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The Ottoman influences on Croatia in the second half of the fifteenth century

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The article discusses political, social, economic and demographic consequences of the Ottoman attacks on the Croatian territories during the second half of the 15th century. It also presents how Ottoman threat influenced the mentalities and everyday life of the Croatian population. The article claims that the Ottoman threat presented a major external influence on the Croatian medieval society of that period. Complex changes in all spheres of the Croatian society were all influenced by the threat from the east.

Croatian history in the second half of the fifteenth century is marked by the arrival of the Ottomans on the borders of Croatian medieval lands. After sporadic incursions in the first half of the century, attackers from the east, particularly after conquering the medieval kingdom of Bosnia in 1463, became a factor of utmost importance for all the segments of late medieval Croatian society. This paper outlines the various Ottoman influences on politics, society, economy and demographics of medieval Croatia as well as their expressions in the thinking and everyday life of Croats at the time.

Living on the Ottoman border at that time was not unusual in the region. Medieval Croatia became the battlefield of two worlds and was a part of the periphery of the Catholic world in Central and Southeast Europe, which extended roughly from the Baltic to the Adriatic and the Black Sea regions. This area included the war-torn southern, border area of the medieval Hungarian-Croatian kingdom. Until the end of the fifteenth century war on both sides was aimed more at draining out the resources of the adversaries than at territorial conquests. However, only the Ottomans, even in such circumstances, managed to achieve certain territorial gains, conquering Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Zeta (Montenegro) and the southeastern border regions of medieval Croatia during the second half of the fifteenth century.

The consequences of war were similar throughout the region. The devastation and destruction of the border area between the Ottomans and the neighboring states in Central and Southeast Europe were coupled with a decline of the economic and demographic potential on the Christian side. All this resulted in the beginning of migrations towards safer areas. The way of life in the wider region became more and more similar, marked with the constant threat of war. Agriculture was neglected and a network of fortresses, serving as local and regional centers of defense, gradually took its shape. The peasants were forced to change their sedentary way

of life, based on agriculture, to a military one. Religious solidarity, based on the threat from the infidels like during the Crusades, regained its relevance in the whole region. It was the opposite in Western Europe at the time, where the ideology of the Crusades and its system of values no longer played a significant mobilizing or integrative role. However, the revived ideology in a new form played a crucial role in the thinking of the social elites in the border areas, including medieval Croatia. The central notion of that ideology is expressed in the term “forefront of Christianity” (*antemurale christianitatis*). The social elites of almost all the countries in Southeast Europe, on the Ottoman frontiers, identified with this term. The papal chancery, in its letters to the rulers and magnates of the region, often used this notion, mainly as a sort of spiritual backing and compensation for the lack of real support in soldiers, money and war equipment from the rest of Europe.

The Ottoman influences on political, social, economic and demographic changes in medieval Croatia were not apparent until the year 1463. Their role became more important from then onwards, at the beginning mainly because of more frequent incursions and raids. The Ottomans once again used their efficient tactics to pave the way for territorial conquests in the future. From the Ottoman point of view, it was necessary to weaken their adversaries economically and demographically to make them an easy prey for the final blow.¹ In the case of medieval Croatia the territorial conquests mainly took place from 1521 onwards. Newer research points to the possible influence of food shortages at the end of the fifteenth century, caused by poor weather conditions, as driving forces behind some of the Ottoman raids. There were also the initiatives of local Ottoman commanders and border units.² The Ottoman raids were swift and cruel, giving the population of the attacked regions, particularly the peasants, very little time and chance of finding a safe haven. The Ottoman marauding troops, because of their strategy and tactics, usually did not come back again for booty in the same area. Therefore, they always attempted to cause as much damage as possible and capture as many prisoners as possibly during the first major attack.³

Some regions of medieval Croatia were an integral part of the western flank of the defense system on the southern borders of the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom. Two defense lines of fortresses spread from the present-day Romanian Banat and Danube regions (Turnu-Severin and Timi oara) in the east to the Croatian Adriatic coast near Skradin and Klis, or Senj (Zengg, Senia) in the west. The defense system started to take its shape soon after the Ottoman conquest of medieval Bosnia in 1463, when Hungarian-Croatian king Matthias Corvinus (1458-1490) managed in a counterattack to liberate a significant portion of the conquered territory. The king established two military defense organizations, under the titles of banats of Jajce and Srebrenik (today in Bosnia and Herzegovina). Later, in 1469, the king went on to form a military and administrative unit called a captaincy, with its center in the Croatian coastal town of Senj, at the western terminus of the defense system. This system was centralized, poorly coordinated and insufficiently financed. However, during the period in question it was efficient enough and managed to slow down the Ottoman advance into the heart of Europe for several decades. This could be interpreted as one of the crucial facts for the final outcome of the Ottoman conquests.

¹ *Historija naroda Jugoslavije* [=History of the Peoples of Yugoslavia], (eds. Bogo Grafenauer / Dušan Perović / Jaroslav Šidak), vol. 1., Zagreb 1953., 345.; Milan KRUHEK, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana hrvatskog kraljevstva tijekom 16. stoljeća* [=The Fortresses of Military Krajina and the Defense of the Croatian Kingdom during the Sixteenth Century], Zagreb 1995., 58.

² Ivan JURKOVIĆ, *The Fate of Refugees in Medieval Croatia during the Ottoman Invasion* (M.A. Thesis, unpublished), Budapest 1995., passim.

³ János M. BAK, “Delinquent Lords and Forsaken Serfs: Thoughts on War and Society during the Crisis of Feudalism”, *Society in Change. Studies in Honor of Béla K. Király*, (eds. Steven Bela Vardy / Agnes Huszar), New York 1983., 296.

