

THE VLACHS IN OTTOMAN BORDERLANDS: THE SANJAK OF KLIS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 16th CENTURY

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The paper proposes the study of the Vlach population of the Ottoman Dalmatian hinterland in the middle of the 16th century, as described in the tax register (*defter*) of the *sanjak* of Klis from 1550, a document that allows for a better understanding of the social and economic history of southwestern Bosnia and the Herzegovina and parts of Lika, Krbava and Dalmatia, which all formed this administrative unit since 1537. The analysis outlined in the case study includes the problem of cross-border migrations, the specificity of transhumant economy, and the functioning of the “Vlach law” as well as the general status of the Vlach community in the Ottoman Empire, which can be also traced thanks to the abovementioned register. This document testifies that Vlachs were used to populate borderland areas, as it mentions that they settled in some deserted territories. Their migrations, which were sometimes caused by the colonization initiated by the authorities of the states (Venice, Habsburg Monarchy and Ottoman Empire) were partially facilitated by the internal social connections that characterized the Vlach community. The register clearly indicates that transhumance pastoralism practiced since the Early Middle Ages remained the main activity of the Vlachs in 16th century. Some of them also cultivated the land, although agriculture never became their main economic activity.

Keywords: Vlach law, Vlachs, Ottoman Empire, transhumance, Bosnia, Dalmatia, *defters*.

Since the 15th century, the Vlachs – people who often lived in borderland regions – were used by different political powers to populate border zones.¹ The paper proposes the study of the Vlach population of the Ottoman Dalmatian hinterland in the middle of the 16th century, as described in the tax register of the *sanjak*² of Klis from 1550³, a document which allows for a better understanding of social and economic history of south-western Bosnia, the Herzegovina and parts of

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¹ Ilona Czamańska, “Vlachs and Slavs in the Middle Ages and Modern Era,” *Res Historica* 41, 2016, p. 111–123.

² A *sanjak* (in Turkish *sancak*, literally “banner” or “standard”) is an administrative unit of the Ottoman Empire. In the early modern period, the whole Ottoman state was divided into provinces, which were named *eyalets* (and smaller ones – *pashaliks*), and those units consisted of *sanjaks*. The administrative division of the empire, as it can be seen from the example of the term *sanjak* (“banner”), largely reflected the feudal and military structure of the state. The local governors were both military commanders, cf. Jan Reychman, *Historia Turcji*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1973, p. 77, 345–349.

³ *Opširni popis Kliškog sandžaka iz 1550. godine*, trans. Ahmed Aličić and Fehim Spaho, Sarajevo: Orijentalni institut u Sarajevu, 2007.

Lika, Krbava and Dalmatia, which all formed this administrative unit since 1537⁴. The register (or *defter*, as such documents were called in the Ottoman nomenclature) was a document that served to identify all of the revenues of the state⁵. It was made by the tax administration that appointed commissions to prepare the register on the spot.⁶ The commission engaged local authorities and members of the military class to gather the correct information for the registers. The leaders of the very specific kind of Vlach shepherd corporations consisting of 20 to 50 households (named *katuns*⁷) were also engaged in that process and provided the necessary information on the number of shepherd population, areas on which they herded sheep and cattle, and on their income, which allowed the authorities to determine the amount of taxes which the population should pay.⁸

Overall, the goal of this paper is to show which information on the Vlach community can be traced in Ottoman *defters*, especially in the *defter* of the sanjak of Klis, which covers an area with a very particular border character. Its analysis will contribute to the better understanding of the history of pastoral communities in this part of the Mediterranean, but also of the functioning of the Vlachs in early modern in general.

1. CROSS-BORDER MIGRATIONS AND THE MILITARY ASPECT OF THE COLONIZATION

The cross-border migrations are the first and one of the most apparent features characterizing the Vlachs, as the name Vlachs (apart of a potential ethnic meaning) was a socionym mostly used to describe shepherds that wandered with their flocks.⁹ The particular, semi-nomadic and cross-border character of the Vlach

⁴ It should be underlined, that the territory of the sanjak of Klis was later divided, and the territories of Lika and Krbava formed new sanjak of Krka, cf. Ahmed Aličić and Fehim Spaho, "Uvod," in *Opširni popis Kliškog sandžaka iz 1550. godine*, trans. Ahmed Aličić and Fehim Spaho, Sarajevo: Orijentalni institut u Sarajevu, 2007, p. IX.

