

Reading Societies and their Social Exclusivity: Dalmatia in the First Half of the 19th century

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Summary

Reading societies, known as the *gabinetto di lettura*, or the *casino*, appeared in Dalmatia in the middle of the 18th century modelled on their Western European, North Italian and Austrian counterparts. They became centres of social and cultural life in the region. However, their number was very small in comparison with other Central and Western European countries. In spite of that, their statutes can serve a historian as very fertile and useful historical sources. First of all, they can reveal the importance given to books and reading as well as changing attitude towards reading in the course of time. They can also indicate social structure of the reading circles as well as the interaction and communication among the members. In addition, they can reveal the participation of women in social and cultural life, internal functioning of the society, etc. Based on the statutes of several reading societies of the 19th century, this work suggests several important issues. First, it shows that in the first half of the 19th century the membership of these societies was still select and prestigious, acquired by position on the social scale. In other words, reading societies were still confined to very narrow social circles of the educated. Although in Western parts of Europe the reading public became more heterogeneous and open, in Dalmatia reading still preserved its exclusive features. Second, the work also suggests that what some historians of book and reading called the “reading revolution” or “revolution in reading” occurred in Dalmatia much later, and even then mostly in urban areas. Some changes in reading habits occurred in the region, albeit to a limited extent and with less influence on society as a whole. Third, the work also demonstrates that from the 1840s reading acquired a new dimension, becoming open to the more social strata and gradually losing its exclusive character. The reading societies, lending libraries and other cultural institutions established in the course of the 1840s did not limit their memberships by the social parameters. The only criterion seems to have been activity work for the benefit of the nation and its education. Yet, it may be concluded that what had happened in most of Central and Western Europe in the late 18th century, occurred in Dalmatia only at the very end of

the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. However, without an actual account of the membership of these societies and their reading habits (still missing in Croatian historiography due to a lack of information on the members and their numbers), it is difficult to give a completely accurate picture of the degree to which reading became significant in the early 19th century. Along with information on the amount of money set aside for new reading material and the increase of the library inventories (which has not yet been found), this would certainly shed new light on the importance of books and reading had in the first half of the 19th century.

KEY WORDS: Dalmatia, 19th century, reading, reading societies, "reading revolution", *casino*, *gabinetto di lettura*.

The Statutes of Reading Societies as Historical Sources

Reading societies, known as the *gabinetto di lettura*, or the *casino*, appeared in Dalmatia in the middle of the 18th century modelled on their Western European, North Italian and Austrian counterparts.¹ Soon they became centres of social and cultural life in the region from which a wide range of important social, cultural, economic and political initiatives emerged. In the early 19th century their significance became even greater. In 1814–15 Dalmatia became an integral part of the Austrian Empire, which imposed on it severe censorship. Censorship constrained political life in the region and attempted to control entire cultural life.² Due to the inchoate nature of political structure, there were still no political groups or associations. For this reason, reading societies played large importance not only in cultural and social, but also in political life in the region. They were more acceptable than circulating libraries as the former were more easily supervised by the police.³

At first the societies of *casino* were founded in Zadar, Šibenik, Split, Trogir, Makarska, Dubrovnik and Kotor, all coastal cities, as well as in Drniš, Knin, Sinj and Imotski in the hinterland and Supetar and Milna on the island Brač. They all possessed reading rooms. The literature offers different data on the year of their foundation. It is likely that some of these societies were closed in certain periods and then opened some time later. Afterwards appeared new reading rooms as independent institutions — the *Gabinetto di lettura* or *Druxba od scenja* (Reading Room) (1807), *Narodna čitaonica*

1 *Lesekabinett, Lesegesellschaft, Lekturkabinett, or Cabinet de lecture* appeared in Central and Western Europe already in the 17th century.

2 However, the circulation of forbidden literature demonstrated that cultural life was not entirely shaped by political power. In addition, sources suggest that subversive political ideas managed to seep into the Austrian Empire despite Metternich's strict censorship.

3 In a lending library a book might be borrowed and taken home, in which case no surveillance is possible.



Reading societies and casinos in Dalmatia (1815-1850)

(National Reading Room), *Gabinetto di lettura illirico-dalmata* or *Ilirsko-dalmatinska čitaonica* (Illyrian-Dalmatian Reading Room) (1848), all founded in Zadar, *Gabinetto di lettura* or *Narodna čitaonica* in Dubrovnik (1848), and *Slavjanska čitaonica* (Slavic Reading Room) in Kotor (1848). However, until 1970s there prevailed in the Croatian historiography a conviction that not until the foundation of the National Reading Room in 1862 in Zadar did reading rooms exist in Dalmatia, if those rooms designated for reading within the societies of *casino* are not to be counted. Vjekoslav Maštrović was the first one to claim that the first reading room in the entire region was that of 1807 (*Gabinetto di lettura* or *Druxba od scenja*), established in Zadar (Maštrović 1974). Sources also show an unsuccessful attempt by Špiro Popović to establish *Ilirska čitaonica* (Illyrian Reading Room) in Šibenik in 1839, modelled on the reading room founded in Zadar (Zorić 1971: 356; Maštrović 1974: 53). All in all, a number of

reading societies was very small in comparison with other Central and Western European countries.⁴ Moreover, with the advent of Bach's Absolutism in the countries of the Austrian Empire, the great majority of existing reading societies were suppressed, especially those founded during the revolutionary year 1848.

Map: Reading Societies and Casinos in Dalmatia (1815–1850)

However, their statutes can serve a historian as very fertile and useful historical sources. First of all, they can reveal the importance given to books and reading and changing attitude towards reading in the course of time. They can also indicate social structure of the reading circles as well as the interaction and communication among the members. In addition, they can reveal the participation of women in social and cultural life, internal functioning of the society, etc. For the purpose of this paper several statutes are examined and discussed: *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara*, published in 1829, *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara*, published in 1833, *Regolamento della Società del Casino di Sebenico*, published in 1845, and *Statuto della Società del Casino in Zara*, published in 1888. All statutes were published in Zadar, the main Dalmatian publishing and printing city in the region. Two other statutes are used as well: *Regolamento per la Biblioteca comunale Paravia in Zara visto ed approvato dall' I.R. Luogotenenza Dalmata*, written in 1856,⁵ and *Statuto dell'associazione della Biblioteca Circolante Cattolica in Zara*, written in 1872. These statutes are both manuscripts, kept in the Scientific Library in Zadar. Finally, some published sources are used as well, collected in work by Stijepo Obad (Obad 1987).

A Growing Importance of Reading towards the Middle of the 19th Century

As has been stated above, the statutes of contemporary reading societies are very helpful tool for identifying many issues related to books and reading culture. First of all, they suggest a growing importance of reading towards the middle of the 19th

4 For instance, in 18th century German lands, over four hundred reading clubs were registered. In Paris, only in the period between February and May of 1848, there were over 450 clubs. However, almost all of them were associated with political coalitions and groups (Darnton 1990: 170; Sperber 1994: 157-167).