Two parallel lines of fortresses formed the defense system, of which the rear line was some one hundred kilometers north of the frontline and as well having fewer fortresses. A chain of similar fortresses continued in the coastal area under Venetian rule. The fortresses of Knin, Klis and Skradin, in the territory of medieval Croatia, were part of the frontline of defense, while Krupa and Bihać (in the present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina), as well as Otočac and Senj, were part of a rear line. Apart from the royal ones, the fortresses of various magnate families in Croatia constituted the main and irreplaceable part of the defense network.⁴

Contingents of border units filled up the empty spaces between the two lines of fortresses. They were mainly *banderia* of various Croatian nobles. All the various defense units, including peasants defending their own homes, were put under the central command of the king, who in turn, partly or fully, financed the defense system from the state income.⁵ The financing and command over the entire defense system gradually became centralized from the 1460's onwards. For the first time in 1466 the functions of bans (*bani*) of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia were temporarily united in one person, to meet the military needs. The new and common ban became the commander who united the whole western flank of the defense system. Various sectors of defense had their own smaller units as well, with their local territorial commanders in charge of the more important fortresses. They worked together with mobile and independent units under direct royal command. In medieval Croatia the infantry significantly outnumbered the cavalry, for both financial reasons and the mountainous character of the local terrain.⁶

The defense system for the most part fulfilled its objectives till the end of the fifteenth century. Occasional skirmishes on the border and incursions into the enemy's hinterland, on both sides, including even bigger battles such as one fought at the Krbava field in Croatia in 1493, did not significantly alter the balance of power. However, the balance of power gradually started to alter towards the end of the century, in favor of the Ottomans, particularly after the death of Matthias Corvinus in 1490. The defense system required more and more material and human sacrifices, while at the same time the overall number of taxpayers and the resources of the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom started to decline.⁷ The Ottomans were generally superior in logistics, the number of canons, the firepower of artillery and particularly in the maintenance of arms and equipment. The use of artillery gradually but substantially changed the very nature of war. The Ottoman supremacy in artillery at the beginning of the sixteenth century became very important for besieging the fortified strongholds. Therefore, the defenders were forced to build much larger and safer fortresses.⁸ Unfortunately for the Croats, their resources were not sufficient to do that.

⁴ *Historija naroda Jugoslavije*, 754.-755. ; Karl NEHRING, *Matthias Corvinus, Kaiser Friedrich III und das Reich. Zum hunyadisch-habsburgischen Gegensatz in Donauraum*, München 1975., 13.-27. ; Ferenc SZAKÁLY, "Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare before the Battle of Mohács", *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 33/1979., 99.-100. ; F. SZAKÁLY, "The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System and its Collapse", *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi. War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, (eds. János M. Bak / Béla K. Király), Brooklyn 1982., 142.-143. ; Vasko SIMONITI, *Turki so v deželi že: turški vpadi na slovensko ozemlje v 15. in 16. stoletju* [=The Turks are Already in the Country: Turkish Incursions into Slovenian Territory in the Fifteenth and the Sixteenth Centuries], Celje 1990., 203.-205.

⁵ F. SZAKÁLY, "The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System", 143., 145.

⁶ *Ibidem*, 146.-147.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 148.-150. ; F. SZAKÁLY, "Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare", 111. ; Tomislav RAUKAR, "Društveni razvoj u Hrvatskoj u XV stoljeću" [=Social Development in Croatia in the Fifteenth Century], *Historijski zbornik* (further: *HZ*), 38/1985., 80.-81.

⁸ The development of artillery and fortifications at the end of the fifteenth and at the beginning of the sixteenth centuries in a wider European context is discussed in Matthew Smith ANDERSON, *The Origins of the Modern European State System 1494-1618*, New York 1998., 17.-24.

The growth of Ottoman threat after 1463 had direct consequences on the organization of the anti-Ottoman defense in the Croatian lands. Namely, it led to some organizational changes with direct political repercussions that sped up the process of political integration of medieval Slavonia with medieval Croatia. Until the year 1463 two separate bans administered the two kingdoms in the name of the king in Buda. From 1463 till 1476 the two functions were sometimes unified in one person, while from August 1476 onwards the kingdoms of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia were placed under the control of one common ban. The military and defense needs brought about this change. The military function of the ban became more and more important, because he took the leading role in the defense against the Ottomans on the western flank of the defense system. As more power and authority was vested in him, the ban's prestige and rank increased. Simultaneously, the status of the three Croatian kingdoms inside the realm improved as well.⁹

Closer ties among the medieval Croatian lands and the first migrations of Croats from the south to the north were coupled with a gradual expansion of term Croatia, in political sense, onto the neighboring regions of medieval Slavonia. In the second half of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth centuries, for example, some parts of Zagreb County, south of the rivers Kupa and Sava (the former counties of Gorica and Gora) started to be referred to as Croatia. The whole territory in the area of the rivers Kupa, Sava and Una from then onwards became an integral part of medieval Croatia, with its towns and fortresses such as Bihać, Krupa, Kostajnica, Zrin, Toplica (Topusko), Steničnjak and Dubovac, all earlier in medieval Slavonia. Many refugees from the south both nobles and commoners settled throughout the region during this period.¹⁰

Apart from the cavalry units of the Croatian bans and magnates, the middle and lesser Croatian nobility represented the most numerous and a very important component of the defense. However, their fighting capability did not always correspond with the fact that they were the most numerous. They were bound to their possessions and would gather in arms after being called upon by their counts or counts' officials. This type of mobilizing, in essence typically medieval, as compared to the Ottoman raiding units, made them inefficient and slow. The Croatian nobles usually managed to attack the Ottomans only during the latter's return from robbing the Holy Roman Empire or the Venetian-held territories, when the conquerors were loaded with booty and prisoners of war and therefore much slower and more vulnerable. The biggest defects of the Croatian defense units were exactly the above-mentioned slowness, poor tactics and strategy of the outdated system, typical of the medieval rural and sedentary Croatian society.¹¹