⁵ Each province had a separate *defterdar*, i.e. a treasurer's office that kept the accounts and sent the surplus of the collected taxes back to the central treasury in Istanbul. The tax registers they kept (the *defters*) were the documents of great accuracy, as they were detailing the name, occupation and size of all taxpayers' possessions, the amount of their benefits, etc. Hence, the provincial *defterdar* and its officials were able to record and control the taxes, cf. Reychman, *Historia Turcji*, p. 78.

⁶ Fehim Spaho, "Defteri za Kliški sandžak iz XVI i početka XVII stoljeća," *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju*, 34, 1985, p. 138.

⁷ Cf. Miloš Luković. "Self-Government Institutions of Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Livestock Breeders in the Balkans and in the Carpathian Regions in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods." *Res Historica* 40, 2016, p. 56.

⁸ Ahmed Aličić and Fehim Spaho, "Uvod," IX.

⁹ Vlachs appeared in the historical sources suddenly in 10th century, and from the very beginning their name was associated with a group of romanophonic pastors, scattered throughout the whole Central and South-Eastern Europe, from Carpathians to Peloponnesus. Their particular social and legal status was recognized in all countries in which they lived. With time, they started to use their status for the settlement in various mountainous regions, as well as for the other purposes, like the military settlement. This determined the division between the Vlach law and their ethnic entity, cf. Czamańska, "Vlachs and Slavs," p. 11–24.

activity was a huge challenge for the states that wanted to tax the Vlachs,¹⁰ and the semi-nomadic way of life also facilitated another frequent Vlach activity: the brigandage. Both of these phenomena occurred not only in the space of *Triplex Confinium* (the triple border between the Ottoman Empire, Venice, and the Habsburg Monarchy), but also in other border and mountainous areas inhabited by the Vlach shepherds, e.g. at the Polish-Hungarian frontier.¹¹ The analysed register is one of the documents which allows to trace the movements of the Vlach population at the Ottoman-Venetian border, because it compares the (in 1550) newly collected data with previous information on the described areas.¹²

Most often the document does not specify from where the Vlachs migrated, and it mentions only that, in comparison with the previous register,¹³ there are some new Vlach settlers, e.g. as in the case of the *mezra'a*¹⁴ of Bilo in the *nahija*¹⁵ of Ostrovica:

“The *mezra'a* of Bilo belongs to Ostrovica. The income of the said *mezra'a* in the earlier *defter* was tied to the *timar*¹⁶ of the fortress of Drniš [...]. When the control was performed, it was determined that one newly arrived Vlach family lives there [...]”.¹⁷

In many cases, the register records these newly arrived Vlachs as “nomads”, which means that they did not appear in the previous documents, as for example in some locations in the *nahija* of Zrmanja Istrija, *nahija* of Ostrovica, *nahija* of Srb, *nahija* of Nečven, and *nahija* of Vrhrika.¹⁸ Sometimes, the *defter* simply mentions newly settled Vlachs, e.g., in the *mezra'a* of Rupa¹⁹ and the *mezra'a* of Orašje in the *nahija* of Ostrovica. In the case of the second *mezra'a*, Orašje, the register mentions the active role of the Vlach leaders who cooperated with the officials who

¹⁰ Dana Caciur, “Considerations Regarding the Status of the Morlachs from the Trogir’s Hinterland at the Middle of the 16th century: Being Subjects of the Ottoman Empire and Land Tenants of the Venetian Republic,” *Res Historica* 41, 2016, p. 95–110.

¹¹ Tea Mayhew, *Dalmatia between Ottoman and Venetian Rule: Contado di Zara 1645–1718*, Roma: Viella, 2007, p. 256.

¹² Elma Korić, “Nekoliko osmanskih dokumenata o događajima u dalmatinskom zaleđu u drugoj polovini 16. stoljeća,” *Povijesni prilozi* 34, no. 48, 2015, p. 71–88.

¹³ This register was never found, and the one made in 1550 is the earliest known to the historians, cf. Aličić and Spaho, “Uvod,” IX.

¹⁴ This term referred to a temporary settlement, cultivated, but only periodically inhabited, cf. Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994, p. 113.

¹⁵ Commune, an administrative unit inferior to sanjak, cf. Reychman, *Historia Turciji*, p. 117, 348.

¹⁶ An administrative and political unit in which the *timar* holder collected the taxes as a representative of the state. The title of the *timar* holder was transient, in the absence of the ownership in the Ottoman Empire. Cf. Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, p. 93.

