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## Considerations Regarding the Status of the Morlachs from the Trogir`s Hinterland at the Middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century: Being Subjects of the Ottoman Empire and Land Tenants of the Venetian Republic

*Rozważania nad statusem Morlaków z prowincji Trogir w połowie XVI wieku: poddani Imperium Ottomańskiego i dzierżawcy ziemscy Republiki Weneckiej*

### STRESZCZENIE

W połowie XVI stulecia prowincja Trogir, podobnie jak cała Dalmacja, odczuwała znaczący spadek gospodarczy i demograficzny. Opuszczone ziemie i wsie regionu przygraniczna, oddzielające posiadłości Imperium Ottomańskiego i Republiki Weneckiej stały się nowym domem dla półkoczowniczych pasterzy Morlaków. Niektórzy spośród wcześniejszych właścicieli opuszczonych posiadłości wyprowadzili się w czasie konfliktu z Osmanami do miast na wybrzeżu i zdecydowali się wydzierżawić swoje ziemie Morlakom, którzy przybyli tu spoza granicy. Tak stało się w przypadku wsi *Radosich*, *Triloque* i *Suchi Dol*, wydzierżawionych rodzinom Morlaków, które – w świetle dokumentów państwowych – musiały wywiązać się z obowiązków nałożonych na dalmatyńskich właścicieli. Rodzaje powinności, które miały być świadczone przez Morlaków na rzecz weneckich panów, jak również ottomańskich władców, nie różniły się tak bardzo od zobowiązań wypełnianych przez inne społeczności wołoskie zidentyfikowane w środkowej części Półwyspu Bałkańskiego. Biorąc pod uwagę fakt, że zadaniem wenecko-ottomańskiego regionu pogranicznego było utrzymanie pokoju między nimi na terenie Dalmacji, wenecka decyzja o wydzierżawieniu ziem ottomańskim poddanym jawi się jako rozwiązanie korzystne dla wszystkich zaangażowanych stron: mieszkańców Dalmacji, władz ottomańskich na Bałkanach i półkoczowniczych Morlaków.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Dalmacja, Morlacy, administracja wenecka, poddani Imperium Ottomańskiego, dzierżawcy ziemscy, kontrakty publiczne, negocjacje graniczne

The argument of this paper focuses on a quite common situation for the border region between the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire: a dual social status of the people living in that area. The main characters are the Morlachs, a marginal social group identified through the Venetian eyes with the people arriving from the inner provinces of the Ottoman Balkans. The space and time of the argument is shaped by the hinterland of Trogir (Traù) and the wars of 1537–1540, and the war of Cyprus (1570–1573). The duality of the Morlachs status is given equally by the political interests manifested in Dalmatia by the Ottoman Empire and Venetian Republic, and by the specific life-style of the Morlachs. The documents I choose to invoke allow us to learn how the Morlachs interfere in the border negotiations between the two powers and also to discover more about the Morlach communities from Dalmatia during the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Given the lack of unity in defining the Morlachs, it appears still necessary to explain who the Morlachs of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were. Since the first reference in the sources in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>, the Morlachs have been known for a specific lifestyle: they are semi-nomadic shepherds, good soldiers, if there is a nobleman willing to pay them, and skillful caravan merchants. Also known is the fact that the Morlachs lived in small familial communities, trusted their own leader, who was usually the oldest man in the community, and they respected mostly their own rules<sup>2</sup>. According to the earlier sources they were Orthodox by religion and Vlachs by ethnicity<sup>3</sup>. These two last aspects are the most uncertain and difficult to describe or explain if someone wants to know more about them. Instead, one can understand why it is so difficult. For that we have to keep in mind frequent changes of political influences (different administrative organizations, various influences: Hungarian, Byzantine, Italian,

<sup>1</sup> The Morlachs were mentioned for the first time by the anonymous presbyter from Dioclea in the second half of 12<sup>th</sup> century. In his chronicle of Slavs, this anonymous presbyter comments on the beginning of the Bulgarian invasion in the Balkan Peninsula named “Latin Provence as it was named by the Romans, or Morovlachi, which is the name for black Latins”. This is for the first time the name of the Morlachs is used to describe a population of Latins, other than Italians, Latins themselves. In: Presbyter Diocleatis, *Regnum Slavorum*, in: I. G. Schwandtner, *Scriptores rerum Hungaricanum veteres ac genuine*, III, Vienna 1748, p. 478.

<sup>2</sup> S. Dragomir, *Vlahii din nordul peninsulei Balcanice*, Bucharest 1959.

<sup>3</sup> J. V. A. Fine Jr., *When Ethnicity Did Not Matter in Balkans: a Study of Identity in Pre-nationalist Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia in the Medieval and Early – Modern Periods*, Ann Arbor 2006; D. Roksandić, *The Dinaric Vlachs/Morlachs in the Eastern Adriatic from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries: How Many Identities?*, in: *Balcani occidentali, Adriatico e Venezia fra XIII e XVIII secolo/ Der Westliche Balkan, der Adriarum und Venedig (13. 18 Jahrhundert)*, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, eds. G. Ortalli, O. J. Schmitt, Wien 2009, pp. 271–286.

and Venetian), the migrations caused by the late influx of Slavs arriving in the Balkan Peninsula, and the geography of the area. The Morlachs appear on the scene of history in the context of the Bulgarian arrival south of the Danube. Put in movement by the Bulgarians, some of the Vlach groups headed west and arrived on the shore of the Eastern Adriatic<sup>4</sup>.