The natural and geographical features of medieval Croatia hindered its defense efforts as well. As opposed to medieval Slavonia, protected by natural obstacles such as the Sava and Danube rivers, medieval Croatian territory was easily accessible to the Ottoman raiding units and therefore attractive for plundering. Mountains and forests of medieval Croatia represented a perfect cover for the Ottoman looters, enabling them to remain for a longer period of time on the Croatian soil, waging a sort of guerilla war. By doing so they represented a constant ele-

⁹ Vjekoslav KLAJIĆ, "Hrvatsko kraljevstvo u XV. stoljeću i prvoj četvrti XVI. stoljeća" [=The Kingdom of Croatia in the Fifteenth and the First Quarter of the Sixteenth Centuries], *Vjesnik hrvatskoga arheološkoga društva u Zagrebu* n. s. (further: *VHAD*), 8/1905., 135.-136. ; Mirko VALENTIĆ, "Hrvati u stogodišnjem ratu" [=Croats in a Century of War], *Sisačka bitka 1593.*, (eds. Ivo Goldstein / Milan Kruhek), Zagreb - Sisak 1994., 20., n. 2.

¹⁰ V. KLAJIĆ, "Hrvatsko kraljevstvo", 133.

¹¹ The claims in this passage and the following one follow the well-argued interpretations of Ivan Jurković. I am grateful to him for his manuscript, which will be a part of his Ph.D. Thesis entitled *The Fate of the Croatian Lower Nobility during the Ottoman Invasion*, at the Central European University in Budapest.

ment of insecurity and instability for all Croatian social groups. There was true devastation as a consequence of their activities. The defenders would fight them only when the Ottoman units were retreating, when the damage had already been done. Even then the Croats seldom managed to prevent the Ottomans from returning home safely.¹² The fact that the Ottomans, from the beginning of the sixteenth century onwards, held strategically important fortresses in the Sana River valley, Kamengrad and Ključ, inserted in-between the Croatian territory, enabled them to attack Croatia at will, with either smaller or larger units. The two above-mentioned fortresses almost completely separated the two lines of the defense system in that area.¹³

Considering all of the above, especially the outdated style of waging war, one could argue that the Croatian defense system, which relied upon various types of fortresses and natural features of the terrain, represented one of the weaker links in the chain, although the defenders did not lack courage and fighting spirit.¹⁴

From the year 1463 the Ottomans started with their incursions into Croatia, through the regions lying on the main routes towards the Adriatic coast and the provinces of Lower Austria, namely through Lika, Gacka and Krbava regions, the area around the town of Modruš as well as the hinterland of Venetian-held Dalmatian towns. Particularly badly hit were the areas of the most powerful Croatian magnates, the estates of the Frankapani and Kurjakovići families. The leading Croatian magnates remained, till the end of the fifteenth century, without numerous important possessions, which significantly reduced their overall power. This reduction was due to Ottoman raids, political and territorial aspirations of the Holy Roman Empire and Venice, and particularly King Matthias's centralizing measures. The most weakened were the Frankapani, who lost Senj, part of the Vinodol County and the island of Krk (Veglia). By losing them they were deprived of their coastal and most valuable possessions. Therefore, even their remaining estates, in economic as well as in military and strategic terms, significantly declined in value.¹⁵ The Croatian social elite was once again badly hit in their defeat by the Ottomans at the Krbava field in 1493, losing in a single day a huge number of its members, although its consequences on medieval Croatia were not immediately felt.¹⁶ Despite several significant military victories up to the end of the fifteenth century, such as conquering Herzegovina in 1482 and winning the Krbava battle, the Ottomans did not significantly undermine the territo-

¹² The main Ottoman incursions into medieval Croatia came from the fortresses of Kamengrad and Ključ (in the present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina) across Krupa and the Korana River towards Metlika (in the present-day Slovenia) and further to Ljubljana (Laibach), as well as across the Lika region, towards Rijeka (Fiume) and further to Istria and Kras (Carso) regions. Danilo KLEN, "Stoljeće i pol prilika i neprilika u Rijeci i oko nje (1465-1627)" [=A Century and a Half of Events and Troubles in Rijeka and Its Vicinity (1465-1627)], *HZ*, 41/1988., 18.

¹³ *Historija naroda Jugoslavije*, 754-755. See also M. VALENTIĆ, "Hrvati u stogodišnjem ratu", 20.; Nenad MOAČANIN, "Bihać i osmanski obrambeni sustav na sjeverozapadu Bosanskog ejaleta 1592-1711." [=The Town of Bihać and the Ottoman Defense System in the Northwestern Part of the Bosnian *Eyalet* 1592-1711], *Spomenica Ljube Bobana*, (ed. Mira Kolar Dimitrijević), Zagreb 1996., 105-107.

¹⁴ For typology and the names of the Croatian fortresses see M. KRUHEK, *Krajiške utvrde*, 11.-39., with the list of relevant literature.

¹⁵ The complex relations between the Frankapani counts and King Matthias are amply discussed in Vjekoslav KLAJIĆ, *Krčki knezovi Frankapani. Od najstarijih vremena do gubitka otoka Krka* [=The Frankapani Counts of Krk from the Earliest Period until the Loss of the Island of Krk], vol. 1., Zagreb 1901.; Borislav GRGIN, *The Frankapani Family and King Matthias Corvinus* (M.A. Thesis, unpublished), Budapest 1994.; B. GRGIN, "Senj i Vinodol između kralja Matijaša Korvina, Frankapana i Venecije" [=Senj and Vinodol among King Matthias Corvinus, the Frankapani Family and Venice], *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest*, 28/1995., 61-70.; B. GRGIN, *Kralj Matijaš Korvin i Hrvatska* [=King Matthias Corvinus and Croatia] (Dr.Phil. Thesis, unpublished), Zagreb 1997., 115-206.

¹⁶ *Krbavska bitka i njezine posljedice* [=The Battle of Krbava Field and Its Consequences], (ed. Dragutin Pavličević), Zagreb 1997., passim.

rial integrity of medieval Croatia. However, they managed to conquer some border areas of the kingdom and to weaken its economic and demographic capacities.