¹⁷ *Opšimi popis*, 17: “Mezra Bilo, pripada Ostrovici. Prihod spomenute mezre u ranijem defteru bio je vezan za timar čehaje tvrđave Drniš [...]. Kada je izvršena kontrola utvrđeno je da na njoj stanuje jedno vlaško novopridošlo domaćinstvo i da je obrađuje”.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 8, 16, 82, 89–90, 64, 96–97.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 16: “Mezra Rupa, pripada Ostrovici (...). Kada je izvršena kontrola ustanovljeno je da su se na njoj nastanili neki Vlasi nomadi i da je oni obrađuju”.

prepared the register: "Some newly settled Vlach infidels have now settled in the mentioned *mezra* 'a and asked to be enrolled".²⁰ Only in a few cases, the document specifies the place of origin of the newly settled Vlachs, especially the ones who migrated from Istria, to whom a whole separate section of the register was devoted²¹. The information about this particular group that came from Istria is very unique, as migration, in the case of this Venetian territory, generally took the opposite direction and many of the Vlachs (Morlachs²²) from the hinterland of Zadar were settled in Istria in the period between 1537 and 1540.²³

Even if the register does not provide much information on the places of origin of the new settlers, it gives some indication why they settled in specific areas. Vlachs were organized in *katuns*, which were in fact large corporations, whose internal structure was strengthened by blood bonds.²⁴ Those relations also facilitated the migrations, especially when members of one large community lived on both sides of the border. The register testifies that, when some deserted land was available for shepherding, the Vlachs were often informed about that fact by some of their relatives and decided to migrate. In the *nahija* of Petrovna Gora, some settlers came because of the invitation of the local Vlach *primićur* (i.e., leader)²⁵, which was also described as *zimmi* (non-muslim):

"The *mezra* 'a of Brštan belongs to Petrova Gora. The mentioned *mezra* 'a was deserted and outside the *defter*, *primićur* of the village of Ljubušina, which is near it, *zimmi* Radosav, brought two nomads of Vlachs and asked to be registered in the mentioned *mezra* 'a with Vlach fees".²⁶

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 17: "Mezra Orašje, pripada Ostrovici. Na spomenutoj mezri sada su nastanjeni neki novodoseljeni Vlasi nevjernici koji su zatražili da se njima upiše".

²¹ "Nahija Zrmanja Istrija" and "Nahija Ostrovica i Istrija Ostrovica", cf. *Opširni popis*, p. 8–20.

²² It should be noted that in the case of the Vlachs from the Dalmatian hinterland, the term "Morlachs" (*Morlacchi*) is used in the Venetian documents of the Late Medieval and early modern period. This term was also adopted by French, English or German documents, and at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries became even more popular than the term "Vlach" in itself. This denomination literally means "the Black Vlachs", and originates from the Greek appellation *Maurovlachoi*. It is possible, that the term "black" was most likely related to the color of shepherd's coat (*gunja* in Croatian) used by the Vlachs from the Dalmatian interior, cf. Zef Mirdita, *Vlasi u historiografii*, Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2004, p. 343; Wojciech Sajkowski, "Morlachs, or Slavs from Dalmatia in French encyclopedias and dictionaries of the 18th and 19th century." *Poznańskie Studia Slawistyczne* 15, 2018, p. 207–218.

²³ Snježana Buzov, "Vlasi Istrije na području Sjeverne Dalmacije u popisnim defterima 16. stoljeća," *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 40, 1990, p. 243–257; Caciur, "Considerations," p. 98.

²⁴ Miloš Luković, "Sezonowe migracije pasterzy na Bałkanach: charakter, historia, transformacje," *Res Historica* 40, 2015, p. 78–79; Luković, "Self-Government Institutions," p. 56.

²⁵ *Primićur* was one of the terms which were used to describe the leader of the *katun* (some others were *voyvoda*, *knez*, or *katunar*). The term originates from Greek (*πριμικήριος*), or Latin (*primicerius*), which means "the first in the rank", and was used to denominate the Vlach leader which was officially appointed by the authorities. As it was observed by Miloš Luković those leaders were elected through a self-government process by the other members of the *katun*. Cf. Luković, "Self-Government Institutions," p. 56–57.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 82: "Mezra Brštan, pripada Petrovoj Gori. Spomenuta mezra je bila pusta i izvan deftera, primićur sela Ljubušina koje je u njoj blizini, zimija Radosav, doveo je dvojicu nomada Vlaha i zatražio da se ubilježe na spomenutoj mezri uz vlaške pristojbe".