5 *Biblioteca Comunale Paravia* (Town Library Paravia) was established in Zadar in 1857. It was based on a bequeathed private collection of books possessed by Pier Alessandro Paravia, a university professor in Turin. For the purpose of this paper particular attention has been paid on rules referring to the reading room within the library - *Discipline per la sala di lettura estratte dal regolamento approvato dall'Eccelsa Luogotenenza della Dalmazia con suo Decreto 18 Novembre 1856*, N. 17 296 / 4 129, Capitolo VII.

century. In 1829 reading was listed as only one of the activities of the *casino* society (though nominally the first one) to which no broader interest was given. The third article of the *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara* from 1829 states that the principal forms of entertainment in the society are to be: a) the reading of chosen journals b) approved games, as well as billiards c) at least one weekly gathering, which is to be organised when it would be most suitable for all members d) cultural events (performance, concert, entertainment) during the period of the Lent e) dance societies during the Carnival period f) two to three dances during the same period of the Carnival and g) masquerades.⁶ The next two articles deal with masquerades and possible extensions of entertainment activities during the year, if so requested by members and their wives, and of course, if the society's budget would allow for it.⁷ Thus, it can be concluded that entertainment, not reading, was an essential purpose of the *casino* society in Zadar.

Not much had changed a few years later. In 1833, reading assumed only a minor role in the sphere of actions within the *casino* in Zadar. The second article of the *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara* from 1833 also states that the principal amusement events are as follows: a) the reading of journals and newspapers b) playing allowed games, including billiards c) at least one gathering per week during each season of the year d) gatherings with dance in the autumn and during Carnival e) dances during Carnival, one of which should be masquerade f) arrival of (decent) masks during Carnival.⁸ However, it is unquestionable that society possessed an area designated only for reading. The statute clearly states that eight days before the general council ought to be convoked, a notice should be put on the door of the reading room.⁹ Furthermore, the statute of the National Reading Room (1847-1848) also states that there is to be an area on the premises of the society designated exclusively for reading and another area where books and other reading material are to be stored.¹⁰ Journals and newspapers were situated in these reading areas. However, one was less likely to find books there.

6 *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara*. Zara: dalla tipografia Battara, 1829, 4 (articolo 3).

7 *Ibid*, 4 (articolo 4, 5).

8 *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara da essere attivato col giorno 1.º novembre 1833*. Zara: Gio: Demarchi Tipografo, 1833, 5-6 (articolo 2).

9 *Ibid*, 9 (articolo 12).

10 Obad 1987: 37 (Skupina građana Zadra moli više vlasti da im dopusti osnutak Društva narodne čitaonice, 14. prosinac 1847, Zadar (A group of citizens from Zadar asks the higher authorities for permission to open the Society of National Reading-Room, 14th of December 1847), articolo 3). This request was found in Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv in Vienna (AVAW, Ministerium des Innern 2, 193/1848, Vienna) by Stijepo Obad (Obad 1987). A decade earlier a report on the request had been already found in the State Archive in Zadar (Državni arhiv u Zadru (further: DAZd), Prezidijalni spisi Namjesništva, grupa razno, 1849. god., sv. bez broja (br. 3), izvještaj br. 24 366/3432, 20th December 1847) by Vjekoslav Maštrović and translated by him from Italian into Croatian (Maštrović 1974). With these two documents the entire story about the foundation of the Illyrian reading room in Zadar seems to be complete.

Only a decade later reading had gained such great attention that an entire section of the statute of 1845 was dedicated to the organization and administration of the reading room in the *casino* society in Šibenik.¹¹ Reading gained importance, although entertainment was also an objective of the gatherings. Besides offering reading matter, the *casino* also offered its members the opportunity to play different games. It organized regular gatherings, concerts, dances and carnivals. Still, reading seems to have become the primary objective and purpose of the existence of *casino* in Šibenik. Offering the most esteemed newspapers and chosen books, the society's intention was to elevate the spirit through reading and enrich minds with useful knowledge.¹² All manuscripts, books, journals, documents of social importance, and "other material that belongs to the natural sciences and national history" were to be appropriately stored in a room next to the dancing hall designated just for that purpose. This room was to be distinguished from other areas in *casino* and named *Gabinetto di Lettura*.¹³ An objective of *Gabinetto di lettura* was to instruct and educate its users, enabling them to gain useful knowledge.¹⁴ This possibility, however, was not denied to non-members either, which demonstrates that reading gradually became popularised. All those persons who wished to benefit from the reading matter available in the reading room were at times allowed to enter and read. However, the librarian had discretion to decide on who was worthy enough.¹⁵

Indeed, in the course of the first half of the 19th century education seems to have become the most important task of reading rooms and similar societies. Members of the National Reading Room, for instance, were all those who "wished to acquire knowledge" and benefit from an institution of that kind.¹⁶ Education was the main purpose of the public library *Biblioteca comunale Paravia* (1856) as well. The rules of this library state that those who have intentions other than studying should not be allowed access to the reading room.¹⁷ On the other hand, those who wish to study and acquire new knowledge could make a copy of a book in writing, i.e. transcribe a printed book.¹⁸ There were no particular limitations for doing so. Once informed of the purpose of copying a book, the committee would decide whether to proceed with transcribing the book or not. A request was usually approved unless there were

11 *Regolamento della Società del Casino di Sebenico*. Zara: nella Tip. dei fratelli Battara, 1845, 10-12. Capitolo VI: Discipline pella conservazione ed incremento del Gabinetto di lettura, articolo 28-36.

12 *Ibid*, 3 (articolo 1).

13 *Ibid*, 10 (articolo 28).

14 *Ibid*, 11-12 (articolo 33).

15 *Ibid*.

16 *Obad* 1987: 38 (Skupina građana Zadra moli više vlasti da im dopusti osnutak Društva narodne čitaonice, articolo 4).

17 *Discipline per la sala di lettura... 18 Novembre 1856*, N. 17 296 / 4 129, Capitolo VII, articolo 62.