Relevant sources confirm the Ottoman raids on the estates of the Frankapani and Kurjakovići families in June 1463. In the summer of 1464 the estates of Count Stjepan (Steven) Frankapan were hit, and the Ottomans captured many inhabitants of the region.¹⁷ A period of intensive incursions started in the summer of 1467, with the Ottomans coming all the way down to the hinterland of Venetian-held Dalmatian towns of Zadar (Zara) and Šibenik (Sebenico).¹⁸ The new attack came at the beginning of 1468, with the Ottomans coming down from Bosnia as far as Senj. The Frankapani family estates were once again badly hit, while the Ottomans on their return sacked the town of Modruš, capturing many of its inhabitants.¹⁹ The Ottoman incursion in April or May 1469 was particularly devastating. They penetrated once again as far as Senj, forcing the Frankapani to pay a significant sum of money for the town to be spared. The town of Modruš and the imperial province of Carniola were plundered as well. The Ottomans took many prisoners of war and large amounts of booty back to Bosnia. The Venetians were the only ones who effectively helped the Croatian magnates in such dire circumstances, sending a hundred infantry troops to Count Stjepan Frankapan for the defense of the town of Modruš. The next Ottoman raid occurred in September 1469.²⁰

While King Matthias was busy waging war in Bohemia, the Croatian magnates had to find their own solutions for preventing the aggressors' attacks, which created a real confusion during the years 1468 and 1469. The defense strategies were various, expressing all the chaos, uncertainty and fears. They varied from petitions for help in men, arms and money addressed to the various neighboring states, calls for a military alliance with Venice, to migration towards the safer areas (for example Count Martin Frankapan).²¹ The Ottoman raids continued to be frequent and devastating. They plundered the hinterland of the Dalmatian towns of Zadar, Šibenik and Split (Spalato) in May 1471.²² The raids were particularly frequent in 1472, when the Ottomans attacked in May, September and again in November. As a consequence of this mounting pressure on medieval Croatia, Pope Sixtus IV, King Ferrante of Naples and the Venetians launched an international diplomatic action to help Croatia.²³ Even while the Croatian estates asked for foreign help, the leading Croatian magnates continued their internal conflicts. The international mediators emphasized those conflicts as being the principal cause of difficulties that medieval Croatia was facing at the time.

Besides the Ottoman superiority in military terms, one can safely suppose that the tumultuous internal relations among the various strata of Croatian late medieval society further facilitated

¹⁷ Iván NAGY / Albert NYÁRY, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek. Mátyás király korából* [=Hungarian Diplomatic Sources from the Period of King Matthias], vol. 1., Budapest 1875., 218.-219., 284.-288. ; V. KLAJČ, *Krčki knezovi Frankapani*, 251.

¹⁸ I. NAGY / A. NYÁRY, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek*, vol. 2., Budapest 1877., 67.-68.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 75.-76.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 117.-119., 122., 126.-129., 132.-133. ; Šime LJUBIĆ, *Listine o odnošajih Južnoga Slavenstva i Mletačke Republike* [=Documents Concerning the Relations of the Southern Slavs with the Republic of Venice], vol. 10., Zagreb 1891., (*Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium*, vol. 22.), 447., 453.-454. ; V. KLAJČ, *Krčki knezovi Frankapani*, 258.

²¹ I. NAGY / A. NYÁRY, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek*, vol. 2., 96.-98. ; Š. LJUBIĆ, *Listine*, 430.-431., 434.-435. ; V. KLAJČ, *Krčki knezovi Frankapani*, 257. ; Vjekoslav KLAJČ, *Povijest Hrvata* [=The History of Croats], vol. 4., Zagreb 1980., 99. ; János M. BAK, "The Late Medieval Period 1382-1526", *History of Hungary*, (eds. Peter F. Sugar / Péter Hanák / Tibor Frank), Bloomington 1990., 72.

²² I. NAGY / A. NYÁRY, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek*, vol. 2., 216.-217.

²³ V. KLAJČ, *Povijest Hrvata*, 115.-116.

Ottoman incursions into Croatia and Slavonia. Such an unstable internal situation was by no means unusual throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. However, in a radically changed international framework, it became an important obstacle for the efficient defense of medieval Croatian lands. Numerous examples from both Croatia and even more so from Slavonia during this period illustrate the fact that the Ottoman threat did not prevent internal fights.²⁴ The conflicts among the Croatian magnates were of particular relevance. Count Petar (Peter) Zrinski, for example, in 1475 imprisoned and robbed Count Ivan (John) Karlović Kurjaković of Krbava. This move prompted swift reaction and condemnation by the Zagreb County noble diet. They soon forced Count Petar to liberate Count Ivan and restitute all his belongings.²⁵

In the fall of both 1473 and 1474 Croatia and Slavonia, as well as the neighboring provinces of the Empire, were once again badly hit.²⁶ The frequent Ottoman incursions forced Emperor Frederick III and the estates of Carniola, Carinthia and Styria to consider the creation of a frontline network of strong defense fortresses. The latter had to extend even on the other side of the empire's borders, on Croatian soil. At the same time Venice was also interested in the creation of what would later become a *Militaergranz* of the Habsburg Empire. Medieval Croatia would serve, in their minds, as a convenient buffer zone or frontline for the upkeep and defense of the Venetian-held province of Friuli.²⁷ King Matthias was not opposed in principle to the above-mentioned ideas, as long as the new defense system remained under his control. He also believed his Croatian neighbors, as an interested party, should finance its upkeep.²⁸