The meaning of the name 'Morlach' for the Vlachs, functioning throughout the centuries on the slopes of the Dinaric Mountains, started to change. During the Hungarian rule over Dalmatia the equivalence between the terms 'Vlach' and 'Morlach' can be proven by documents issued for the same reasons by the Hungarians (Vlach name) and the Venetians (Morlach name). Starting with the arrival of the Ottomans in the south of Dalmatia and further toward north – west, the thesis can hardly be supported. The Ottoman expansion and the fall of Hungary (1526) made the Morlachs to be identified especially thanks to their lifestyle, and less through ethnical features. At least in the Venetian eyes the Morlach community can represent a mixture of Vlachs, Croatians, Serbs, Bosnians, etc., as long as they share a specific lifestyle. For the Venetian officials responsible for the administration of Dalmatia since 1409 (the conquest of Zadar/Zara), being a Morlach meant that one must have arrived from beyond the flexible border, must not have had a good social condition (they were rather poor), had to practise sheep breeding, caravan commerce or be involved in paid military activities. If none of this worked and they were not recognized as Uskoks then a Morlach might have been as well the most feared theft, robber or killer.

The renewal of the Morlach population at the border region of Dalmatia, caused by the Ottoman expansion toward the coastal Dalmatian cities, accentuated equally the mixture of people identified with the Morlach name and the social implications of their presence. The difference between the Morlachs "our subjects" and the Morlachs "the subjects of Signor Turco (*sudditi del Signor Turco*)" is the main distinction, which can be made between the Morlach groups. Nevertheless, the Morlach presence is significantly felt in the local economy, agriculture, defensive system, demography, and in the development of the region. Unfortunately, the Morlach presence is perceived by local Venetian authorities, in most of the cases, like something that must be fixed. The Morlach problem and the solutions Venice found for it during period of peace, established in Dalmatia between Venice and the Ottoman Empire at the end of the war from 1537 to 1540, allowed Venice to transform the Morlachs into an advantage for her regional politics and for keeping to herself the control of the harbor

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<sup>4</sup> See note 1.

cities of Dalmatia. In addition to that, the fact that there was no established and well-defined border until the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the lifestyle of the Morlachs and the interests of the ruling powers placed these communities in the center of the border diplomacy.

The general context that places the Morlachs between the Ottomans and Venetians with a similar status of subordination is shaped by the period of peace established at the end of 1537–1540 war, peace that lasted until the Cyprus war in 1570. The Venetian defeat at Prevesa, by the end of this war, represents for *Serenissima* a big disadvantage in her negotiations for the border of Dalmatia<sup>5</sup>. With the treaty concluded, for the next thirty years Venice has to share with the Ottomans the commercial routes from the south Adriatic. This way, even the coastal cities of Dalmatia became very attractive to the Ottoman regional expansionistic policy. Therefore, there are two significant aspects that influenced the negotiations for the border: the Ottoman interest in having access to the Venetian city-ports from Dalmatia and the arduous Venetian administrative policy over a reduced but extremely important province with its hegemonic status in the Adriatic.

Even if both states, the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Venice, manifested for a peaceful border and a good neighborhood<sup>6</sup>, the discussions reached only some approximate solutions. In the first place, Venice managed to settle on the abandoned border region of Zadar some of the immigrants who arrived from beyond the border, granting them lands, seeds, protection and exemption from the service on galleys<sup>7</sup> (it is worth to mention the case of the Istrian Morlachs brought to Dalmatia by Alvisè Badoer in 1538). Secondly, in the hinterland of Šibenik/Sebenico, the negotiations for border are shaped by the status of 33 Venetian villages inhabited by the Morlachs, who were Ottoman subjects<sup>8</sup>. A third situation

<sup>5</sup> S. K. Sander, *Urban Elites in the Venetian Commonwealth. Social and Economic Mobility in Early Modern Dalmatia (Zadar/Zara, 1540 to 1570)*, 2011, University of Graz, p. 51 [unpublished PhD dissertation].

<sup>6</sup> G. Praga, *Storia di Dalmazia* (ed. Oglio), p. 181: *Miracoli di abilita, di tatto, di destrezza, fecero i conti, i capitani ed i rettori delle città per venire a capo della rudezza dei sangiacchi, degli aga, dei cadì, dei dizadr, con i quali avevano ordine perentorio di "vicinare bene"*.

<sup>7</sup> Various acts issued between 1538 and 1570 and found in the archives of the National Archives from Venice (*Archivio di Stato di Venezia*) prove that the Venetian settlement policy applied in the case of the Morlachs who crossed the unsettled border between the Venetian and the Ottoman lands. Also, a fact is mentioned as reality by P. Giuseppe in *Storia di Dalmazia*, p. 181, when he states: *gravissimo pertanto si presento il problema del ripopolamento dei pochi territori rimasti a Venezia. Morlacchi ed Istriani vennero insediati con patti colonici favorevolissimi*.

<sup>8</sup> K. Juran, *Doseljavanje Morlaka u opustjela sela šibenske Zagore u 16. Stoljeću*, "Povijesni prilozii" 2014, 46, pp. 129–160; Cr. Luca, *The Vlachs/Morlaks in the Hinterlands of Traù (Trogir)*

is represented by the Trogir's hinterland where Venice solves the matter of the people from the outside of the region by concluding with them some rental contracts.