Similarly, in the territories of the *mezra'a* of Bilan and *mezra'a* Katari, which also lied in the *nahija* of Ostrovica, the new settlers were “the sons of the Vlachs” which indicates that family or *katun* relations with some Vlachs already living there made their immigration easier.²⁷ A similar observation about such “sons of the Vlachs” who newly settled in the period between the previous *defter* and the new one concerns the *nahija* of Saromiš²⁸ and *nahija* of Kosovo:

“The lands of Bojica Mašić and the meadows below the crossing, on the other side of the river Krka, belong to Kosovo. In the old *defter* it was written that they were in the possession of Mustafa, son of Yusuf and another Mustafa, Musa and Ibrahim, sons of Mehmed. When the control was carried out, it was determined that some *hajmani* [i.e., nomads], the sons of the Vlachs, lived on these lands [...]”.²⁹

The migration occurred in both directions, and the register mentions also the cases of the Vlachs who decided to leave the villages e.g., because of bad natural conditions. A certain *mezra'a* in the neighborhood of Karin is mentioned as an area where there is very little land suitable for cultivation or shepherding: “it has been established that the said *mezra'a* has very little land and does not provide an opportunity to live, and that all the said Vlachs have fled, but it is not known where”.³⁰ As it was already mentioned, some of the Ottoman Vlachs migrated in the Venetian territories (e.g. Istria), and it was the consequence of the politics of Venice that aimed for populating some of its deserted possessions.³¹

The sanjak of Klis was also very important for strategic reasons, as it was the western most part of the European possessions of the Ottoman Empire in 1550. This was one of the reasons behind the very careful choice of the *sanjaks*³², which in the second half of the 16th century were, among others, members of the family of the Great Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, as for example Ferhad-beg Sokolović, who governed the sanjak of Klis from 1566 to 1573.³³ The necessity of the preparation of the register under scrutiny was also related to the importance of this territory, however, the document itself does not provide much information on the military aspect of the settlements. Of course, it mentions many fortresses that

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 116: “Mezre Bilan i Katari, u blizini kaštela Sopkovići, pripadaju Ostrovici. Sada, u vrijeme popisa na spomenutoj mezri nastanjeni su sinovi Vlaha”.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 390: “Dio zemina od mezre Gornji Zabukovi, pripada Saromišu (...) Sada se na tom dijelu nalaze nastanjeni neki sinovi Vlaha”.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 102: “Zemlje Bojice Mašića i livade ispod prijelaza, s druge strane rijeke Krke, pripada Kosovu. U starom defteru nalazilo se upisano da su u posjedu Mustafe, sina Jusufovog i drugoga Mustafe, Muse i Ibrahima, sinova Mehmeda. Kada je izvršena kontrola utvrđeno je da na tim zemljama stanuju neki hajmani, sinovi Vlaha”.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 388: “Sada kada je vršena kontrola ustano vljeno je da spomenuta mezra ima vrlo malo zemlje i da nepružamogućnost za življenje i da susvinavedeni Vlasi odbjegli, alisene zna gdje”.

³¹ Buzov, “Vlasi Istrije”; Caciur, “Considerations,” p. 98.

³² Military and administrative commander of the sanjak, cf. Reyhman, *Historia Turcji*, p. 349.

³³ Korić, “Nekoliko osmanskih dokumenata,” p. 72.

were important for the defence of the border, but it does not specify any of the military duties that were often a part of the Vlach law. It is understandable, as the register is focused mainly on fiscal matters. However, from other documents, as well as from the documents issued by Venice,³⁴ it is known that, in the 16th century, Ottoman authorities were very indulgent towards acts of cross-border plundering and looting, which was a very typical tactic already used by the Ottomans at the Hungarian border (and which became one of the reasons of the financial ruin of Hungary at the turn of the 16th century, which could not afford constant protection of its borders).³⁵ In the case of Dalmatia, the incursions were made by the Ottomans or the formations of *Martolosses* that were recruited among others from the local Vlach community, and very often were just the Vlach *katuns* whose leaders were asked to participate by the authorities.³⁶

2. THE TRANSHUMANCE ECONOMY IN THE REGISTER

As it was already mentioned, transhumance pastoralism was the main economic activity of the Vlachs. This fact was evident for a famous Dalmatian historiographer of the 17th-century, Ivan Lucić, who in his history of the city of Trogir mentioned that already in the 13th and 14th-century the Vlachs, or Morlachs, were the pastoralists who grazed their flock in the mountains at the frontier of Bosnia and Dalmatia.³⁷ Already in that time, the transhumance economy of the Vlachs was perceived as harmful by the authorities of the Dalmatian cities and this did not change over the centuries.³⁸ In the 16th century, the Morlachs (*Morlacchi*), as the Vlach shepherds were called by the inhabitants of the Dalmatian cities, were considered as very harmful for the local economy. The scope of the damages of which the Vlachs were accused of was even broader: they were often perceived as outlaws and robbers, and Venetian authorities often had problems to collect taxes from them. Ottoman authorities, which were asked by Venice to take care of the

³⁴ Caciur, "Considerations," p. 107.

