

JULES VERNE'S SOURCES FOR "MATHIAS SANDORF"¹

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1. Count Monte Cristo

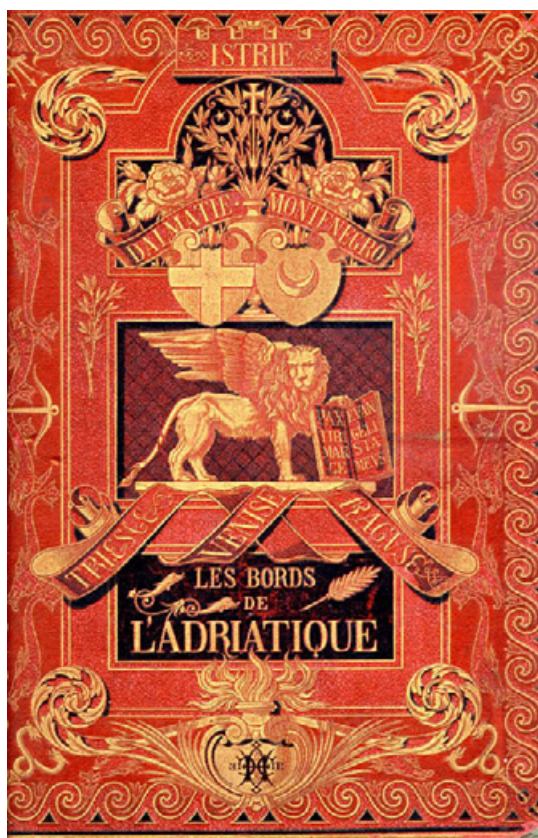
Jules Verne dedicated his novel "Mathias Sandorf" to Alexandre Dumas jr., his very good friend. Dedication was also pointed to the memory of Alexandre Dumas (father), author of legendary novel "Count Monte Cristo". In a dedication-letter addressed to Dumas junior, Jules Verne stated that he tried to make Mathias Sandorf as a Monte-Cristo of "Voyages Extraordinaires". Verne's dedication and answer by Alexandre Dumas jr. were published as an opening of many editions of the novel "Mathias Sandorf", including also a Croatian 1988 edition.

2. Jules Verne's journeys

Jules Verne had a lot of travellings, mostly with his yacht "Saint Michel". In couple of interviews Verne mentioned that the inspiration for the novel "Mathias Sandorf" came during one (undated) family cruising with "Saint Michel" over the Mediterreanean, when he visited Tanger and Malta; and during another Mediterreanean cruising at 1878, with his friends Raoul Duval, Hetzel jr. and his brother Paul.

3. Travelling diaries

Describes of Pazin, of his thousand years old castle and of underground cave called Pazinska jama (or Foiba di Pisino), places mentioned in novel "Mathias Sandorf" as a scenery for very important parts of the plot, were available to Jules Verne in years before he wrote this novel. Regarding the fact that Verne, in "Mathias Sandorf", mentioned traveller and writer Charles Yriarte, it's possible that Verne knew for Yriarte's works about Adriatic coast. Besides, Verne and Yriarte knew each other. Charles Yriarte wrote about Pazin, his castle and cave "Pazinska jama", in his works "Les Bords de l'Adriatique" (Ports of Adriatic) - (Hachette, Paris 1878.) and "Trieste et l'Istria" (Trieste and Istria) -



¹ <http://www.ice.hr/davors/sources.htm>

(Hachette, Paris 1875.). In his book “Les Bords de L’Adriatique” Yriarte published one very nice panoramic drawing of Pazin, with a gorge of “Pazinska jama” cave in a first plan. Besides his other impressions from Pazin, Charles Yriarte very carefully described architectonic look of the old castle and views down the gorge, talking about his own feelings of fear and respect to the mysterious deep he saw while looking over the castle’s window. Yriarte mentioned also an contemporary episode when a young count Esdorff, official of local municipality, entered the underground lake in “Pazinska jama” cave with a little boat, but couldn’t reach it’s end. Also, Yriarte repeated a contemporary belief that the water of river Pazincica, after miles of underground flow through “Pazinska jama” cave, comes up again on the surface in a Lim channel (or Lim bay), at the western coast of Istria; and that’s the way where also Verne’s heroes had passed.

4. Mayor of Pazin Giuseppe Cech

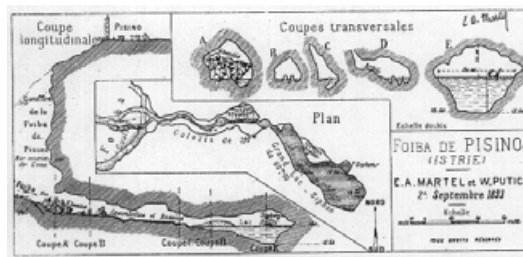
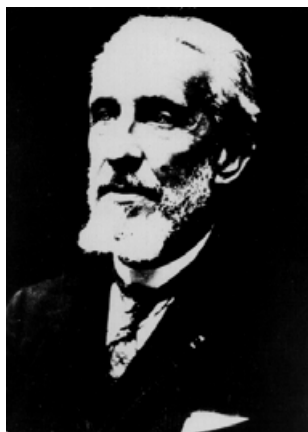
Famous about his very pedant and detailed preparations for every of his novel, Jules Verne used to collect all available informations about places he was up to describe. While preparing to write a huge, three-volumes novel “Mathias Sandorf”, Jules Verne wrote a letter to contemporary mayor of Pazin, Giuseppe Cech, asking for more detailed facts that he could find in Yriarte’s works. Giuseppe Cech answered the letter, and sent to Jules Verne also a photographs of landscape with gorge, old castle, and old parts of town. I believe that, thanks to these photographs, Leon Benett, illustrator of “Mathias Sandorf”, could draw an very realistic picture of old castle in Pazin, placed on the edge of a high rock with a deep gorge and a river flowing to the underground. Well, two years after, Jules Verne sent a first print of “Mathias Sandorf” to his correspondent from Pazin, with hand-written dedication: “Au Podestat de Pisino - Hommage de l’auteur - Jules Verne - Paris, 22 novembre 1885.” This relationship between Jules Verne and mayor of Pazin Giuseppe Cech was enlightened for a first time at book “La Foiba di Pisino” by Nerina Feresini (Trieste, 1972).

5. Ludwig Salvator von Habsburg

Austrian archduke Ludwig Salvator von Habsburg was a close friend with Jules Verne. He was adventurer, he loved the sea and sailing, in his time he was famous explorer, and his books on the popular life, costumes, customs, and architectural monuments on the eastern Adriatic coast undoubtedly influenced on Jules Verne’s choice of the places used in Mathias Sandorf. Some researchers claimed that the person of Ludwig Salvator was model for the character of the count Mathias Sandorf (and, also, for the character of Hector Servadac!), and this could be true very easily. Also, it’s well known that the model for the illustrated character of Mathias Sandorf was another Jules Verne’s friend, Jules Hetzel jr.

There’s one more possible relation between Jules Verne, Ludwig Salvator, and Mathias Sandorf. It’s historical fact that the famous French speleologist Edouard Alfred Martel was inspired with Verne’s novel Mathias Sandorf (as he directly wrote in his scientific reports) when he decided to come to Pazin for exploring the underground part of the Pazin Gorge in 1893 and twice more after that. We have not any confirmation that Verne and Martel knew each other, but it’s well known that both of them knew Ludwig Salvator very closely.

D. Šišović, oktober 2003



Edouard Alfred Martel, famous French speleologist who explored many caves all over Europe, including Pazinska jama, saying that he was directly inspired by Verne’s “Sandorf”.