18 *Ibid*, articolo 72.

justifiable reasons not to. A written permission from the managerial committee was required only for manuscripts.¹⁹

However, once "enlightenment" and education became dominant themes of national revivals, and the promotion of knowledge came to be closely linked with learning national languages, reading acquired a new importance, unknown in previous periods. It moved from the cultural to the political realm. Reading rooms also acquired a role not previously seen. Although they were founded in order to satisfy the cultural needs of the population, particularly the most educated segment, soon not only reading but also an exchange of ideas took place within these societies. Their activity surpassed the functionality of a mere reading room, gaining political significance for the entire region. One must bear in mind that at that time open political gatherings were forbidden. Political discussions could and probably did occur only in social gathering places, such as cultural and economic societies. The statute of the National Reading Room, for instance, testifies to the purpose which the initiators ascribed to the reading room, called *Gabinetto di lettura nazionale dalmata*. This included the promotion of knowledge of the national language, the studying of the most esteemed literary works of national literature, and if possible, the publication of these works.²⁰ For that purpose books and newspapers were to be procured, and a library established. Acquisition of Croatian and "other Slavic newspapers" was considered the society's top priorities.²¹ Reading was now closely related to national issues, since someone who knew how to read was able also to acquaint himself with the most eminent works of the Croatian literary heritage. The possibility of establishing a national library on the grounds of the Illyrian Reading Room in case the latter should be closed in the course of time indicates a strong awareness of the benefits which books and reading contributed to the national welfare.²² Furthermore, in 1849 the society *Slavjanska lipa* (Slavic Lime-Tree), among its various "national" tasks, listed the establishment of a reading room within the society (Obad 1973-74). Simultaneous efforts were made towards establishing *Dalmatian Matica* (eventually founded in 1862) which would also contain a library.²³ It is evident that in the age of a strong process of Italianisation, such institutions were unquestionably considered "useful to the homeland." For all of these institutions love for the national language and the nation was the principal aim.

Since reading acquired a new importance and reading rooms gained a new role, reading societies came to attract a considerably greater number of people than before. Precise

19 Ibid, articolo 73.

20 Obad 1987: 38. (Skupina građana Zadra moli više vlasti da im dopusti osnutak Društva narodne čitaonice, 14. prosinac 1847, Zadar), articolo 2.

21 Ibid, 39 (articolo 9).

22 Ibid, 40 (articolo 16).

23 On the foundation and work of the *Matica dalmatinska* see for instance: Tartalja 1961; Karlić 1913.

numbers, however, are impossible to determine. There is still no information on the number of members in the Dalmatian reading societies. Thus, without an actual account of the membership and their borrowing habits, it is difficult to give a completely accurate picture of the degree to which reading became important in the early 19th century. One ought to keep in mind that in all likelihood not all members read or borrowed books, and that presumably many of them only sought out the company which the reading societies and *casino* offered.²⁴ The membership figures of some German reading societies, which ranged from two dozen in the case of the smaller societies to more than 400 in rare cases (Wittmann 1999: 310), might give us at least a hint of the number of possible members in Dalmatian societies.

However, what is certain is that all members were supposed to safeguard the books, avoiding any kind of damage.²⁵ In this respect, manuscripts and priceless publications could be read only at a desk adjacent to the librarian's desk.²⁶ The statute of the Illyrian Reading Room even specified that the catalogue of books, newspapers and journals was to be provided to all members, in order to facilitate functioning of the reading room and enable members to obtain desired books as quickly as possible.²⁷

Although most of the reading rooms of the period did not lend their reading matter out of the society, there existed special occasions when this was allowed with the approval of the managerial committee. The statute of the *Gabinetto di lettura* in Šibenik from 1845, states that a request for borrowing a book should be approved by the librarian.²⁸ The statute of the *Gabinetto di lettura* in Zadar from 1833, states that such a request has to be approved by the managerial committee.²⁹ Journals and newspapers are to be lent no longer than 24 hours.³⁰ Similar rules applied to the Illyrian Reading Room, which allowed its members living outside of Zadar to borrow literary and economic journals.³¹ New books could be borrowed only a month or two upon their acquisition.³² Newspapers and journals are to be returned within a week, while books within a month at most.³³

24 As an illustration, in the 18th century in a reading society in German town of Trier only two-thirds out of eighty-three members ever borrowed books in the years 1783-1793 and eight readers account for around half of the total number of books borrowed. (Houston 1988: 195).

25 *Discipline per la sala di lettura ... 18 Novembre 1856*, N. 17 296 / 4 129, Capitolo VII, articolo 68.

26 *Ibid*, articolo 69.

27 Obad 1987: 40 (Skupina građana Zadra moli više vlasti da im dopusti osnutak Društva narodne čitaonice, 14. prosinac 1847, Zadar), articolo 14.

28 *Regolamento della Società del Casino di Sebenico (1845)*, 11 (articolo 33).

29 *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1833)*, 17 (articolo 38).

30 *Ibid*.

31 Obad 1987: 41 (Skupina građana Zadra moli više vlasti da im dopusti osnutak Društva narodne čitaonice, 14. prosinac 1847, Zadar, articolo 17).

32 *Ibid*.

33 *Ibid*.

Regulations existed in case a book was stolen, lost, or damaged (pages torn out). The accused usually had to reimburse the damage, and in some cases he was permanently forbidden to use the library.³⁴ Measures were also enacted to punish those who insulted the library's employees or disturbed the silence and order in the library.³⁵ They might also be forbidden to return to the library and use its sources.³⁶

Responsible for overseeing the care of the library was the custodian. If someone succeeded in stealing a newspaper (or even a piece of furniture) in spite of surveillance, or if a custodian did not notify the managerial committee of any anomalous event, certain measures were to be applied. A custodian was to be punished with a fine of two fiorins, but if he failed similarly, he was dismissed.³⁷ A member was to pay four fiorins, but in case he avoided paying the fine, his name was to be permanently removed from the membership list.³⁸ Finally, if the same thing was done by a family member of a person who had full membership, or by a guest, an immediate and permanent exclusion from the society was to take place, and these individuals lost all their privileges.³⁹

Furthermore, the common and regular practice of donating books demonstrates the importance reading had assumed. Those who donated books were undoubtedly aware of the advantages brought by doing so.⁴⁰ Many of them wished upon their death to make their books accessible to everyone. It is sufficient to give the example here of the Fanfogna Garagnin family from Trogir, whose great concern for books resulted in their own rich library, which even today is accessible. Apart from their careful choice of books, the Fanfogna Garagnin family paid such great attention to books and reading that they employed a librarian who made a catalogue of the library (Cega 1996: 129–137).

34 *Discipline per la sala di lettura ... 18 Novembre 1856*, N. 17 296 / 4 129, Capitolo VII, articolo 76; Obad 1987: 41 (Skupina građana Zadra moli više vlasti da im dopusti osnutak Društva narodne čitaonice (14. prosinac 1847, Zadar), articolo 17).

35 *Ibid.*, articolo 77.

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1829)*, 12 (articolo 36).