While the international plans for the anti-Ottoman defense were slowly taking shape, the invaders did not wait. They crossed the Una River (on the Croatian-Bosnian border) in 1475, plundering the vicinity around the fortress of Zrin. Their incursion led them further into Lower Austria. On their retreat, near the Una River, they suffered a defeat by the troops of Count Petar Zrinski.²⁹ The Ottomans launched a new wave of attacks after the death of Hungarian appointed Bosnian king Nikola Iločki (Nicholas of Ilok, Miklós Újlaki) in 1477. Croatia and Slavonia were plundered in October of the same year. This attack prompted the Frankapani and the Kurjakovići to beg for help from Venice. The Venetian authorities refused their appeal, putting the blame for the sad course of events directly on the counts and their internal fights.³⁰ King Matthias was at the same time residing in Korneuburg, engaged in a conflict against Emperor Frederick III and unable to help the Croatian counts. Therefore, he summoned the bans of Slavonia and Croatia for consultations, after they had complained about the Ottoman raids. The king approved the assembly of the Slavonian noble diet, aimed at evaluating the defense potential of the realm and electing a special captain to take care of the defense preparations and needs. The king's measures were coupled with a four year long exemption from taxes for Slavonia, in order to facilitate the defense efforts.³¹

²⁴ Magyar Országos Levéltár, Budapest - Diplomatikai Levéltár [=The Hungarian State Archives in Budapest - Archive of pre-1526 Charters] (further: MOL - DL), nos. 106840, 106846, 106850, 106852, 106856, 107006, 107011, 107021, 107025, 107027, 107028, 107030, 107035, 107048, 107054, 107056, 107058, 107059, 107060, 107061, 107088.

²⁵ Ivan KUKULJEVIĆ SAKCINSKI, *Zrin grad i njegovi gospodari* [=The Fortress of Zrin and Its Masters], Zagreb 1883., 47-48.

²⁶ V. KLAIĆ, *Povijest Hrvata*, 117-119. ; I. NAGY / A. NYÁRY, *Magyar diplomacizai emlékek*, vol. 2., 260-261.

²⁷ Fabio CUSIN, *Il confine orientale d'Italia nella politica europea del XIV e XV secolo*, Trieste 1977., 422., 424-427.

²⁸ According to Nehring, it was King Matthias's firm belief that Emperor Frederick III was morally obliged to finance the new system. The king held him responsible for their conflict in Bohemia, where the Christian forces were mutually destroyed in vain. K. NEHRING, *Matthias Corvinus*, 77.

²⁹ I. KUKULJEVIĆ SAKCINSKI, *Zrin grad*, 47.

³⁰ V. KLAIĆ, *Povijest Hrvata*, 133.

³¹ József TELEKI, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon* [=The Age of the Hunyadi in Hungary], vol. 12., Pest 1857, 35-36. ; V. KLAIĆ, *Povijest Hrvata*, 131-132.

The Ottoman raids continued in the spring of 1478. However, the Croatian magnates managed to defeat this Ottoman group on its retreat, somewhere on the estates of Count Petar Zrinski, in the summer of 1478. The Ottoman incursions into Croatia were repeated in the fall of 1479.³² Probably the biggest Croatian success in the anti-Ottoman fighting during the second half of the fifteenth century was a battle in the vicinity of the Una River, at the end of October 1483. The Croatian magnate troops, led by ban Matijaš (Matthias, Mátyás) Gereb, inflicted a huge defeat on the Ottomans, who were coming back from the imperial territory overloaded with booty and prisoners of war.³³ In the battle the Frankapani counts, particularly Count Bernardin, son of Count Stjepan, and the Zrinski counts distinguished themselves. A five-year long truce between the Ottomans and King Matthias followed the battle. It halted the fighting on a larger scale for some time. However, the border skirmishes continued. The Ottomans plundered the area of Modruš in 1486, while in 1487 some 600 Ottoman horsemen attacked the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom.³⁴

After the death of King Matthias Corvinus, in 1490, the truce between the two sides ended and the Ottomans restarted their attacks. In 1491 they attacked Slavonia and Carniola. On their way back they were defeated by Croatian forces, led by Count Bernardin Frankapan, near Kolenica in Krbava County, in the locality of Vrpile. This defeat forced the Ottomans to halt their attacks during the year 1492.³⁵ A new heavy attack started in 1493 and finished with disaster for the Croatian noble army at the Krbava field.³⁶ The attacks on yearly basis continued in the fall of 1494, with the Ottomans besieging the town of Modruš, but apparently without success. In March 1495 a three-year truce was established.³⁷

The entire Croatian population participated in defending their own estates, possessions and the whole country against the Ottomans. As well, the Croatian nobility, when necessary, joined their king in his large-scale anti-Ottoman actions outside the borders of medieval Croatia. The main goal of the actions at the time was in the neighboring Ottoman Bosnia. Some of the most prominent Croatian magnates, such as counts and brothers Martin and Stjepan Frankapani, actively participated in King Matthias's Bosnian counteroffensive in 1463-1464, together with their entourage of lesser nobles. Numerous other Croatian magnates and nobles from all over medieval Croatia took part in the action as well.³⁸ Once again, the king's troops attacked Bosnia in 1480, with a significant participation of Croatian troops. The king in his report to Pope Sixtus IV described the fighting in detail.³⁹

After the creation of banats of Jajce and Srebrenik, as well as of captaincy of Senj, the fortresses in medieval Croatia became the backbone of the defense system. They became the real centers of defense and main guarantors of security for the local population. Besides the for-

³² *Ibidem*, 133., 145.

³³ I. NAGY / A. NYÁRY, *Magyar diplomacizai emlekek*, vol. 4., Budapest 1878., 363.-366. ; Duro ŠURMIN, *Hrvatski spomenici* [=Acta Croatica], vol. 1., Zagreb 1898., (*Monumenta historico-iuridica Slavorum meridionalium*, vol. 6.), 291. ; V. KLAJČ, *Povijest Hrvata*, 164.-168.

³⁴ I. NAGY / A. NYÁRY, *Magyar diplomacizai emlekek*, vol. 3., Budapest 1877., 121.-123., 239.-241. ; V. KLAJČ, *Povijest Hrvata*, 168.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 225.-226.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, 228.-234. See also footnote no. 16.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, 239.-240.