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Like the rest of Dalmatia, the hinterland of Trogir was strongly affected by a dramatic demographical decrease (caused by war and plague). Paolo Andreis (the author of a historical chronicle of Trogir written by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century) states that around 1525 those 13 villages from the hinterland of Trogir were almost entirely depopulated and the lands remained uncultivated<sup>9</sup>. The Morlachs were those who occupied these villages and lands during the military conflict and used it following their ancient customs: only in winter when they were looking for a milder climate for their herds. The problems appeared, however, after the war had ended. The Morlachs refused to give up their practice and their new homes, causing a conflictual situation in the process of the border negotiation. The Ottoman conquest of Clissa (Klis) in 1537 and the establishment of a sanjakat in the close neighborhood of the Venetian lands increased the Turkish influence in the region.

The difficulty in deciding the limits between the states is also proved by one letter received by Husref (Husrev), the sanjak of Bosnia, from Istanbul in 1531<sup>10</sup>. In this letter, the Sultan confirms the fact that Venice is the rightful owner of three border villages named *Triloque*, *Radosich* and *Suhidol*, from the hinterland of Trogir. Also, the Sultan does not deny that during the war some Ottoman subjects occupied the abandoned villages and used them for their own purpose. However, since the villages belonged to the Venetian town, according to some ancient Hungarian documents<sup>11</sup>,

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*and Sebenico (Šibenik), Towns of the Venetian Dalmatia, During the 16<sup>th</sup> Century*, in: *Miscellanea Historica et Archologica in Honorem Professoris Ionel Căndea*, eds. V. Sîrbu, Cr. Luca, Brăila 2009, pp. 311–322.

<sup>9</sup> Paolo di Andreis, *Storia della città di Traù*, ed. M. Perojević, Split 1908, chronicle from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, p. 290.

<sup>10</sup> ASV, *Bailo a Constantinopoli*, busta 365, filza: Scritture spettanti a confini di Spalato e Trau. Comitiano dell'anno 1562, sino all'anno 1588. Scritture vecchi intorno a i confini de Trau addopunte l'anno 1562, nenum.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*: *te sia noto che e stato olim a ti et al Caddi di Scardona mandato imperiale comandamento per far inquisition in la causa di confini delli pertinenti alle Signori Venetiani, et havendo hora tu per tue lettere alla mia Porta che e de felice apoggio significato che venuto tu co' il predetto caddi sopra li lochi dell adifferentia se ha fatto inquisitione et con ogni chiarezza consociuto et inteso per li Privilegii delli re de Ongaria [underlined by the Author for emphasis] che ditti hanno nelle loro mani, che le ville nominate Triloque et Radosich et Suhidol poste sopra il confin della loro citta*

Husref-beg was not to express any prejudice to the Venetian subjects and to keep a peaceful atmosphere in the region.

On the other side, Venice deals with the problem of villages occupied by Morlachs during the war by the Ottoman subjects in her own manner: Serenissima tries to transform them into land tenants of the Dalmatian landlord refugees inside the city. This way some of the nobles from Trogir chose to rent (*affitare*) their land to the Morlachs in exchange for some taxes and produce obligations. In order to exemplify these kind of actions it is worth to mention the document issued on 1 January 1534<sup>12</sup> by the chancery of Trogir. At this time, *Ioannes de Buffalis*, *Petro Alberto* and *Domenico de Andreis* testified that *Hieronimus Cippicus* the son of *Coriolani* and *Paulus Cippico*, the son of *Christophoro*, both nobles from Trogir, had decided to give and approve of work, cultivation, plowing, seeding and grazing for unlimited time of the village named Radossich<sup>13</sup>. Those who rented the village and its fields were Morlachs from the family of *Radoslavo Bubotus*. This *Radoslavo Bubotus*, together with *Joanni Vucassino*, *Petro Juanovich*, *Juray Radovanovich*, *Joanni Petrovich* and *Maroi Gliubisich*, and their heirs agree to work the fields, build houses, and even to make a garden if they want and if they receive the approval of the landlord<sup>14</sup>. However, the main concern of the contract was represented by the agricultural activity, which had to be fulfilled by the Morlachs. For the right to live in the village and to use its fields, the Morlachs had to give to the landlords the sixth part of the cultivated grain, which had to be transported by personal means to the noble's house from Trogir, near the sea<sup>15</sup>.

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*nominata Trau [...] et oltra ditte ville quante ville et possessioni sono che ditto confin serra ad initio spettano al Dominio delli Signori Venetiani et sono sta da loro possedute.*

<sup>12</sup> ASV, *Bailo a Constantinopoli*, busta 365, filza: Scritture spettanti a confini di Spalato e Trau. Comitiano dell'anno 1562, sino all'anno 1588. Scritture vecchi intorno a i confini de Trau addopunte l'anno 1562, nenum.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*: *domino Ioanne de Buffais et presentibus domini Petro Alberto et ser Domenico de Andreis condam domini Francisci testibus vocatis et rogatis ibiquem domino Hieronimus Cippicus condam domini Coriolani ac domino Peulus Cippico filius condam domini Cristophoro nobilis Tragurii per se et heredes suos dederunt, locaverunt et concesserunt ad laboratione et cultivatione, arndum, seminandum et apasculandum emporis debitis et congruis villam Radosich sitam in territorio Tragurii.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*: *facere eorum domus habitationum in dicta villa Radosich ubi ipsi dominis locatoribus meliis videbuntur et placeverit ac unus quisquem ipsorum heredes debeant unum uretum (?) terre pro horto constituendo, pro quo tamen horto nihil responderi teneatur pro affictum ipsi patronis, et quam ipsi laborantes teneatur ararae, seminare et pascolare illas terras in dicta villa Radosich quas ipsi domini locatoris consignabunt.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*: *ipsi laboratoribus qui labore nominibus suprascriptis teneatur et obligati sunt pro ut se obligarunt dare ipsis patronibus de bladis nascituris in ipsa villa Radosich sextam parte*