38 *Ibid.*

39 *Ibid.*

40 A statute from 1845 describes the process of acquiring an inheritance: the names of donors and donation itself were to be recorded in an elegant book designated especially for the purpose. This was to be announced in the official newspaper *Gazzetta di Zara*. Donors retained the right to check on the well being of the donated reading material at any moment. They were also given the right to bring to the attention of the managerial committee irregularities in the functioning of a reading room and so forth. Being a donor in all probability granted on a very respected status: those who contributed to the Illyrian Reading Room either with books, documents, or papers of value not less than 40 fiorins were considered not only members but also donors of the society. (*Regolamento della Società del Casino di Sebenico (1845)*, 11 (articolo 32); Obad 1987: 39 (Skupina građana Zadra moli više vlasti da im dopusti osnutak Društva narodne čitaonice, 14. prosinac 1847, Zadar), articolo 7).

Finally, among the most esteemed positions within the *casino* society was that of the librarian, who was to be the most learned and erudite person, possessing knowledge of several languages.⁴¹ Although the post was unpaid,⁴² it was very respected. The post of librarian was a lifetime appointment.⁴³ A librarian's responsibility to the reading room was exceptionally significant, as the entire organization and administration as well as the improvement, development and increase of the library inventory was entrusted to him.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, information on the amount of money set aside for new reading material in any of the reading societies or libraries has not yet been found.⁴⁵ Such sources would be of interest in examining the internal economy of the society, the amount of money received for the acquisition of books and other reading material, as well as an actual amount of money spent on the increase of the library inventory. Along with a record of the membership and their borrowing (reading) habits, this would certainly shed new light on the importance of books and reading had in the first half of the 19th century.⁴⁶

Reading Societies and Social Exclusivity

Sources testify to the social exclusivity of these institutions. Although in the statutes of the European reading societies there was almost no reference to class restrictions, social homogeneity was preserved. A new member could only be accepted if the majority of old members came to agreement. Thus, the often-proclaimed "equality of all classes" was "a mere fiction" (Wittmann 1999: 309). Membership was generally select and prestigious, and customarily only those with substantial incomes could afford to join a library or reading society. In general, reading was presented as a privileged activity, to be guarded by protectors of morality and the old regime, as well as modulated by codes of conduct. There existed exclusivity and social boundaries to

41 Statute also regulated the way a librarian and his substitute were elected. Measures to be taken if a librarian no longer can fulfil his duties or he had permanently changed his place of residence were enacted as well. (*Regolamento della Società del Casino di Sebenico (1845)*, 10-12 (articolo 30, 31).

42 Obad 1987: 39 (Skupina građana Zadra moli više vlasti da im dopusti osnutak Društva narodne čitaonice, 14. prosinac 1847, Zadar), articolo 10).

43 *Regolamento della Società del Casino di Sebenico (1845)*, 10-12 (articolo 29).

44 Ibid.

45 The only information found on the issue concerned the *Biblioteca Comunale Paravia*, which was supposed to receive 500 fiorins annually as "la dota della Biblioteca" for a librarian and a custodian, but only 50 fiorins for the acquisition of new books and their conservation, 12 fiorins for writing material, and 42 fiorins for unexpected costs. (*Regolamento per la Biblioteca comunale Paravia ...*18. 11. 1856, Capitolo VIII, articolo 82, 85).

46 However, one has to bear in mind that the availability of reading matter in reading societies and *casinos* largely depended on the existing political circumstances, meaning that only those books and newspapers successfully passing censorship could be found on the shelves.

reading, which implied that the possibility of the lower social classes acquiring books was very limited. Library membership was also limited (Houston 1998: 175). In short, there existed a common belief that libraries should become closed institutions, books should be locked away, and the display of books left exclusively to gentlemen (Houston 1998: 175). Much less exclusive, however, were coffee-houses, where almost anyone could come and read the available newspapers and periodicals.

In Dalmatian reading societies social status played a significant role as well. Membership in the *casino* was by the statute confined to "the most respected inhabitants." Honoured members were the governor and military commander of the region, the president of the appellate court, and the archbishop of Zadar. Having accepted membership, their names were placed at the top of the membership list and were to be regarded with appropriate respect.⁴⁷ The same process of receiving the membership was to be repeated whenever a vacant dignitary post had to be fulfilled by a new person.⁴⁸

A system of admission was also developed for members who could enter the society without the lottery,⁴⁹ then for members of civic status who had to be proposed by the managerial committee and who passed the lottery,⁵⁰ then family members of the full-member,⁵¹ guests of the society,⁵² and finally, visitors of the town.⁵³ Although the *casino* was to a certain extent open towards individuals of civic, middle-class background (although they could be chosen only if proposed by the managerial committee and only if they passed the lottery),⁵⁴ the group of those privileged who could directly (without lottery) acquire membership seems to be more significant. These were the military officers, whether active or retired, all distinguished officials, the nobility throughout the Austrian Empire as well as from abroad, the mayor of the city of Zadar, the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries regardless of faith,⁵⁵ canons, bishops, pastors, parish priests, seminary teachers, and other teachers employed by the State, as well as lawyers, physicians and surgeons, those who had obtained a doctorate in law, medicine and "highly specialised" surgery, and the proprietors and

47 *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1829)*, 4 (articolo 6); *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1833)*, 7 (articolo 3); *Statuto della Società del Casino in Zara approvato col Luogotenenziale Decreto 9 Gennaio 1888* N. 26 846. Zara: tipografia di S. Artale, 1888, articolo 3.

48 Ibid.

49 *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1829)*, 5 (articolo 7).

50 Ibid, articolo 8.

51 Ibid, articolo 9, 10, 11.

52 Ibid, articolo 12.

53 Ibid, articolo 13.

54 Ibid, articolo 7.

55 Statute of the *casino* in Zadar from 1888 also put among the honoured members the archbishop and the bishop of the Greek Orthodox creed, residing in Zadar. (*Statuto della Società del Casino in Zara (1888)*, articolo 3).

retailers of the "privileged" factories.⁵⁶ Thus, in most cases, a higher position on the social scale guaranteed a privileged position in the *casino* (all others, belonging to the middle-class, regardless of sex, were to be chosen by a lottery where a majority of votes was required).⁵⁷

Therefore, it seems that it was rather difficult to join the ranks of the privileged individuals, although the societies appeared open to new members, at least declaratively. First, candidates for membership had to be "checked" and if considered virtuous and honourable enough, they would be accepted.⁵⁸ Second, although the managerial committee allowed non-members to participate in some of the activities of the institution, this "privilege" was of a very restrictive character comprising most often only participation in the masquerade. Those who were considered honourable enough to take part in the masquerade should satisfy two conditions. First, they had to belong to the family of a state official or to the family of a landowner or merchant.⁵⁹ Second, they had to show their tickets at the entrance door and be identified.⁶⁰ It can easily be seen that only those who were considered worthy enough of participating in cultural events would be allowed to join the other members for the occasion. The same was stated in the statute of 1888: for some extraordinary events, such as different kinds of patriotic anniversaries or official receptions of distinguished persons, those individuals who otherwise had no right to participate in the society's activities could also be invited. These guests were to be considered members and have the same rights as the regular members, but only during that particular occasion.⁶¹ Permanent membership, however, was extremely difficult to obtain.