³⁸ Lajos THALLÓCZY / Samu BARABÁS, *Codex diplomaticus comitum de Frangepanibus*, vol. 2., Budapest 1913., (*Monumenta Hungariae historica-Diplomataria*, vol. 38.), 57.-60., 69.-71. ; V. KLAJČ, *Povijest Hrvata*, 63.-64.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, 149.-151. ; Vilmos FRAKNÓI, *Mathiae Corvini Hungariae Regis epistolae ad Romanos Pontifices datae et ab eis acceptae*, Budapest 1891., (*Monumenta Vaticana historiam regni Hungariae illustrantia*, ser. 1., vol. 6.), 154.-158.

truss of Senj, the captaincy included the fortresses of Brinje, Otočac, Starigrad and Novigrad, under the command of their *castellani*, as well as the Croatian coastal fortresses from Trsat (Tarsatica) till Senj. The royal troops were placed in the main fortresses and the king paid for their upkeep from state income.⁴⁰ In the year 1489 some Slavonian and Croatian defense fortresses, for example Brinje, were repaired, reconstructed and better equipped. According to records from that time, Brinje was then listed among the middle-sized fortresses in Slavonia and Croatia. The strongest fortress by far on the southern borders of the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom was Jajce.⁴¹ All those fortresses started to serve more and more often as shelters for the local population. The whole country was slowly transforming into a real military camp, besieged behind its defense walls.

Many Croatian nobles holding exposed estates, particularly the lesser and the middle-sized ones, found it increasingly difficult to cope with the challenges posed by the anti-Ottoman defense, both in financial and military terms. One of the possible solutions to such difficult circumstances was to sell the endangered estates to those among their noble colleagues who were, at least for the time being, still willing and able to organize a proper defense. For example, Nikola (Nicholas) Sekelj, the son of Mihovil (Michael) from Sveti Juraj, took such decision. In August 1473 he sold to a certain Ladislav (Ladislav) Roh de Detche the fortress of Kozara in Sana County (present-day northern Bosnia), for the sum of 3000 golden florins, together with the adjacent smaller fortresses.⁴² A document clearly describes the circumstances of the transaction. Nikola claimed that he suffered the loss of many soldiers and other members of his armed entourage, despite his strong efforts and the high costs of the defense. He explicitly stated that the danger of an Ottoman takeover was imminent, because of their attacks on an almost daily basis. An efficient defense would require a much larger number of soldiers and more supplies. Nikola could obviously no longer fulfill those conditions. Therefore, he decided to sell his fortresses to prevent a negative course of events, judging that the Ottoman seizure of his estates would seriously endanger the entire kingdom. Nikola explicitly stated, as well, that for some ten years he did not receive a single penny from the royal treasury for the upkeep of his fortresses. This claim is very indicative and significant, casting a new light on the role of the central authorities in the defense of the southern frontiers. It was obviously far from a firm, consistent and continuous policy. The decade Nikola was referring to is the period between 1463 and 1473. His claims clearly illustrate the neglect of the southern fronts, because of the king's political priorities in Central Europe, after Matthias's counteroffensive in Bosnia, in 1463-4.

The Croatian nobles, from 1463 onwards, gradually started to migrate towards the safer parts of the kingdom. This was particularly true for the nobles living on the southeastern borders of medieval Croatia. Their migrations intensified after the Ottoman capture of the fortress of Počitelj on the Neretva River (in the present-day Herzegovina, near the town of Mostar), in 1471. Till the end of the fifteenth century the Ottomans conquered the whole region between the rivers Cetina and Neretva. For example, the most important magnates from that region, Vladislav

⁴⁰ V. KLAIĆ, "Hrvatsko kraljevstvo", 145. ; V. KLAIĆ, *Povijest Hrvata*, 177. ; Branko KRMPOTIĆ, "Maroje Žunjević, Veliki kapitan Senja (1476-1483)" [=Maroje Žunjević, the Great Captain of Senj (1476-1483)], *Senjski zbornik* (further: *SZ*), 6 / 1975., 307-308.

⁴¹ András KUBINYI, *Matthias Corvinus. Die Regierung eines Königreichs in Ostmitteleuropa 1458-1490*, Herne 1999., 194.

⁴² Lajos THALLÓCZY / Sándor HORVÁTH, *Codex diplomaticus partium regno Hungariae adnexarum (comitatum: Dubicza, Orbász et Szana)*, Budapest 1912., (*Monumenta Hungariae historica-Diplomataria*, vol. 36.), 208.-211.

Vukčić and *vojvoda* Ivaniš (John) Vlatković, moved to Slavonia.⁴³ Many members of the Kolunić noble lineage, from the Pset County (present-day southwestern Bosnia) started to migrate after the Ottoman conquest of medieval Bosnia. Some of them moved further west to Lika and Gacka counties, while one of the families settled in the Venetian-held Dalmatian town of Šibenik. One branch of the Kolunić lineage moved to Styria, and the other one, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, to southwestern Hungary.⁴⁴ Some prominent members of the clergy, such as the Cistercians from Topusko, emigrated after the Ottoman incursion in 1463.⁴⁵

The more powerful Croatian magnates, such as the Frankapani, living near the borders of Venice and the Empire, had other possibilities to protect their own interests and property from the Ottoman threat. For example, after 1463 Count Martin Frankapan stored his valuables, mainly silver, in the Venetian-held Dalmatian town of Rab (Arbe) on the island of the same name.⁴⁶ In the year 1478 the brothers Martin and Anž (John) Frankapan stored the sum of 1000 golden ducats in Rab.⁴⁷ Among the middle nobles from the same Croatian border area there is an interesting case of *knez* Lacko (Ladislav) from Kosinj and his son Juraj (George) Lacković. According to their title and material wealth, it is clear that they were not far behind the magnates. It is rather indicative that such magnates and middle nobles tried to find refuge in the safer areas of Dalmatia very soon after the first major Ottoman attack in 1463.⁴⁸ However, an important difference between them should be emphasized. The Frankapani were probably still sure of the strength of their fortified residences. Therefore, they stored only a part of their property in Rab, while the above-mentioned middle nobles had already decided to transfer their property completely to Rab.