³⁵ The Ottoman Empire, in addition to larger military expeditions, continued offensive actions at the border. Although they were not individually dangerous for the Hungarian state, their overall number and constant nature significantly contributed to the decline in its political potential and the actual partition in the first half of the 16th century. Cf. Gunther Rothenberg, "The Origins of the Austrian Military Frontier in Croatia and the Alleged Treaty of 22 December 1522," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 38, no. 91, 1960, p. 494–495.

³⁶ Caciur, "Considerations," p. 107.

³⁷ Giovanni Lucio, *Historia di Dalmatia : et in particolare delle città di Trau, Spalatro e Sebenico*, Venetia: Presso Stefani Curti, 1674, p. 279.

³⁸ Even in the 18th-century, the traditional transhumance pastoralism of the Vlachs was still perceived backward by the Venetian authorities, or by the Italianized Slavic elites that lived in Dalmatian cities (especially the supports of the physiocratic doctrine). The pejorative image of the Vlach transhumance economy that can be traced in Venetian documents was later taken over by the French administration, who governed Dalmatia from 1806 to 1813. Cf. Wojciech Sajkowski, *French image of the peoples inhabiting Illyrian Provinces*, Bellerive-sur-Allier – Warszawa: La Rama – DiG, 2018, p. 181–185.

Vlachs that were crossing the border and grazing their sheep on the Venetian territory, were not always eager to discipline their subjects. All in all, the identification of the term Morlach (or Vlach) with specific kind of economic activity is very apparent in Venetian documents, and it can be defined as denoting the shepherd communities from the Ottoman Balkans who seasonally inhabited the Dalmatian hinterland.³⁹

The question of transhumance economy is in fact a problem which concerns the identity of Vlachs, and thus it should be examined whether the *defter* delivers some information on it. Firstly, the already described mobility of the Vlachs mentioned in the previous chapter testifies that they formed either a nomadic, or a semi-nomadic community. In fact, the tax register of Klis is one of the documents which allow to access some more nuanced information on that matter. Firstly, it specifies the types of economic activities of the local populations, mentioning which crops were harvested (e.g. wheat, barley, buckwheat, oats, millet and lentils), but in a few cases it mentions also sheep, and the places where they grazed, e.g. in the part which concerns the *nahija* of Bukovica it mentions “Hrsovac summer pasture, which is located next to the Dinara and Zakopnik summer pastures near Strumička”.⁴⁰ This and similar mentions of “summer pastures”⁴¹ and “winter pastures”⁴² clearly indicate the Vlachs’ transhumant economy in which the flocks were gathered in the valleys in spring and led to the mountain pastures for summer, from where they returned to the lowlands in autumn. Such was the specificity of the Vlach transhumance not only in Bosnia, and Dalmatia, but also in the whole area of the Balkans (e.g., Greece) and in the whole area of the Carpathian Mountain range, including southern Poland.⁴³

More often, the register does not mention sheep, or summer pastures, but it indicates that a large part of the population made their living from shepherding in a different way. In some cases, for example, the register states very explicitly that certain Vlach families pursued their economic activities on meadows, such is the case of some of the Vlach families of the *nahija* of Petrovo Polje,⁴⁴ the *nahija* of Bukovica,⁴⁵ and of the *mezra’a* of Morovi and the *mezra’a* of Smojčina near the abandoned fortress of Gradčac in the *nahija* of Lika.⁴⁶ This might also indicate that

³⁹ Caciur, “Considerations,” p. 96.

⁴⁰ *Opširni popis*, p. 23: “Ljetna ispasišta Hrsovac, koje se nalazi idući prema ljetnom ispasištu Dinara i Zakopnik u blizini Strumičke”.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 21–22: “Nahija Bukovica (...). Zimska ispasišta u nahijama koje se nalaze iza rijeke Krke. Od stotine ovaca uzima se po jedan ovan”.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 23: “Ljetna ispasišta Plavna i Popitta, koja se nalaze idući prema Srbu. To su zemlje Sazin, Doljani i Dobranovci. To su ljetna ispasišta koja pripadaju srušenim kaštelima Vranik, Komić i Podlapac, te ljetna ispasišta Cememik, zatim ljetna ispasišta koja se nalaze na pustoj zemlji koja pripada Lici – izvan deftera”.