Furthermore, foreigners could also gain the status of a guest, but only those belonging to an upper middle-class background. They had to be either invited by the managerial

56 *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1829)*, 5 (articolo 7); *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1833)*, 7-8 (articolo 4); *Regolamento della Società del Casino di Sebenico (1845)*, 9 (articolo 19); *Statuto della Società del Casino in Zara 1888*, articolo 3.

57 As mentioned, they had to be proposed by both the managerial committee and executive council. According to the statute of 1833, the executive council took part in nominating new members. It also accepted and refused them. These members were to be considered "soci effettivi" as the Statute of the *casino* from 1888 states. Possible refusal, however, was not the final, since after a certain period of time a candidate could again apply for membership. The statute of the society of *casino* in Zadar from 1888 states that the candidate, if not accepted, could again apply for membership but only after one year. (*Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1829)*, 5 (articolo 8), 10 (articolo 26 a); *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1833)*, 7-8 (articolo 5), 9 (articolo 15), 10 (articolo 18); *Regolamento della Società del Casino di Sebenico (1845)*, 9 (articolo 22), *Statuto della Società del Casino in Zara 1888*, Capitolo III.

58 *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1829)*, 4 (articolo 4).

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 *Statuto della Società del Casino in Zara (1888)*, articolo 64.

committee or recommended by an older member.⁶² Guests were to be considered widows of members who had to be of the middle-class background and live in the household of the deceased. Status of full membership might be acquired on some occasions, but only if the managerial committee found them worthy.⁶³ However, in the course of time, the society seems to have become more open: the statute from 1845 does not require information on the foreigners. Only the managerial committee should be informed about a case in advance. However, such candidates had to be of middle-class background.⁶⁴ Servants, however, could not enter the society, even to care for a member's children.⁶⁵

A civic, middle-class background was thus a necessary and minimal prerequisite, as well as were civic virtues implying appropriate and decent manners. Members, guests, and those who enjoyed the status of associate membership could be excluded from the society if their behaviour was found to be inappropriate. General rules of behaviour were explained in detail. For instance, all had to be appropriately dressed.⁶⁶ Exemptions from the rule were clearly explained, such as those that refer to the clothes worn by military officials.⁶⁷ Rules were also prescribed for special occasions, such as dances.⁶⁸ The smoking area was also clearly defined.⁶⁹ Finally, both the executive council and the presiding managerial committee decided as to whether a member should be excluded for such reasons relating to disrespect of the society's rules.⁷⁰

Furthermore, education was also one of the principal criteria for membership as the language of communication was almost exclusively Italian, reserved for the upper social strata. Finally, all members were also obliged to pay the enrolment and monthly membership fee.⁷¹ This means that for the population living in very poor conditions and for those who could not afford to pay this fee, reading societies remained closed not only for social, but for financial reasons, too. These were also reasons why reading was still considered a privileged activity.

62 *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1829)*, 6 (articolo 12a).

63 *Ibid*, articolo 12b.

64 *Regolamento della Società del Casino di Sebenico (1845)*, 13 (articolo 39).

65 *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1833)*, 16 (articolo 36).

66 *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1829)*, 11 (articolo 29, 34).

67 *Ibid*, 30.

68 *Ibid*.

69 *Ibid*, 31; *Regolamento della Società del Casino di Sebenico (1845)*, 14 (articolo 44).

70 *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1829)*, 10 (articolo 26, 33); *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1833)*, 12 (articolo 22); *Regolamento della Società del Casino di Sebenico (1845)*, 5 (articolo 8); *Statuto della Società del Casino in Zara 1888*, 13 (articolo 71).

71 *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara I (1829)*, 12-13 (Capitolo VII, articolo 38 to 42); *Regolamento pel Casino di Zara (1833)*, 17-21 (Capitolo VI, articolo 40 to 50); *Regolamento della Società del Casino di Sebenico (1845)*, 6-7 (articolo 11c), 9 (articolo 20, 23), 13 (articolo 37); Obad 1987: 39-40 (Skupina građana Zadra moli više vlasti da im dopusti osnutak Društva narodne čitaonice, 14. prosinac 1847, Zadar), articolo 7).

Reading was "privileged", or at least controlled, even within the reading societies. This means that the free utilization of available books within the societies was also "censored" to a certain extent. Permission to borrow reading materials outside of the society was to be granted by the managerial committee, who decided whether someone's request ought to be approved or not.⁷² Furthermore, non-member access to reading material depended on the custodian's and librarian's appraisal, which leads us to the presumption that reading still preserved features of exclusivity.⁷³ Even in Germany, England and France, public libraries and the libraries of monasteries, towns, courts, and most universities made reading exclusive and obstructed the expansion of reading (Wittmann 1999: 306). In the Ducal Library in the Thuringian town of Gotha, anyone wishing to take a closer look at a certain book must request to do so from the librarian, who would show it to him and, should the need arise, authorize him to read it (Wittmann 1999: 306).⁷⁴ Entirely free access to all books was not common. Obviously, not all members shared the same rights. Unfortunately, no sources have been found which might reveal who were these "privileged" individuals in Dalmatian reading societies.

The exclusive right to books and reading, however, vanished in the course of time. For instance, the 1872 statute of the lending library in Zadar stated that books were to be accessible to *everyone* regardless of age, social standing and sex.⁷⁵ Only financial reasons might determine to a certain extent whether a book should be lent or not, as the members had to pay an enrolment and membership fee.⁷⁶ In addition, the Illyrian Reading Room did not limit its membership to social parameters. Regardless of their social origin, members came from throughout region, even from very remote places. The only criterion was to possess a desire for participating in instruction and education.⁷⁷ The process of acquiring membership was simple: the name of the potential candidate was to be presented to the director and then added to the membership list.⁷⁸ Social status did not matter greatly in the society *Slavjanska lipa* (Slavic Lime-Tree) in Zadar (1849) either. Its membership was based on broader national background (Slavic), not social status (Obad 1973–74: 127–142).⁷⁹ A difference in social status was reflected in

72 *Regolamento della Società del Casino di Sebenico* (1845), 11–12 (articolo 33).

73 *Ibid.*

74 *Ibid.*

75 *Statuto dell'associazione della Biblioteca Circolante Cattolica in Zara* (1872), articolo 4.

76 *Ibid.*

77 Obad 1987: 38 (Skupina građana Zadra moli više vlasti da im dopusti osnutak Društva narodne čitaonice, 14. prosinac 1847, Zadar), articolo 4).

78 *Ibid.*, articolo 11.