Lacko and Juraj moved to the island probably around 1469, at the end of the first phase of Ottoman attacks. Local documents started to mention them from October 1470 onwards. Till the end of 1470 Lacko was involved in the maritime trade and purchasing of grain on the Italian coast as well as buying property in Rab. The amounts mentioned in those transactions easily reached hundreds of ducats.⁴⁹ In February 1471 Lacko was already titled *ciuis et habitator ciuitatis Arbi*. He then paid back his debt to Ivan (John) de Dominis, a patrician from Rab, who loaned him some one hundred ducats while Lacko was settling on the island together with his property and entourage.⁵⁰ Taking into account the fact that Lacko was well off materially,

⁴³ King Matthias donated the fortresses of Veliki Kalnik and Mali Kalnik in the Krizevci (Körös) County as well as Morović in the Vuka (Valkó) County to Vladislav Vukčić. Ivaniš Vlatković moved to Slavonia even earlier. Lajos THALLÓCZY / Samu BARABÁS, *Codex diplomaticus comitum de Blagay*, Budapest 1897, (*Monumenta Hungariae historica-Diplomataria*, vol. 28.), 380.-387. ; V. KLAIĆ, *Povijest Hrvata*, 106.

⁴⁴ Vjekoslav KLAIĆ, "Županija Pset (Pesenta) i pleme Kolunić" [=The County of Pset (Pesenta) and the Noble Lineage Kolunić], *VHAD*, 15/1928., 11.-12.

⁴⁵ Ivan Krstitelj TKALČIĆ, "Cistercijski samostan u Topuskom" [=Cistercian Monastery in Topusko], *VHAD*, 2/1897., 129.

⁴⁶ Državni arhiv, Zadar [=The State Archives in Zadar] (further: DAZ), Spisi rapskih bilježnika, Toma Stančić (1470-1472), b. 3., fasc. 13., pp. 38.-39.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, Andrija Fajeta, b. 1., fasc. 2. 9., pp. 4.-5.

⁴⁸ Dalmatian towns were at the time receiving many distinguished refugees from the broader hinterland. For example in 1463, after the death of the last Bosnian king Stjepan (Steven) Tomašević, his brother Radič with his family and belongings came to settle in Rab. After 1482 even Vlatko, the son of *Chercech* Stjepan Vukčić Kosača temporarily resided in Rab and died there, in 1489. Šime LJUBIĆ, *Commissiones et relationes Venetae*, vol. 1., Zagreb 1876., (*Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium*, vol. 6.), 88. ; Stjepan ANTOLJAK, *Izvori i literatura o prošlosti otoka Raba od ranoga srednjeg vijeka do godine 1797*. [=Sources and Literature on the History of the Island of Rab from the Early Middle Ages till the Year 1797], Zadar - Rab 1986., 28.

⁴⁹ DAZ, Spisi rapskih bilježnika, Toma Stančić (1470-1472), b. 3., fasc. 13., pp. 16., 18.-19., 21.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

one could safely suppose that this debt was a result of his migration to Rab in a hurry, caused by extraordinary circumstances. Therefore, Lacko and his son lacked the initial capital. However, they easily and quickly solved the problem of debt. Documents from 1472 give further insight in Lacko's strengthening of his own social status in the new community, enumerating his houses with real glass windows, his purchasing of pork from Italy for significant sums of money, etc.⁵¹

The common people found it even more difficult to cope with the challenges posed by the constant Ottoman threat. After 1463 they gradually started to leave their homeland, in bigger numbers year by year, trying to find safe havens outside medieval Croatia. The Ottoman raids and conquests till 1526 completely disintegrated medieval Croatian communities, changed the social order and led to the collapse of medieval church organization in Croatia.⁵² Among the preferred final destinations for migrations were the Venetian held Dalmatian towns, with their safe town walls. For example, the town of Zadar, during the second half of the fifteenth century, received many new settlers from the areas of medieval Croatia and Slavonia near the Bosnian border, particularly from the vicinity of the Una River. Many newcomers were from the counties of Pset and Sana (today in western Bosnia), as well as from areas of Drežnik, Lapac, Krbava, Lika (all today in Croatia) Kolunić, Krupa and Bihać (today in western Bosnia). They became a cheap labor force in Dalmatian towns, working as domestic servants, petty craftsmen, etc.⁵³ Besides the Dalmatian towns and islands, migrations of Croats gradually spread in an ever-wider area, reaching from the Italian Adriatic coast,⁵⁴ across Istria, present-day Slovenia and Hrvatsko Zagorje, to Burgenland and western Hungary.

The migrations from Senj to Marche in Italy, for example, increased 350% during the second half of the fifteenth century. The newcomers settled in all the major coastal towns in Marche. They came from the towns of Senj, Krk, Bakar (Buccari), Knin, Krbava, Ogulin, Modruš and Bihać in Croatia, as well as Krupa, Blagaj, Zrin, Petrinja, Zagreb, Krapina and Požega in Slavonia. It is difficult to establish the exact number of settlers and the rates of immigration due to the paucity of sources. However, both figures were most probably significant. For example, in the second half of the fifteenth century it seems that about 15% of population in the town of Fano in Marche was of Slavonic, mainly of Croatian origin. Besides the merchants, craftsmen and seamen, who came to Marche looking for higher profits and more lucrative jobs, the newcomers were most probably refugees fleeing the Ottomans.⁵⁵ The most important center of Croatian immigration on the Italian coast throughout the centuries was Venice. From the mid-fifteenth century onwards, particularly in the last quarter of the century, a significant number of South Slavonic, mainly Croatian immigrants settled there. Among them the settlers from the Croatian towns of Modruš and Senj represented a significant group.⁵⁶

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 85., 93.