⁴³ Traian Stoianovich, *Balkan Worlds: The First and Last Europe*, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1994, p. 331–340; Czamańska, “Vlachs and Slavs,” p. 11–24.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Opširni popis*, p. 96.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 230.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 231.

shepherding can be considered as their main activity, although certainly not as their only activity. The register suggests that parts of the mentioned population were in fact semi-shepherd, and other information that may be found in this document confirms this hypothesis⁴⁷. In some cases, the Vlach families were confirmed as permanent residents of certain villages, e.g., Zakol Starina and Skratim⁴⁸ in the *nahija* of Vrhirica or Čulišici in the *nahija* of Ostrovica: “The *mezra* ‘a Čulišici belongs to Ostrovica. Some Vlachs lived in the mentioned *mezra* ‘a as nomads and engaged in agriculture”.⁴⁹ Of course the agriculture would not function without such facilities as the mills also mentioned in the register and operated by the Vlachs, such as in the case of the *dzemat* (*katun*) of *knez* Vukman which was settled in the *nahija* of Zrmanja Istria in which “an infidel named Ivoš takes care of the maintenance of the mills” and in some other places, e.g. Čelopek village in the same *nahija*.⁵⁰ Hence, the register allows to trace those nuances of the activities pursued by the Vlachs, which were not limited to shepherding.

The mentions of Vlachs which cultivate the land does not mean that those families ceased to be shepherds. If such thing happened, they would probably lose their particular status which is clearly indicated in the register, and they would be treated as the social class of *rayah* which paid other taxes than *filuria*. From the research on the Vlachs from other sanjaks it is known, that Vlachs never fully resigned from their traditional activity (i.e., pastoralism) to avoid such eventuality⁵¹.

3. THE STATUS OF THE VLACHS IN THE REGISTER

The specific way the Vlachs regulated their relations with the local authorities was called “the Vlach law” (*ius Valachicum*), and its examples may be traced already at the beginning of 14th-century (1313–1316) in a document issued by Serbian king Milutin, which regulated the duties of the Vlachs living in the territories of the monastery of Banjska. Later other documents related to other monasteries and churches were issued, however, a document that would regulate the Vlach issue in a more general scope was never made.⁵² When the Ottomans

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 8, 18, 97, 447.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 97.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 447: “Mezra Čulišici , pripada Ostrovici. Na spomenutoj mezri su stanovali neki Vlasi nomadi i bavili se zemljoradnjom”.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 8: “Selo Čelopek , pripada Zrmanji Istriji. U starom defteru je u ovome selu bilo upisano šest Vlaha nemuslimana. Kad je vršena kontrola ustanovljeno je da nijednog od njih ovdje nema i da su ranije svi odbjegli, a njihove zemlje su ostale puste. Primićur sela Žežević Vukša, sin Milišića doveo je nekoliko nomada koji su ranije bili izvan deftera. Oni su osposobili dva zapuštena mlina i tražili da plaćaju njihove poreze po 30 akči. Pošto su za državnu blagajnu platili tapijsku pristojbu 600 akči, upisani su u defter”. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵¹ Ilona Czamańska, “Wołosi/Vlasi z terenów Hercegowiny w świetle defterów osmańskich z XV i XVI wieku,” *Balkanica Posnaniensia. Acta et studia* 25, 2018, p. 227.

⁵² Miloš Luković, “Zakon vlahom (*Ius Valachicum*) in the charters issued to Serbian medieval monasteries and kanuns regarding Vlachs in the early ottoman tax registers (defters),” *Balkanica Posnaniensia. Acta et studia* 22, no. 1, 2015, p. 39.

entered the Balkans, they also tried to regulate the status of the Vlachs, but in this regard, already in the second half of the 15th century, different regulations were made in each administrative unit (sanjak).⁵³ The duties of the Vlachs consisted in the specific way of paying taxes, which differed from the taxes paid by the *rayah*, i.e. the lower class of the Ottoman society.⁵⁴ Vlachs paid a tax called *filuria* (a name which comes from word florin – gold coin), and because they were people that were not engaged in agriculture, they could also pay their taxes in livestock as well as deliver military service. Those obligations are very similar to the duties which Vlachs had to observe in other states, e.g. in Poland.⁵⁵