79 Statute claimed three important tasks for the society: introduction of the "Slavic" language in schools and offices, the making strong connections with other Slavic peoples, and economic prosperity of the region (agriculture, trade, and crafts). In order to fulfil these tasks, the founder Ante Kuzmanić planned to found the reading room within the society, which would enable the members to acquaint themselves with news concerning Slavic issues. The library as well as a

the membership fee. Those who were at the bottom of the social structure paid much lower membership fee than those who were better off financially or who belonged to the upper social classes.⁸⁰ To work for the benefit of the nation (the Slavic world, in fact) was all that mattered here. The rural population was particularly welcomed, as the founders were strongly aware that they were those who succeeded in preserving the national language and culture. The public library *Biblioteca Comunale Paravia* (1856), however, went a step further opening its doors to *all* the inhabitants of the city.⁸¹ Reading was gradually losing its exclusive character: all had, at least in theory, the same access to reading matter.

Was There "Reading Revolution" in Dalmatia?

However, the reality was different. First of all, only a very small proportion of the population had reading and writing ability.⁸² All others who were incapable of reading came into contact with the written word by mediating voice of someone reading aloud, a phenomenon of collective reading very common at the time.⁸³ Second, written culture appeared in Dalmatia in a well-known yet foreign language, Italian.⁸⁴ Italian was, however, completely foreign to a majority of the rural population, except the small minority that continued schooling in the towns. Only members of urban society, and certainly not all of them, possessed a certain level of literacy, while the members of the oligarchy or rich families had an opportunity to obtain a higher education, mostly at the foreign universities. Thus, reading was still confined to very narrow circle of the educated. A low level of literacy accompanied by a population belonging mostly to the world of oral culture did not produce favourable conditions for the spread of a "culture of reading."

printing house would be established. The awards for works written in one of the Slavic languages would be rewarded as well. A political weekly, *Novine Slavianske Lipe u Dalmaciji*, was planned. It seems, however, that this enthusiasm did not reach other Dalmatian towns, and the society lasted for a very brief spell.

80 Ibid, 136-137.

81 *Discipline per la sala di lettura ... 1856*, N. 17 296 / 4 129, Capitolo VII, articolo 79.

82 Unfortunately, research on literacy has not yet been extensively conducted in Croatian historiography, but the overall picture in Europe suggests that the level of literacy in this region must have been extremely low. It has been estimated that at the end of the 19th century almost 73 per cent of the population in Dalmatia was illiterate. Illiteracy was even greater in Croatia-Slavonia – 85 per cent. In the Balkan region the extent of illiteracy was the same: in Bulgaria 72 per cent, in Romania 78, in Bosnia 87 and in Serbia 96 per cent. By contrast, illiteracy almost disappeared in Britain in the second half of the 19th century. The same was with France. All data have been taken from: Houston 1988; Gross and Szabo 1992: 44; Tóth 2000: 3-4, 193-208; Daskalova 1999.

83 Causes of the low level of literacy included the small number of schools and lack of interest.

84 Although publications written in vernacular did exist, their number was very small in comparison with those published in Italian. More on this see in: Lakuš 2005.

Situation in Central and Western Europe differed. Towards the end of the 18th century the number of readers in Europe increased, and the reading public became largely anonymous, heterogeneous and fragmented.⁸⁵ Literary production increased and "modern" (individual) forms of reading developed. The new reading fashion destroyed almost any sort of social boundaries, attracting all classes and strata of society. Historians of the book have termed this phenomenon a "reading revolution," speaking of a "reading bug" that escalated into a collective "reading epidemic" (Wittmann 1999: 285). They assert that reading gradually evolved into an individual process independent of social class (Wittmann 1999: 290). They also claim that there were significant changes in reading styles towards the end of the 18th century, asserting that reading experienced revolutionary secular transition from "intensive" and reverent reading to a more "extensive," nonchalant reading style (Wittmann 1999: 290). German historian Rolf Engelsing was the first to propose the theory of "reading revolution," that is, he was first to declare the revolution in reading habits, inventing the concepts of "intensive" and "extensive" reading.

The "intensive" reading implied that readers, having the choice of only a few books, read books intensively, re-reading them several times, usually in the midst of the family where they actually listened to the printed word, memorizing parts of the texts. This was particularly true for the Bible and other religious material, especially in the Protestant countries where daily encounters with the Bible was regular. The "intensive" reading was used in the times of scarcity of books and almost general illiteracy when for most illiterate persons a book was considered a sort of sacred object. In the second half of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, this style of reading, claims Rolf Engelsing, yielded to another style – "extensive" reading. The "extensive" reading was characterized by the individualization of the act of reading, its separation from other cultural activities, and the desacralisation of the book. Book also reached various segments of the population, which means that even the members of social strata who had previously not read now became interested in reading matter, not in order to teach and educate themselves, but for their personal enjoyment. Varied reading matter appeared on the literary market, too.⁸⁶

However, the theory of "intensive" and "extensive" reading has witnessed intense debate. What has been questioned is whether the transition from "intensive" to "extensive" reading was as decisive as has sometimes been argued. Some historians of the book have considered the theory of "reading revolution" oversimplified.

85 It has to be emphasized that the concept of a general "reading public" is no longer in favour with historians of the books and reading. To the contrary, they oppose the idea of a homogenous readership with the idea of several reading publics (Houston 1988: 193-197; Small 1996: 263-264).

86 On the theory of "reading revolution" see, for instance: Chartier 1987: 222-223; Darnton 1996: 218; Wittmann 1999: 285-300.

Robert Darnton has emphasized that historians have ignored evidence regarding old-fashioned repetitive reading, which was often mechanical or ritualistic rather than intensive, while the new vogue for novels from the late 18th century onward, for instance, produced an experience which was more and not less intensive (Darnton 1996: 218). Because some novels were read with passionate intensity over and over again, Reinhard Wittmann has claimed, it is certain that the "sentimental" form of reading that developed had become undeniably more "intensive" than before, not in the least "extensive," while old-fashioned "intensive" repetitive reading was very often a ritual devoid of meaning (Wittmann 1999: 286, 296). Wittmann has also claimed that to a certain extent a "reading revolution," that is, an increase in the number of readers did occur, but the true democratisation of reading in a quantitative sense would not take place for another 100 years, that is only in the latter part of the 19th century (Wittmann 1999: 289). Furthermore, Houston has also asserted that over much of Europe of the time the reading public grew in layers rather than evenly across the whole of society, in other words, that a growing number of readers were found only in certain social groups, mostly the urban upper-middle classes (Houston 1988: 194).