Also, the new tenants had some other kinds of obligations to fulfill for the village owners. Around Christmas the Morlachs from Radossich had to give to the landlord a buck for each house, a goat and a pig, and for the celebration of St. George a new cheese, which could be replaced with two loads of wood<sup>16</sup>. For establishing a good relation between the tenants and landlords, the Morlachs could choose their own leader (jupan or Zuppan), who had to observe the contract and the payments which had to be done. The contract also included a cancellation clause: the landlords could banish away from the village all those who did not pay the debts and the Morlachs were free to leave if they felt aggrieved<sup>17</sup>.

Similar conditions are concluded for the rent of the village named Sbiche (Zbice) on 3 January 1534<sup>18</sup>. Matho Celio, the son of Casotti, Michaelae Huoyniza and Sime testified that *Hieronimis de Andreis*, the son *Joannis* and his brother *Iacobus* had given this village to be worked, cultivated, ploughed, seeded and grazed for unlimited time<sup>19</sup>. The new tenants, the Morlachs family represented by *Juaray Simonichi*, received for himself and his relatives the village and the obligations. The first condition of this contract considers the cultivation and the harvest of cereals. The tenants could cultivate any type of cereal as long as the landlord received the sixth part of the production. The Jupan (zuppano) had to supervise the expenses (from the local incomes) and decide when the cereals were to be harvested; any cereal-cut done without his approval was punished with the seizure of the entire production. The produced grain had to be

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*quam sextam partem unus quisquem ipsorum teneatur eorum propriis expensis conducere ad castrum dictorum patronorum situatum in campo magno Tragurii propelitidis maris.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem: quam dictis laboratores et quilibet ipsorum teneatur ut obligati sunt pro ut se obligarunt solemniter pro regalia et honorancia ipsis patronis in festo Nativitatis Domini nostri Jesu Christo unum castratum pro qualiter ipsorum videlicet unum pro domo; et similiter ad carnis primum unum capretum pro qualiter domo, item capita porcorum omnium quos ipsi et qualiter ipsorum in eorum domibus occiderint, et ad festum Sancti Georgi caseum quem ipsi et qualiter ipsorum in sero fecerint iuxta consuetudine nec non dare ipsis patronibus duos equos lignorum pro qualiter domo.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem: cum hac conditione et apposita quam ista in libertatem quancumque ipsis patronis videbint expeller ipsos laboratores vel (the documente is damaged) ipsorum dicta villa et similiter sit in libertate ipsorum laboratores vel alterius eorum ipsi viderete exire et descendere de dicat villa Radossich.*

<sup>18</sup> ASV, *Bailo a Constantinopoli*, busta 365, filza: Scritture spettanti a confini di Spalato e Trau. Comitano dell'anno 1562, sino all'anno 1588. Scritture vecchi intorno a i confini de Trau addopunte l'anno 1562, nenum.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem: ibique dominis Hieronimus de Andreis condam domini Joannis et domino Iacobus eius frater per se et heredes suos dederunt et concesserunt ad laborandum, cultivandum, arandum, seminandum ac pasculandum temporibus debitis et congruis villa Sbiche positam et situatam in territorio Tragurii.*

carried to the landlord's houses with the tenants' horses<sup>20</sup>. Considering the periodical gifts which had to be offered to the landlords this document sets the following: at Christmas each tenant house had to bring 6 loads of wood and all the heads of the sacrificed pigs; at Carnival each house had to send a good goat, at Easter a good lamb and at St. George a fresh new cheese<sup>21</sup>. If neither of these gifts could be offered the tenants had to give to the landlord the equivalent in aspers (aspri – Ottoman coin). This way, the equivalent for a pig is 15 aspers, a buck – 30 aspers, a goat and a lamb 12 aspers each, and for the cheese – 15 aspers<sup>22</sup>.

Except from the obligations of providing animal or cultivated products, the Morlach tenants had to live permanently in the village and had to assure its protection<sup>23</sup>. The landlords were free to banish them and the Morlachs were free to leave when something went wrong<sup>24</sup>. Interesting is the following requirement: the new tenants of the village had to confess, take communion and pay the usual debts to the landlord's priest<sup>25</sup>.

During the following years, these kind of renting contracts did not present a desired situation. The fact that the Morlachs rented lands from the Dalmatians and had to pay debts to the Venetian authorities comes together with the fact that they had some obligations to fulfill as Ottoman subjects. There are not many cases, in which the Morlachs refused to pay

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*: Primo, siano tenute de tutte le biave de che condition se voglia che nascerano suli ditti terreni siano tenuti responder a noi patroni de dicta villa el sexto. Item sian tenuti tenir il vostro Zupanno seco d'ogni hora che occorrera alli loro proprie spese. Et non tagliar le biave senza nostra licentia ne tirarle senza licentia del vostro zuppano sotto pena de perder le ditte biave secondo li ordini della terra; item che tutte le biave sian tenute condurne gioso sulli loro cavalli senza solution alcuna (item che sian tenuti resseverni a noi patroni sui honorevolmente con la compagnia che venira con noi suso solum quatro volte al anno) item che ogni pluch (Engl. plough; Rom. plug) cosi detto sia tenuto ararne giornie do al anno et che tutte le biave che nascerono per conto nostro sian tenuti condurne gioso ut supra con soi cavalli et tirarnele senza solution alcuna [underlines made by the Author for emphasis].

