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SOLDIERS FROM HERZEGOVINA IN THE VENETIAN ARMY UNITS (THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY)

Abstract

During the Early Modern Period, and particularly during the Veneto-Ottoman wars of the 17th and 18th century, the backbone of the Venetian trans-Adriatic army forces was formed by the units called the *Fanti oltramarini* and the *Croati a cavallo*. Their military complement consisted in the first place of soldiers and officers originating from the Venetian territories from Istria to Albania and Greece, but the cases of participation of soldiers coming from other areas, mostly those neighbouring the Republic of Venice. One such case is that of the soldiers from Herzegovina, who served in Venetian army units during the eighteenth century, particularly in the first half of that century, which is during the Small or the Second War of Morea (1714-1718). According to the hitherto conducted research into the sources kept in the *Archivio di Stato di Venezia* (archival series of the *Inquisitori sopra l'amministrazione dei pubblici ruoli*), there were 32 soldiers from Herzegovina in Venetian infantry and cavalry units, who mostly came from Mostar and Trebinje. In most cases they were ordinary soldiers, and only in a few cases, junior officers (sergeant, corporals) were also recorded. Regiments and companies in which the soldiers from Herzegovina operated were commanded in the first places by the officers from Dalmatia and Boka, in most cases the scions of noble families providing the *Serenissima* with high officers for centuries. Such units were garrisoned alongside Venetian East-Adriatic possessions (Istria, Dalmatia, Boka), as well as in the urban settlements and fortresses in Veneto. According to the available data, the average soldier from Herzegovina in the Venetian Army in the 18th century was an infantryman 23 years old or a cavalryman in his thirties, brown- or black-haired, medium height, who served in that army for ten and more years, particularly if he served during the war or immediately after it.

It may be concluded that total number of soldiers from Herzegovina in Venetian military units was not high, especially if it is compared to different regions of Dalmatia (Zadar, Šibenik, Split and their hinterland) and Boka (Kotor and its district) which were from the beginning of the fifteenth century within the scope of the Republic of St. Mark. However, if it is compared to the number of soldiers originating from the Croatian areas which were not part of the Venetian dominion, it may be seen that their number, particularly in the 18th century, is still worth of research attention and scholarly analysis. Of course, some future research will certainly add some new names to the list of the soldiers from Herzegovina serving in the Venetian army, but it is very unlikely that it will seriously alter the picture depicted here.

Key words: Herzegovina, Republic of Venice, military history, history of the 18th century