Historians have furthermore argued that even though the late 18th century certainly was the turning point in reading habits (more reading matter became available to a wider public, a mass readership emerged, etc.), the intensity in reading did not decrease. Instead, the variety of books found on the literary market increased. They have claimed that reading did not evolve in the single direction of extensiveness, but rather assumed many different forms among different social groups in various geographical areas (Darnton 1984: 215-256; Darnton 1990: 165-166; Brewer 1996: 243). An accelerated change in reading habits occurred mostly among the urban classes. Their role in what is called the "reading revolution" was most decisive, while the members of other social layers, for instance, the nobility, played an almost insignificant part (Wittmann 1999: 294).

However, this process was both quantitatively and qualitatively much weaker in Dalmatia. Though sources suggest that obviously much attention was given to books and reading habits of the population, nowhere can one find that vivid and picturesque account of the expanding reading habits as the following one recorded in the French capital:

everyone in Paris is reading ... Everyone, but women in particular, is carrying a book around in their pocket. People read while riding in carriages or talking walks; they read at the theatre during the interval, in cafés, even when bathing. Women, children, journeymen and apprentices read in shops. On Sundays people read while seated at the front of their houses; lackeys read on their back seats,

coachmen up on their boxes, and soldiers keeping guard (Wittmann 1999: 286).⁸⁷

Or, as the Erfurt clergyman Johann Rudolf Gottlieb Beyer observed in 1796:

readers of books who rise and retire to bed with a book in their hand, sit down at table with one, have one lying close by when working, carry one around with them walking, and who, once they have begun reading, are unable to stop until they have finished. But they have scarcely finished the last page of a book before they begin looking around greedily for somewhere to acquire another one; and when they are at their toilet or at their desk or some other place, if they happen to come across something that fits with their own subject or seems to them to be readable, they take it away and devour it with a kind of ravenous hunger. No lover of tobacco or coffee, no wine drinker or lover of games, can be as addicted to their pipe, bottle, games or coffee-table as those many hungry readers are to their reading habits (Wittmann 1999: 286).⁸⁸

In most of the Western European countries such diversity of readers could indeed be described in social terms. Towards the late 18th century not only in France, but in England, too, one could find as constituent parts of the expanding reading public servants, clerks and others of similar professions. Having analysed the print orders and purchases of 50 servants in the period between 1746 to 1784, historian of the book and reading culture in England Jan Fergus has come to the conclusion that "those in the lower ranks were as interested as their 'betters' in making the best use of their literacy, and that servants' interest in print reflects that of the middling ranks and sometimes even of the gentry and professional classes" (Fergus 1996: 202-225).

By contrast, a landowner from Zadar Cesare Cernizza (Cezar Crnica), who in 1841 wished to open the lending library in Dalmatia, arguing to defend his request for reducing the financial burdens, claimed that no comparison could be made between Zadar and other larger cities of the Austrian Empire.⁸⁹ Cernizza emphasized that in Graz and similar

87 Quoted from Krauss, W. 1965. Über den Anteil der Buchgeschichte an der Entfaltung der Aufklärung. In *Zur Dichtungsgeschichte der romanischen Völker*, 194–312. Leipzig, 1965.

88 Quoted from: Beyer, J. G. 1794. Über das Lesen, insofern es zum Luxus unserer Zeiten gehört, In *Acta Academiae Electoralis Moguntinae Scientiarum Utilium*, vol. 12. Erfurt, 1794, 7.

89 On 7th of January 1841 a landowner Cesare Cernizza submitted a supplication for the foundation of the public library in Zara named *Biblioteca di Lettura di Zara*. At the request of the censorship office (*Ufficio di Revisione dei libri*), dated with 5 April 1842 (N. 805/p), Cernizza handed over a catalogue of books that his library possessed on 28 June 1842. Having received it, a censor named Brozović drew up his observations and opinion on the matter on 10 July 1842. Although he passed several critical remarks on the stocks, the request was sanctioned and Sednitzky approved its opening on 10 December 1843. The owner had to pay 400 fiorins in caution money as well as 100 fiorins more per year. A correspondence between Cernizza and the authorities, however, continued as Cernizza asked them to lessen that financial burden as the circumstances in Dalmatia differed from those in other parts of the Monarchy. This forced him to close the

cities, the novel, as the most fashionable genre of the period, reached even the lower social layers, such as the servants, soldiers, waiters, and still unrecognised artists, who could afford these books due to their low prices.⁹⁰ Yet again, we find that the novel reading public could hardly be found among the lower classes in Zadar, but only among the higher social strata, such as state officials, and the most distinguished citizens.⁹¹ The lower classes, Cernizza asserted, were still "uncivilized" and rarely inclined to read due to a low level of literacy.⁹² It is obvious that the middle class in this region had not yet gained such power as the middle classes in other parts of Europe, where the bourgeoisie had experienced a significant transformation and emancipation, which eventually led to the break-up of feudal society.⁹³ Reading was thus in Dalmatia still confined to very narrow circles.

Because of all these circumstances it is quite evident that what Rolf Engelsing, speaking about reading in Germany in the late 18th century, called the "reading revolution" or "revolution in reading," occurred here much later, and even then mostly in urban areas. As Bulgarian historian Krassimira Daskalova has asserted, it is probable that what had happened in most of Central and Western Europe in the late 18th century, occurred in the entire South-Eastern Europe only at the very end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century (Daskalova 1987: 38-39). Furthermore, the so-called "intensive" reading of mostly religious and edifying works, habitually performed aloud, lasted in the region almost until the end of the 19th century, and even onwards.⁹⁴ The practice of reading silently and in isolation was confined to the narrow educated circles. Finally, reading still did not reach various segments of the population. There were several reasons for that. First of all, the population in Dalmatia belonged mostly to the world of oral culture, meaning that a level of illiteracy was very high. Second, spreading of a "culture of reading" among the members of various social strata did not suit the interests of the authorities in the whole of the Austrian Empire. Clergymen feared that reading would lead to a general process of secularisation and de-Christianisation,

lending library for two years. A detailed argumentation of such a request was explained in an attached document (14 February 1844). (DAZd, Prezidijalni spisi Namjesništva, 282 XI/2 10 fasc. 1) More details are provided in: Pederin 1987: 37-39.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid; DAZd, Prezidijalni spisi Namjesništva, 314, XI/2 10. 1138.

93 Although the social status and structure of the nobility and peasantry remained largely unchanged, the bourgeoisie in Europe gained significant power, which was in essence a part of the current embourgeoisement of society, culture, and literature. On this basis, Jürgen Habermas developed his theory of the "structural transformation of the public sphere," according to which the new bourgeois identity emerged with a new public sphere that was independent of the courts, Church and State. In this new form of the public sphere status granted only by birth was replaced by individual identity. More on this see in: Habermas 1993.

94 Ibid.

while secular authorities feared that the existing order might be endangered (Wittmann 1999: 294-295).