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*: item che sian obligati per Nadal cadauna casa portarne some sei de legne per regalie, Item che tutte le teste de porcia sian tenute portarne a noi patroni, item che ogni Nadal ogni casa sian tenuta portarne un castron di anni tre, Item ogni Carnival ogni casa sian tenuta portarne un bon capreto, che ogni Pascha ogni casa sian tenuta portarne un bon agnello, che ogni casa sia tenuta portarne el di de San Zorzi uno fromagio de calatri doi.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*: per cadauna testa de porco non portando pagi aspri 15 per ogni castrado aspri 30, per ogni capreto et agnello aspri 12 per ogni formazo aspri 15.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*: item che sia tenuti far le stancie sulla villa nostra et residentia.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*: item che sia in liberta delle Patroni ogni hora che vorrano farli partir, et cosi chi non vorra star possi partirsi.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*: item che sian tenuti tenir il parrochian che li patroni li mettera et da lui confessarsi et tuor li debiti sacramentu et darli mercede solita et che non debbano andar a lavorar altrove che a loro.



the Venetian taxes, invoking the *Haraç* (tax)<sup>26</sup> they had to pay to the Ottomans (since they had lands to use and live on, they must have acted like any other Ottoman land owner and paid the required tax<sup>27</sup>).

However, the large number of letters exchanged between the Venetian authorities and the Ottoman ones until 1570 (the period of our research) informs us that the Morlachs almost never followed the requirements of the contracts. In fact, as the years went by the problem of the Morlachs living in the villages of Radossich, Triloque and Suchidol became a matter of understanding who is the rightful owner of the villages, Venice or the Ottoman Empire? The problem reached such an extent that it influenced the negotiations for the border in Dalmatia. The insubordination of the Morlachs and the Ottoman interest in gaining even more from the Dalmatian territory almost monopolized the letters sent from Trogir to Venice or Constantinople, from Venice to Klis or to Istanbul, as far as the subject of Dalmatia was concerned.

The difficulty in finding a solution influenced the count and captain of Trogir to make a detailed presentation of the problem. In his letter sent to the Venetian Senate on 7 May 1562<sup>28</sup> the count demanded that in the future the Morlachs, Ottoman subjects, could no longer be allowed to live and work the lands of *Serenissima* because they had brought only damages and had done only bad things<sup>29</sup>. The current conflicting situation started, according to the count's letter, at the end of the war of 1502, when the Turks had done a raid for plunder. Many of the ancient inhabitants fled to the fortified city of Trogir and others retreated to the mountains, abandoning the villages. These empty villages attracted the Morlachs, Ottoman subjects, who during the winter grazed their sheep flocks in the border's neighborhood. With every passing year the Morlachs were brought even closer to the sea<sup>30</sup>, a reason for which the establishment of a definitive

<sup>26</sup> Paolo di Andreis, *Storia della città di Traù*, p. 290: *I Morlacchi, ch erano sudditi de Turco, introdotti per necessita a lavorar queste terre, n'ebbero de molte il possesso in quasi tutte le ville, e per queste ne furono astretti di contribuire a' Turchi il Harazzo, ch'e una gravezza personale, et a' Traurini il terratico e le regalie.*

<sup>27</sup> A better explanation of the Vlachs'/ Morlachs' status inside the Ottoman Empire offers V. Kursar in *Being an Ottoman Vlach: On Vlach Identity(ies), Role and Status in Western Parts of the Ottoman Balkans (15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Centuries)*, "OTAM. Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi" 2013, 34, pp. 115–161.

<sup>28</sup> ASV, *Bailo a Constantinopoli*, busta 365, filza: Scritture spettanti a confini di Spalato e Trau. Comitiano dell'anno 1562, sino all'anno 1588. Scritture vecchi intorno a i confini de Trau addopunte l'anno 1562, nenum.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*: *che li terreni posseduti dalli sudditi di quella nell'avvenir fussero piu lavorati ne pascolati da Morlachi sudditi Turcheschi, per rimuovere ogni disturbo et querelle che potessero nell'avenire succedere.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*: *Primo essendo stato fatto al anno 1502 per la guerra principiata una depredaton*

border became necessary. The border was established for the first time around 1533 with the involvement of Husref, the *sanjak* of Bosnia. According to his document, already lost by 1562, the villages of *Radosich*, *Triloque* and *Suchidol* were confirmed as Venetian, and all the Morlachs and their flocks were banished away from the Dalmatian territory<sup>31</sup>. In this context, the Morlachs seem to be the ones who arrived in Trogir to ask the count and captain for the right to live in those villages. To convince the Venetian official from Trogir, the Morlachs promised to pay the taxes in accordance with the legal demands and even to cultivate grain and to pay the tax named *terratico delle biave* (the tax for cereals), only to be allowed to live in those 3 villages and to feed their animals in the pasturelands of Trogir<sup>32</sup>. The count and some of the nobles accepted the Morlachs' proposal, established some rental contracts and lived together peacefully until 1546. In this year the things started to change, a certain Morlach family named Vratcovich refused to pay the Venetian taxes. The *sanjak* of Klis at that time, Abdi, tried to convince the Morlachs to pay the Venetian debts even at the threat of having them removed to the Ottoman border, and he obtained a temporal success<sup>33</sup>. Two years later, another Morlach, Alia Slavich, the tenant from *Radosich* refused to pay the *terratic* and other established gifts. In this case, also the Ottoman authorities intervened and applied the Ottoman solution for their removal to other places of the Ottoman Empire. In his letter, the count of Trogir enumerated also a few other Ottoman