The register of the sanjak of Klis mentions that *filuria* was the basic tax paid by the Vlachs; in 1550, this tax was fixed at 150 silver coins (*akçe*) per year and household.⁵⁶ This tax was identified with the “Vlach law” numerous times, as in the mention of the Vlachs who lived in the *nahija* of Ostrovica: “The *mezra’a* Orašje belongs to Ostrovica. Some newly settled Vlach infidels who now asked to be enrolled are now living in the mentioned *mezra’a*. [...] They were enrolled here with the proviso that, according to Vlach customs, they pay a *filuria* fee”.⁵⁷ The amount of that fee could be related to other services provided by the Vlachs, e.g., the restoration of facilities, as was the case of the settlers of the village of Čelopek in the *nahija* of Zrmanja Istria: “The *primiĉur* of the village, Žežević Vukša, the son of Milišić, brought several nomads who were previously out of the register. They rebuilt two neglected mills and demanded that they pay their taxes of 30 *akçe* each”.⁵⁸ It should be underlined that taking care of facilities such as fortresses, bridges, and mills, as well as the adaptation of the whole deserted areas for settlement and agriculture was a very common duty which was expected from the Vlachs in many European territories they appeared, e.g., in Poland and Hungary. Such duty was performed in exchange for the right to colonize some areas, and fulfilment of such obligations often resulted in exemption from or lowering of taxes for a certain period of time.⁵⁹

⁵³ Snježana Buzov, “Vlasi u bosanskom sandžaku i islamizacija,” *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 41, 1991, p. 99.

⁵⁴ This term literary means “the flock” or “the herd” and it was used to denominate the peasant subjects, in early modern period it gradually became the denominator of the Christian part of the lower class of the Ottoman society, cf. Reyman, *Historia Turci*, p. 349.

⁵⁵ Czamańska, “Vlachs and Slavs,” p. 16.

⁵⁶ Aličić and Spaho, “Uvod,” p. IX.

⁵⁷ *Opširni popis*, p. 16: „Mezra Orašje, pripada Ostrovici. Na spomenutoj mezri sada su nastanjeni neki novodoseljeni Vlasi nevjernici koji su zatražili da se njima upiše. Pošto su upućeni obavijestili da ovi zaista uživaju ove zemlje, ubilježeni su ovdje s tim da, prema vlaškim običajima, plaćaju filurijsku pristojbu”.

⁵⁸ *Opširni popis*, p. 8: “Primiĉur sela Žežević Vukša, sin Milišića doveo je nekoliko nomada koji su ranije bili izvan deftera. Oni su osposobili dva zapuštena mlina i tražili da plaćaju njihove poreze po 30 akči. Pošto su za državnu blagajnu platili tapijsku pristojbu 600 akči, upisani su u defter”.

⁵⁹ Grzegorz Jawor, *Osady prawa wołoskiego i ich mieszkańcy na Rusi Czerwonej w późnym średniowieczu*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2000, p. 57–74; Tomasz Filgus, “Villae iuris valachici: Z problematyki rozwoju osadnictwa wołoskiego w Polsce na przykładzie ziemi sanockiej,” *Studia z Geografii Politycznej i Historycznej* 5, 2016, p. 11–37; Ladislav Heka, “Vlaški statuti i njihova usporedba s povlasticama a mađarskih hajduka,” *Podravina: časopis za multidisciplinarnu istraživanja* 35, 2019, p. 26–45.

Another tax that appears in the register and that is very clearly related to the main activity of the Vlachs is the grazing tax. This fiscal duty was related to the size of the grazed flock:

“From the herd that come to graze from the largest flock, take one sheep whose value is 20 *akče*, from the middle flock, take one sheep whose value is 15 *akče*, and from the smallest flock, take one sheep whose value is 10 *akče*. In the new *defter*, it was determined that the grazing tax is taken in the described manner”.⁶⁰

This kind of tax involved a payment in sheep, but it should be emphasized that in many cases payment in kind, with products from shepherding, was also accepted. Such practice is known from the *defters* of the other sanjaks of the Ottoman Empire,⁶¹ but also from other states where Vlachs used to live.⁶²

The very particular status of the Vlachs in the Ottoman Empire is visible not only in the specific taxes mentioned in the register of Klis, but rather in a fact that those fiscal burdens were perceived as a part of something bigger: a way of life of a certain community. And this way of living as well as the organization of the Vlach society was also taken into consideration while the register was drawn up in the sanjak of Klis. As we have seen, the Vlach leaders (labeled in the register as *knez* or *primičur*) delivered information on their *katuns* (or *dzemat* as the register calls this specific corporation of the Vlachs). As those data were collected by Ottoman officials, they became the basis for the construction of the large part of the register that did not mingle Vlachs with *rayah* and other social classes such as the inhabitants of the cities, but devoted separate sections of the register solely to the Vlachs. Those sections were divided according to *katuns*; hence the whole structure of the Vlach society is reflected in the register, delivering data on the size of *katuns*, their wealth and even their confession.