For instance, the censor Brozović criticised stocks of the Cernizza's library. These were composed of too many entertaining works, of which Italian and German novels were particularly singled out. He stated that the library's two sections, namely, scientific and literary works, comprising 1,300 volumes, and works of entertainment, comprising 1,060 volumes, should not be equal to one another. He also noticed that some works put in the former section actually belong to the latter one, which meant that entertaining works were even more numerous than the aforementioned number would suggest. He furthermore warned that moral and didactic works, particularly important in shaping the minds and hearts of the young (and adults too), should exceed in number works that served only to amuse. Only one copy of each work belonging to the entertainment section should be kept in the stocks. In this way, a reasonable and acceptable proportion of books in the two sections could be achieved. Finally, he reproached Cernizza for not including classical Latin and Greek works, either in the original or translation.⁹⁵ This suggests two important things. First, the authorities wished to limit the reading of works they considered useless if not dangerous. Second, although the literary production of the *belles-lettres* in Dalmatia barely existed, novels obviously had their faithful reading public there. Although it is difficult to assess who were most often consumers of this kind of literature, these were in all probability the educated social strata.

However, what is certain is that interest for various reading materials did exist. This demonstrates that certain albeit slow changes occurred in Dalmatia as well. In spite of the premise that printed matter did not pervade the population through all its ranks, it certainly did reach the educated classes. Furthermore, although the number of reading societies (as well as public libraries, bookshops and other, similar institutions that might further help the cultivation of reading habits) was rather small, it has to be remembered that the more educated population could procure books from foreign bookstores as well.⁹⁶ As a result of these circumstances, it might

95 DAZd, Prezidijalni spisi Namjesništva, 282 XI/2 10 fasc. 1.

96 However, without a detailed study and analysis of possible channels of illegal import of the forbidden literature, which, for instance, can be seen in French historiography, it is difficult to make any general conclusion concerning the reading of forbidden literature. What is certain is that the geo-strategic position and fairly well-developed maritime relations with other countries undoubtedly made Dalmatia a fertile soil for development of illegal channels. Through these channels forbidden books were being imported into the region, and then deep into the Danube area, Vienna and Pest. They came mostly from France (Paris), Switzerland and Germany (Hamburg, Stuttgart, Dresden), and were then transported to Marseilles and by sea to Livorno; then by the Adriatic Sea the books continued their journey into Dalmatian seaports. Occasionally their journey was stopped by the authorities. Documents on censorship testify to the circulation of forbidden books and demonstrate the character and intensity of attention paid to the printed word by both the State and the Church.

be concluded that important changes in reading habits also occurred in this region, albeit to a limited extent and with less influence on society as a whole. As has already been demonstrated, the reading circles were still very restricted and reading was still considered privileged activity, reserved only for upper social layers. Reading societies testify to this pattern. However, the statutes of the reading societies founded in the 1840s show that they did not limit their memberships by the social parameters. The only criterion seems to have been activity work for the benefit of the nation and its education. These societies began to play a significant role in the national movement that developed at the time. In other words, their activity surpassed the functionality of a mere reading room, gaining political significance for the entire region. Reading now acquired a new dimension, moving from the cultural to the political realm. It became open to the more social strata, gradually losing its exclusive features.

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Sažetak

Društvena ekskluzivnost čitateljskih društava u Dalmaciji tijekom prve polovice 19. stoljeća

Čitateljska su se društva, poznata i kao *gabinetto di lettura* ili *kazina*, u Dalmaciji pojavila sredinom 18. stoljeća, postavši središtima društvenoga i kulturnog života regije. Premda su nastala prema uzoru na slična zapadnoeuropska, sjevernotalijanska i austrijska društva, njihov je broj u usporedbi sa zemljama Srednje i Zapadne Europe bio veoma malen. Usprkos tomu, njihovi su statuti iznimno dragocjen i koristan povijesni izvor, koji nam može razotkriti ne samo važnost koja je pridavana knjizi i čitanju već i mijenjanje odnosa prema čitanju tijekom vremena. Statuti čitateljskih

društava također mogu poslužiti pri rekonstrukciji društvene strukture čitateljskih krugova, kao i interakcije i komunikacije samih članova. Oni mogu rasvijetliti i pitanje sudjelovanja žena u cjelokupnome društvenom i kulturnom životu, razotkriti unutrašnje funkcioniranje društva itd.

Ovaj rad, koji se temelji na analizi statuta nekoliko čitateljskih društava 19. stoljeća, donosi nekoliko zaključaka. Ponajprije ukazuje na to da je u prvoj polovici 19. stoljeća članstvo u čitateljskim društvima još uvijek bilo determinirano položajem na društvenoj ljestvici i rezervirano samo za uzak krug obrazovanih. Premda je u Zapadnoj Europi čitateljstvo bilo znatno heterogenije, a članstvo u čitateljskim društvima otvoreno svim društvenim slojevima, u Dalmaciji je čitanje zadržalo obilježja ekskluzivnosti. Rad također ukazuje na to da se pojava koju pojedini povjesničari knjige i čitanja nazivaju „čitateljskom revolucijom” ili „revolucijom čitanja” u Dalmaciji zbila znatno kasnije, a čak i tada većinom u urbanim krajevima, te su stoga promjene u čitateljskim navikama bile uglavnom ograničenog doseg a i utjecaja na cjelokupno društvo. Nadalje, rad ukazuje i na to da od 1840-ih godina čitanje zadobiva novu dimenziju, postajući dostupno i širim društvenim slojevima te gubeći pritom postupno svoje ekskluzivne karakteristike. Čitateljska društva, posudbene knjižnice i druge kulturne institucije utemeljene tijekom 1840-ih godina nisu svoje članstvo ograničavale društvenim parametrima. Jedini je uvjet bilo djelovanje za dobrobit nacije i njezino prosvjetljenje. Naposljetku, može se zaključiti da su se promjene na području kulture čitanja, koje su se u Srednjoj i Zapadnoj Europi zbile potkraj 18. stoljeća, u Dalmaciji dogodile tek krajem 19. ili čak početkom 20. stoljeća. Međutim, točnu procjenu promjene odnosa prema čitanju i rastu njegove važnosti početkom 19. stoljeća teško je dati bez analiza strukture članstva i čitateljskih navika samih članova te visine iznosa koji su izdvajani za nabavu nove građe i povećanje knjižnog fonda, a koje do sada još nisu učinjene u hrvatskoj historiografiji zbog nedostatka povijesnih izvora. Takvo bi istraživanje zacijelo dodatno rasvijetlilo ulogu koju su knjige i čitanje imali u Dalmaciji tijekom prve polovice 19. stoljeća.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: Dalmacija, 19. stoljeće, čitanje, čitateljska društva, „čitateljska revolucija”, *kazina*, *gabinetto di lettura*.