimage centers. One of the places, Šaštín- Stráže (Germ.: Schoßberg-Strascha; Hung.: Sasvár-Morvaőr), located west of Jarovce, is where the traditional Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, celebrated on September 15th, began in the mid-16th century and flourished in the 1730s. Another important place of pilgrimage was the village and the valley of Mariánka (Germ.: Mariathal; Hung.: Máriavölgy) where the origin of its pilgrimage is connected to the Order of the Paulines and dates back to the 14th century. There were Marian pilgrimages held during the year, with the central one, the feast of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrated on September 8th. Then, to the northeast of Jarovce, in the lowlands on the right bank of the Danube, there is a place known as Báč (Hung.: Bácsfa), where there were a Marian pilgrimage on the occasion of the August 2nd feast of Portiuncula. Few kilometers closer to Bratislava, in the village of Jánošíková (hun.: Dénesd; germ.: Schildern), from 1749 until 1942, the local church served as a place of pilgrimage to the statue of the Mother of God, called “the helper”, celebrated on August 15th (feast of Assumption of the Virgin Mary). Among other nearby pilgrimage sites, several localities inhabited mainly by ethnic Croats had special importance, such as Bezenye located in today’s Hungary (Croat.: Bizonja, Germ.: Palesdorf) which lies to the east of Jarovce. Here was a special altarpiece of the Virgin Mary celebrated on the 8th of September. Or, on the other side of the Danube, which is now part of Bratislava, in the village of Dúbravka (Germ.: Kaltenbrunn, Hung.: Pozsonyhidegkút), another historically mostly Croatian village in the surroundings of Bratislava, there is a church dedicated to Saints Cosmas and Damian which was built in 1723. The feastday of these saints is on September 26. The pilgrimages to this place played a great role in strengthening the Croatian identity of the pilgrims.

As the last in the series, but by no means last in terms of importance, is Mariazell, a small town in Styria, located about 200 km away from Jarovce, and the most

famous pilgrimage site in Austria. Up until today it is very important for neighboring countries. It was and continues to be visited also by pilgrims from the eastern part of the former monarchy. The Madonna of Mariazell, also known as *Austriae Magna Mater* (Great Mother of Austria), has great value for pilgrims from the former Hungarian Kingdom, including both Hungarian and Slavic pilgrims (Great Lady of Hungary and Great Mother of the Slavic People). The largest pilgrimages are associated with a legendary gift of miraculous aid, held on December 21, and in connection with the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary on September 8th.

Jure Treuer as a participant and organizer of pilgrimages

The most extensive set of Treuer's texts is associated with the theme of religion. The texts are distributed in multiple notebooks, written over time and sometimes concurrently with each other. Treuer started writing the oldest text when he was a boy of fourteen. The notebooks with the most specific content are those dedicated to songs. A special set of songs linked thematically are connected to death and burial. The present researcher is most interested in the hymnbook of Marian songs, which was labeled *LIBER ... MARIAEZELLENSIS* (63 songs total in the Croatian language, dated 1906). The Marian collection here consists of eleven songs; the first two are devoted to the Virgin Mary connected with the pilgrimage site in Mariazell, Austria. The note after the first song deserves mention, as Treuer states that it was composed by Jive Reiter from Parndorf in 1901. It sums up the major figures of the early history of the pilgrimage temple, including the theme of the struggle against the Turks. The history of Mariazell is mentioned also in a separate text, eight pages long, that Treuer placed at the end of this workbook.

Religious songs and prayers are also included in the last collection that Treuer entitled *JACKENA I MOLITVENA KNYIGA* (70 pages in Croatian, dated 1940). Apart from a few Marian songs there are included also songs and prayers to some saints, perhaps the most popular in Jarovce being Florian, John of Nepomuk, Margaret, Cosmas and Damian (patron saints of the church in Dubravka). Another notebook with the Latin name *LATINUM LIBELLUM: CANTATE DOMINO CANTICUM NOVUM: CANTATE OMNIS TERRA* (41 pages, Croatian and Latin, dating from 1901 to 1924) is dedicated to Litanies, where the Latin part is accompanied by a few funeral songs in Croatian.

To the multifaceted interests of Jure Treuer belonged a love of travel. His excursions to areas surrounding Jarovce, as well as to more remote regions, were usually associated with visits to places where religious activities were held, or places important for other reasons. He left an interesting chronicle from his travels consisting of three volumes of written, visual, and other types of documents. The oldest of these documents is a collection, entitled *KITICZE SZPOMINKI OD SZAKORJACSKI MESZTOV I DUGOVANJ* (25 pages, Croatian, dating from 1899 to 1908).

At first glance this collection might seem like a herbarium. In fact, it was a notebook, where Treuer recorded not only the place, occasion, date, and event significant in his visit, but where he included his “living memory” in the form of leaves, stalks, flowers, spikes or other parts of plants, which grew in the places he periodically visited. The usual destinations of his trips were the villages of Rusovce (a neighboring village to Jarovce, now also in Slovakia), Bizonja / Bezenye (now in Hungary), German Jandorf, (in Austria) and the already mentioned Mariazell, as well as Bratislava and other locations where he participated in processions, pilgrimages, festivities, and visits to local Calvary chapels, basilicas, and other religious or secular sights.