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*in questo territorio dalli Turchhi et menato via un gran quantita de anime, ne ritrovandosi fuora della citta in terraferma fortezza alcuna da potersi salvar, li restanti se reduseno alli scogli et cosi le ville di terraferma restorno del tutto vacue [...] All' hora vennerro certi Morlachi sudditi pero Trucheschi a tempo del inverno a pasclar li loro animali nelli luochi del Signor Turcho vicino a questo territorio li quali erano soliti l'estate andar alla montagna, et cosi tornandoli altri inverni sempre piu approssimandose alle marine intravano in questo territorio non vi essendo che quelli luochi habitasseno et li impedessero.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*: dove per tal causa furono descritte alcune ville di questo contadi nelli libri del Signor Turco per Huserf, sanzacco di Clissa del 1533 dechiarito e posto il confine de questo contado et esser le ville nominate Radosich, Triloque et Suchidol. Et questo pero mi essecution di uno commandamento del garn detto Signor Turco fatto del 1531, et cosi detto sanzacco caccio via tutti li Morlachi che si attrovarono esser con loro animali nel sudetto territorio.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*: li quali Morlachi vedendosi cacciati via del 1534 vennero al magnifico conte di questo loco et dimandorno a sua magnificentia per quatro ville che sono di questa comuna et ad altri particolari patroni de altri fondi che li fosse conceduto disponer al tempo d'inverno venir sopra li luochi loro a pascolar li suoi animali promettendo dar le honoranze iuxta il solito, et anche quando seminarano dar il terratico delle biave.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*: in quel tempo il sanzacco di Clissa, il magnifico Abdi, fece intimar alli Morlachi che non volendo dar li terratici secondo l'accordo dovessevo levarsi via, quali poi pagrono per non si partir.

interventions, which were to convince the Morlachs to pay their debts to the people of Dalmatia. Until 1558 each of these letters confirm the appurtenance of the three abovementioned villages to Dalmatia<sup>34</sup>, but with the arrival of *Ferhat beg* as sanjak of Klis the problem became even more complicated. This new sanjak ordered the Morlachs not to pay any of the debts required by the ndlords from Trogir or by the Venetian authorities<sup>35</sup>. From that moment onwards the negotiation regarding the border in the hinterland of Trogir involved the Venetian ambassador in Constantinople (*bailo a Costantinople*) even more as he was charged with the procurement of the official documents confirming the status of villages from the hinterland of Trogir. The count's detailed report written in 1562 mentions that the original border demarcation contract established together with Husref-beg was lost, but this did not mean that the Sultan could not issue a new official document to prove the Venetians right over the villages of Suchidol, Radossich and Triloque. Since the new sanjak supported the fact that the Morlachs could refuse to pay the Venetian taxes, the count decided to visit the villages and to observe with his own eyes the realities. Having arrived there he met Venetian subjects complaining about the Morlachs and the difficult relations existing between them. These Dalmatian inhabitants, subjects of Venice, asked the official from Trogir to banish the Morlachs and to definitely forbid their access to the Venetian region.

In May 1562<sup>36</sup>, a new letter sent by the count of Trogir to the Venetian Senate informed about the negotiations carried out at the local level with the Turks regarding the removal of the Morlachs from the Venetian vil-

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*: 1549 – Il clarissimo bailo ottenne uno commandamento del Gran Signor indirizzato al sanzacco di Clissa et al cadì de Cliuno (Clivno) per il qual si commetteva, che essendo Usreph sanzacco di Bossina messo li confini le ville nominate Radosich, Triloque et Suchidol, che tutti quelli che fussino intrati in detti confini si facessimo passar oltre che per modo alcuno non fusse permesso che fusse dato molestia alle luochi di Vostra Serenita;

1551 – Pisan sanzacco di Clissa commando al suo che constringesse li Morlachi a pagar alli patroni li terratici o che partissero via, così pagorno;

1552 – il cadì de Cliuno al qual il sudetto mandato era indirizzato insieme co'l sanzacco fece fede sottoscritta de molti testimoni et sigillata del suo sigillo come li luochi sopraditti erano nel territorio di Trau;

1553 – Malcos, sanzacco di Clissa fece una lettere in forma de cochiume che tutti quelli che stanno su le ville di Triloque et Sbiche debbano risponder il terratico et honoranze a miser Jacomo Chiudi, qual Malcos stete nel sanzacco fino 1558 et di continuo tutti li Morlachi pagarno li terratici et honoranze.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*: venne per 1558 Ferhat, sanzacco di Clissa, qual commandi alli Morlachi che trovo nel territorio di Trau che non dessero terratici ne honoranze alli patroni.