The latter issue was mentioned due to the fact that Ottoman society was structured according to religion. The register of Klis often mentions the “infidel Vlachs”, which – probably because of the border character of the sanjak – were a very considerable group, unlike the Vlachs in other sanjaks, which were already islamized.⁶³ The faith of the Vlach population is known not only from the mention about the “infidels”, but also thanks to the fact that Muslims had names consistent with Islamic tradition (like Alija, Mustafa or Kasim)⁶⁴, while the Orthodox

⁶⁰ *Opširni popis*, 29: “Od stoke koja tu dolazi na ispašu od najvećeg stada neka se uzima jedna ovca čija je vrijednost 20 akči, od srednjeg stada neka se uzima jedna ovca čija je vrijednost 15 akči, a od najmanjeg stada neka se uzima jedna ovca čija je vrijednost 10 akči. U novom defteru je utvrđeno da se na opisani način uzima pristojba na ispašu”.

⁶¹ Czamańska, “Włosi/Vlasi z terenów Herecegowiny,” p. 223.

⁶² Jawor, *Osady prawa włoskiego*, p. 78.

⁶³ Buzov, “Vlasi u bosanskom sandžaku i islamizacija, p. 99–111; Aličić and Spaho, “Uvod,” XIV.

⁶⁴ *Opširni popis*, p. 97–108.

Christian Vlachs preserved Slavic names (like Stanko, Radko or Juraj)⁶⁵. This subdivision into “our” Muslim Vlachs, and the other Vlachs who are “infidel” is very noteworthy, particularly by contrast with the external perception of the Vlachs in Habsburg Monarchy or Venice. In both of these latter states, the Vlachs were rather considered as a Christian population, while the Muslims were simply labeled as “Turks”.⁶⁶ Moreover, it is the Orthodox Christianity that seems to be associated with the Vlachs, especially with those living in the Dalmatian hinterland. In Austrian documents from the beginning of the 18th century, the Orthodox faith of the Lika and Krbava military settlers is labelled simply as “Wallachische” or “Wulachisch”, i.e., the “Vlach” faith, and it is clear that it is associated with the Serbs who colonized this area after 1699.⁶⁷ Is it possible to determine the ethnicity of the Vlach population of the sanjak of Klis in a similar way? The names of the Vlachs mentioned in the register are clearly Slavic, and it would be safe to give only such a general reference.⁶⁸

CONCLUSION

The *defter* of the sanjak of Klis, i.e., the register prepared for the purposes of the functioning of the Ottoman fiscal administration in 1550, constitutes a very important historical document that allows understanding better the problem of the functioning of the Vlach communities on the northwestern border of the Ottoman Empire. Firstly, the register testifies that Vlachs were used to populate borderland areas, as it mentions that they settled in some deserted territories. Their migrations were partially facilitated by the internal social connections of the *katun*. Secondly, the register clearly indicates that transhumance pastoralism remained the main activity of the Vlachs, while some of them also cultivated land, although agriculture never became their main economic activity.

The particular status of Vlach communities, which is testified in the *defter* of the sanjak of Klis, is recognized also in late medieval and early modern documents related to the functioning of the Polish and Hungarian borderlands. Hence, the frontier of the territories of Venice and the Ottoman Empire was not only political; it was also a transitional territory between the Mediterranean and the mountainous or borderland areas of Southeast and Central Europe, all of which were territories in which the transhumance economy and the Vlach law functioned.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 87, 97–101, 103, 114.

⁶⁶ Larry Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs: The Discovery of Dalmatia in the Age of Enlightenment*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, p. 128.

⁶⁷ *Popis Like i Krbave 1712. godine: obitelj, zemljišni posjedništvo u jugozapadnoj Hrvatskoj*, ed. by Karl Kaser, Hannes Grandits and Siegfried Gruber, Zagreb: Prosvjeta, 2003, p. 111, 128.

⁶⁸ *Opširni popis*, p. 97–108.



Localisation of the Klis sanjak on the map of the Ottoman Empire in 1550⁶⁹.



Map of the Klis sanjak in 1550. Dotted line indicates the borders of this administrative unit⁷⁰.

⁶⁹ An author's map, created on the basis of the map "Territorial changes of the Ottoman Empire 1566" - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_evolution_of_the_Ottoman_Empire#/media/File:OttomanEmpire1566.png, accessed 15.03.2021.

⁷⁰ An author's map, created on the basis of the map "Bosanski pašaluk oko 1600. godine" (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bosanski_pa%C5%A1aluk_1600._godine.png), accessed 15.03.2021. – shape of the borders of the sanjak from 1550 based on the map attached to *Opširni popis Kliškog sandžaka iz 1550. Godine*, cf. *Opširni popis*, p. 473–474.