In addition to this notebook, Treuer also created another, more complex documentation of his journeys. This collection can be described as a postcard album, and it contains 170 pages filled with 460 illustrated documents. Such a collection was a way for our traveler Jure to strengthen the prestige of the middle class to which he belonged. Since the late 19th century, middle class society began placing an increasing emphasis on the visual aspect of travel. Maps, travel guides, postcards, and later one’s own photos, and videos were judged primarily on the basis of their visual qualities (Chorvat 2007). Jure Treuer’s postcard album proves that even he, a pilgrim and an explorer, had adapted to this trend and gathered cards of the places he visited to ensure some kind of visual memory. This memory also became very personal as shown by the photos of the sanctuaries that were made by professional photographers. In the album we find, for example, a photo with Jure Treuer and his wife posing in 1926, captioned with the following: “Recollection of Mariazell.”

As in the previous notebooks, in the album the author illustrated his trips to important pilgrimage sites in what is now Austria (Mariazell), Slovakia (Marianka, Dúbravka, Šaštín), as well as Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Germany. In addition, he visited a number of other cities in these countries, such as Vienna, Eisenstadt, Budapest, Győr, Brno. The most spectacular travel experience for Treuer was the visit to Rome and the Vatican. Postcards usually include views of towns, fairs, city centers, churches, and other buildings. Treuer’s were stored in an album and completed with notes about the journey, about its participants, as well as his impressions and experiences. He did not store postcards only from his own trips, but also those which he received from his friends and acquaintances who had traveled to the most diverse corners of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

From the cultural and historical point of view, the most valuable of Treuer’s collections connected to his travel was the book entitled *TRACTUS EX.ECLESIA ET CRUCIS ET SECUNDIS SANCTIS MEMORIAM NOSTRAE SANCTE FIDES ROMA CATHOLICAM* (166 pages, dating from 1904 to 1933, written in Croatian, German, and Latin). This collection is thematically focused on religious buildings (churches, parsonages, belfries, wayside columns and crosses, Calvary chapels, and gravestones) in more than two dozen villages around Jarovce. Treuer was fascinated by their construction and the artistic and historical value of these objects. He recorded texts, dates, and various symbols always with great precision.

From this overview, it is clear that Jure Treuer was an exceptional chronicler. His versatile interests are reflected in the thematic variety of his writing. His handwritten legacy is an important source for the spiritual and philosophical understanding of the life of a traditional (although admittedly exceptional) peasant and his village community. He played an important socio-normative role in his community as a representative of the middle class and certainly as a person in whose life are contained the essential elements and characteristics of community culture. His devotion to Christianity and the Church was significant and unusual, and was recognized as highly valued, for in 1927 he was awarded an honorable Lateran silver cross by Pope Pius XI.

Treuer's Jarovce was one of the most significant localities in terms of Croatian settlement in Slovakia. The fact that this multilingual individual wrote the bulk of his manuscript texts in Croatian speaks of the importance of the ethnic dimension of the writer's personality and his community. Although the village has its ethnicity fixed in its name – "Croatian" Jandrof ("Hrvatski" Jandrof) – from the historical perspective, the ethnicity of the village, or more precisely, its inhabitants, seems to be much more stratified and dynamic. In a historical evaluation of ethnic symbolism and ethnic identity, it is language which is usually considered the most important factor among all the others. Thus the language legacy in the form of Jure Treuer's writings indicates the ethnic vitality of the residents of Jarovce, as well as the linguistic and cultural influences of the surrounding German and Hungarian populations.

Collective cultural memory always exists within individual bearers, who serve an important social role. Why was it specifically Jure Treuer who had evolved into such a personality? In addition to the individual attributes, interests and talents which he clearly had and which are undisputed, however difficult it might be to prove this *ex post*, it was the weight of what he represented. Even as a self-taught man, with no formal higher education, Treuer had a chance to build on the interests of his ancestors and to act in the spirit of the family tradition. Among the values of this tradition among well-off peasant middle-class families were literacy, communication skills, and participation in social and ecclesial life. Church life in all of its complexity interested our writer, who involved himself in all its activities. Besides this, he was also a man of many other interests, including secular interests. In accord with the contemporary possibilities of his time, these were also connected primarily with the church, especially pilgrimages. As an amateur collector, and perhaps also reflecting the growing prestige of his middle-class status, he expressed his views on architecture, natural history, and various curiosities connected with the places he had visited. Finally, it is important to stress how he validated both a Croatian and "Jarovce" identity, proof of which lies in his many activities. For us, the life and work of Jure Treuer serves as evidence for the multilateral importance of members of the middle class for the community of which he was part and its leadership role in religious life and the pilgrimage experience.

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This paper was prepared within the grant project 1/0244/11 Cultural processes in the post-socialist society: between globalization and localization.