<sup>36</sup> ASV, *Bailo a Constantinopoli*, busta 365, filza: Scritture spettanti a confini di Spalato e Trau. Comitiano dell'anno 1562, sino all'anno 1588. Scritture vecchi intorno a i confini de Trau addopunte l'anno 1562, unnumbered.

lages. The context is favorable for discussions because the Ottomans from Klis were expecting some products and merchandise to be delivered from the harbor of Split, via hinterland of Trogir. To obtain this merchandise, the sanjak renewed his promise about convincing the Morlachs to pay their obligations or to remove them. On the other hand, the count of Trogir continued to postpone the delivery of goods invoking his fear for the life of his people who would have to cross the region inhabited by the Morlachs<sup>37</sup>. Only when the sanjak had promised a safe trip for the delegates of the count of Trogir, the merchandises were delivered together with the nobles, Miser Pietro Chiudi and Miser Doymo Hipio. These nobles were prepared to discuss the Morlach problem with the sanjak of Klis, the sanjak of Cliuno, the dasdar of Cliuno and Hadar voyvode. The Ottoman hospitality and openness for discussions on the matter of the Dalmatian border seemed to lead to a positive answer for the Venetian authorities. The sanjak approved of convincing the Morlachs to pay the *terratic* and other obligations, and delegated Hadar voyvode to apply this decision. Unfortunately, the odds were not following the Venetian desire. In the exact moment (*occorse in un momento gia a pena scritte li lettere*) when the decision was put on papers, a messenger informed the sanjak that his and his men's presence is required urgently at the border with Hungary to stop the local uprising (of Croatians, Hungarians, etc.)<sup>38</sup>. In this context, the matter of the villages occupied by the Morlachs was postponed again. However, the sanjak ordered the dasdar of Klis to inform Zorzi Nenadich<sup>39</sup> about the Morlachs' obligation to pay the Venetian taxes. This time the Venetian local officials managed to obtain something more than recognition for their rights and promises. Again in 1566<sup>40</sup> the count of Trogir sent to Venice a new detailed letter about the matter of the villages from the Trogir's region. In addition to the usual chronological presentation of events, the description of the hinterland and the Morlachs' status in the relations with the Dalmatians, the count stressed the bad influence of Ferhat bey, sanjak of Klis, over the Morlachs. While convincing the Morlachs that the Venetian taxes did not have to be paid, the sanjak also encouraged them to extend

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*: non ardino commetter noi nuncii a tanto pericolo, vedendo le starde non sicure et senza providimento alcuno si che si potesse andare senza sospetto di essere per strada amazzato.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*: che vi sopraionesse un coriero con lettere che subito sua Magnificentia con tutta la gente a cavalacar alli confini de Ongaria [...] che li ongari et crovati erano passati certa fiumara per il che fu forzato partirssi che tutti li suoi.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, Zorzi Nenadich appears as one of the Morlachs who at some point was in Constantinople to ask for their exemption from paying the Venetian debts: uno di primi morlachi il qual per causa di tal terratici piu volte era stato a Costantinopoli.

<sup>40</sup> ASV, *Miscellanea materie miste e notabile*, busta 33, filza: Trau terratici 1566 ff., document without a number.

their presence in the entire hinterland of Trogir, making damages in almost 4 out of 5 parts of this region<sup>41</sup>. Nothing was done from the Ottoman side to stop the Morlachs incursions, which every September affected the pasturelands, cereal fields, vineyards, and gardens. What was even worst was the presence of the Martolosses (some paid Ottoman soldiers, who had offensive and plunder duties), who mingled between the Morlachs and used to take young men as hostages to be sold as slaves on the Ottoman markets. New requests were made to find an appropriate solution for this problem. The increased Morlach damages and the fear spread by the Turkish soldiers left the local Venetian authorities without solutions, and the loss of a part of territory seemed to be imminent.

Even so, the intense negotiations between the Venetian Republic and the Ottoman Empire for the Dalmatian border managed to keep an approximately peaceful atmosphere; the war of 1570–1573 (Cyprus war) changed everything. The Morlachs status changed as well. If during the war period they were exempted from the rent payment<sup>42</sup> (or at least from the claim to have the rent paid), the new administrative context on the border established at the end of the war restarted the discussions about who had the right to use the lands of the villages of Radossich, Triloque and Suchidol, and consequently what the Morlachs had to pay or not. Until the end of Candian War (1645–1669), when the first international border was established in Dalmatia (*linea Nani*), there were no solutions for the problem of these three villages.

Seen from above, the case of the Morlachs from the hinterland of Trogir and the efforts of their settlement represent an example of border struggle in Dalmatia. Caused by the strong interests of Venice and the Ottomans, one can learn from this situation about the role played by the Morlachs. They appear as a key element in the regional, official discussions and as significant aspects in shaping the following central decisions. The Morlachs' lifestyle, even if the Venetian side of the border was used to settle and maybe assimilate them, proved to be a strong advantage for the Ottoman side, which used their seasonal movement to infiltrate the Venetian territory and to facilitate their offensiveness towards the Adriatic sea (as regional goal and reason for reward for the regional Ottoman officials). The Morlachs themselves seemed to fit quite well in these events. They could choose a side anytime; something which was favorable for them;

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*: *quai Morlacchi con mezzo d'ogni sanzacho che di nuovo vien a quelli confini cercano di usurpare et apropiarsi essi luochi che sono li quatro quinti d'esso territorio et li sanzachi da pochi ani in qua in cio li prestano ogni favore al che non prevedendosi seria total ruina et estemio di questa Vostra fidelissima citta.*

<sup>42</sup> Paolo di Andreis, *Storia della Citta di Trau*, p. 291.

they could or could not pay the obligations they were supposed to pay; they could cross the lands anytime they wanted, even if the damages left behind caused problematic negotiations; and they were more than welcome to live and use the abandoned lands and villages, as long as the Ottomans stayed away from the Venetian towns of Dalmatia.

From a larger perspective, if one is to consider the aspects chosen to be established as base for the rental contracts, made between the Morlachs and the inhabitants of Trogir, we gain more useful information about defining this community. Even if this hypothesis requires many other arguments and examples to be presented, it appears that obligations such as the tax for the use of the Dalmatian pasturelands, specific part of the agricultural products obtained by the Morlachs (if they chose to practise agriculture), the animals they had to give to the landlords or the cheese they had to offer, are recurrent in the history of the Morlachs in the Western Balkans. To some extent it might be enough to mention the case of Paul Medossevač, Morlach leader from the hinterland of Šibenik, who in 1441 concluded a contract with the count and captain of the Dalmatian city, according to which his Morlachs had to pay 65 ducats (*auri boni et iusti ponderis*) to sell their products only in Šibenik and to buy salt only from the city salines<sup>43</sup>. Again, similar debts are mentioned by Ivan Pederin in his study about Šibenik during late Middle Ages<sup>44</sup>, when the Morlachs provide the livestock for the city inhabitants<sup>45</sup>. To bring the analogy even

<sup>43</sup> *Monumenta historiam sibenici et eius districtus illustrantia*, tomus 3, *Instrumenta cancellariae Fantini de Cha de Pesaro comitis Sibenici, 1441–1443*, ed. Josip Kolanovic, Museum Civitatis Sibenici, 1989: *Et hoc usque ad festum Sancti Georgii proxime futurum, salvois gaiis, campis et aquis pro nostris villicis et subditis, et hoc pro responsione affictus ducatorum sexaginta- quinque auri boni et iusti ponderis, quos solvere teneatur, videlicet, medietatem in medietate cum intraverit dicta pascua et aliam medietatem per dies quindecim ante complementum dicti termini, sub poena quarti, cum hiis pactis et condicionibus, quod teneatur cum omnibus de usa catuna venire Sibinicum cum eorum mercantiis ad vendendum et emendum de sale nostre camere. Item quod teneatur solvere ducatos duos pro qualibet celega, quam conduxerit in dictis pacuis extra suam catunam. Et si aliquis de catuna dicti Pauli teneamini ad omnem emendationem totius dicti damni. Et si per aliquem vel aliquos extra catonam dicti Pauli illatum esset damnum alicui civi vel districtuali nostro dictus Paulus esset magis propinquus loco, ubi comissum foret tale damnum quam alii catonarii, ipse teneatur ad omnem emendationem dicti damni vel reos dicti damni in fortiam nostram dare. Et si cum dicta catuna contingerit dictum Paulum stare super dictis pascuis ultra dictum terminum, quod solvere teneatur de illo pluri secundum consuetudinem nostram. Dantes et concedentes dicto Pauli et omnibus de sua catuna liberum et plenum salvum conductum ac fidantiam veniendi ad hanc civitatem nostram Sibenici et districtum cum suis animalibus et meercantiis, rebus et bonis quibuscumque et ibi standi et manedi indeque descendendi ad eorumlibitum volutum omni molestia et impeimento omnium personarum penitus cessante dumodo contra status prelibate Serenissime ducalis dominationes nostre et huius civitatis nostre Sibinici non tractaverint.*

<sup>44</sup> I. Pederin, *Šibenik (Sebenico) nel basso Medioevo fino al 1440*, "Archivio storico italiano" 1991, 149, pp. 811–885.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 850.



further one can invoke the ancient *law of Vlachs* (*ius valachicum; zakon vlahom*) extracted from the privilege accorded by King Štefan Milutin to the Banjska monastery<sup>46</sup> in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. According to this privilege the Vlachs who settled on the monastery's lands had to consider between their obligations, animals (sheep), sheep skins, the work on fields and the security of the community.

Whether or not this comparison is justified, the common elements confirm the pastoral tradition of the Dinaric Vlachs, which was transmitted to the Morlach communities of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, even though its ethnical bonds suffered transformations. What remains in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is the lifestyle example, which is important in understanding how the communities on a changeable border were perceived by the Dalmatian people and further, the Venetians. Seen through their sources, the Morlachs achieve their deserved place between those marginal communities, the history of which must be (re)written.

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<sup>46</sup> Apud. S. Dragomir, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

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#### ABSTRACT

In the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the hinterland of Trogir, like the entire Dalmatia, suffers a significant economic and demographic decrease. The abandoned lands and villages from the border region established between the Ottoman Empire and the Venetian Republic became a new home for the semi-nomadic Morlach shepherds. Some of the former owners of the abandoned properties moved during the military conflict with the Ottomans to the coast cities and decide to rent their lands to these Morlachs who arrived from beyond the border. This happens with the villages of *Radosich*, *Triloque* and *Suchi Dol* that were rented to some Morlach families which, according to some public documents, had to fulfill a list of obligations established by the Dalmatian owners. The types of duties that must have been accomplished by the Morlachs for the Venetian landlords and also for the Ottoman rulers were not so different from the obligations fulfilled by other Vlach communities identified in the inner part of the Balkan Peninsula. Considering that the goal of the Veneto – Ottoman border region was to maintain the peace between them in Dalmatia, the Venetian decision of renting lands to the Ottoman subjects appears as an advantageous solution for all the parties involved: the inhabitants of Dalmatia, the Ottoman authorities from the Balkans and the semi-nomadic Morlachs.

**Key words:** Dalmatia, Morlachs, Venetian administration, subjects of the Ottoman Empire, land tenants, public contracts, border negotiations

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