⁵² Tomislav RAUKAR, "Hrvatska na razmeđu XV. i XVI. stoljeća" [=Croatia at the Turn of the Fifteenth and the Sixteenth Centuries], *SZ*, 17/1990., 10.-11.

⁵³ Tomislav RAUKAR, *Zadar u XV. stoljeću. Ekonomski razvoj i društveni odnosi* [=The Town of Zadar in the Fifteenth Century. Economic Development and Social Relations], Zagreb 1977., 67. For migrations from the present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina compare also Franjo ŠANJEK, "Hrvati prognanici i izbjeglice kroz povijest" [=Croatian Displaced Persons and Refugees throughout History], *Bogoslovska smotra*, 63/1993., n. 3-4, 350.-355.

⁵⁴ Slavonic migrations to Italy are amply discussed in Ferdo GESTRIN, "Migracije iz Dalmacije u Marke u XV i XVI stoljeću" [=Migrations from Dalmatia to Marche in the Fifteenth and the Sixteenth Centuries], *Radovi Instituta za hrvatsku povijest*, 10/1977., 395.-404.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ Lovorka ČORALIĆ, "Senjani u Veneciji od 15. do 18. stoljeća" [=Settlers from Senj in Venice from the Fifteenth till the Eighteenth Centuries], *SZ*, 20/1993., 79.-102.; L. ČORALIĆ, "Iseljavanje stanovnika Modruša i njihov život u

One of the possible answers to the Ottoman threat became a passive or active collaboration with the conquerors. This happened in cases when the endangered nobles estimated that the hardships of anti-Ottoman defense surpassed their capabilities of resistance, forcing them to try at least to protect their own estates from destruction. In 1481 somebody accused Ivan (John) Bevenjud, the chatelaine of the fortress of Krupa on the Una River, at the Slavonian noble diet in Zagreb, of supplying food to the Ottoman-held fortress of Kamengrad and helping the Ottomans to take Christian prisoners into slavery.⁵⁷ In 1485 Count Petar Zrinski accused the Blagajski counts of collaborating with the Ottomans. He claimed that his officials recognized his sheep, stolen from him by the Ottomans, on the neighboring Blagajski estates. Count Petar requested their return, but the Blagajski refused to do so.⁵⁸

It is difficult to estimate whether the accusations against the Blagajski were true. However, it does suggest that collaboration with the Ottomans was not at all unimaginable at that time in the region, even among the highest social strata. One has to emphasize that the accusations of collaboration were rather common during this period in medieval Croatia, as well as in the neighboring territories. They were particularly frequent in the diplomatic correspondence. In some cases such accusations were false, aimed at covering one's own behavior or misdeeds. To accuse an adversary of collaboration with the Ottomans, for example, could serve as a strong argument for protecting somebody's own material interests in front of the judicial authorities. The claims of Count Petar Zrinski could perhaps be interpreted as such an attempt. However, one has to bear in mind the fact that on some occasions the endangered magnates in the frontier regions really allowed the Ottomans to pass over their estates to attack neighboring territories, in order to spare their own possessions. The Venetian and imperial officials on many occasions accused Croatian magnates of allowing the Ottomans to pass through Croatia without interruption, enabling the latter to attack with full force the territories of the Empire and the Republic. One example of active collaboration is the alleged participation of Count Anž (John) Frankapan Brinjski in an Ottoman raid on Carniola, in 1476.⁵⁹ On another occasion the Ottoman negotiators discussed a possible surrender of the town of Modruš with Count Bernardin Frankapan, in October 1494. Allegedly, the Blagajski had then already sworn an oath to the Ottomans, enabling the latter to travel without interruption through the counts' estates. As well, the Ottomans imposed a yearly contribution on them.⁶⁰ Although the events described here were from a somewhat later period, one has to bear in mind those claims while analyzing the earlier conflicts of the Blagajski with the Zrinski counts.

The Ottoman raids and incursions influenced to a great extent the everyday life in medieval Croatia, as well as in neighboring Slavonia and Dalmatia. The majority of sources only give concise data about the individual events, mainly about the concrete attacks and their immediate consequences. They speak much less about how the Croats perceived the aggression and the invaders and how the whole new situation influenced the thinking throughout Croatian society. However, one cannot negate the impression of difficult and tumultuous times. The Ottoman attacks had a direct and negative impact on the whole population, making the usual everyday activities year by year slower and more difficult to perform, creating chaos in the judiciary system and property issues. For example, in February 1475 a certain lesser noble

Veneciji u 15. i u prvoj polovici 16. stoljeća" [=Emigrations of the Inhabitants of the Town of Modruš and Their Life in Venice in the Fifteenth and the First Half of the Sixteenth Centuries], *SZ*, 21/1994., 79.-100.

⁵⁷ V. KLAJČ, *Povijest Hrvata*, 154.

⁵⁸ L. THALLÓCZY / S. BARABÁS, *Codex diplomaticus comitum de Blagay*, 399.-403.

⁵⁹ V. KLAJČ, *Povijest Hrvata*, 128.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, 239.

Andrija (Andrew) from Varaždin (Varasd) County in Slavonia lost all his family's property documents, running away from the Ottomans.⁶¹ In September 1488 the Ottomans prevented Pavao (Paul) Krnčić, a chatelaine of the fortress of Obrovac on the Una River (today in Bosnia), from appearing in the town of Bihać, where the local magistrates summoned him.⁶² Such examples were frequent and common.

One cannot establish with certainty the exact proportions of human and material losses that the Ottoman incursions inflicted upon medieval Croatia. First of all, reliable statistics did not exist for the time. Besides that, many documents were lost during the turbulent centuries that followed. Despite that, one can suppose that human and material losses were substantial. The absolute figures of forces, killed, wounded, imprisoned, etc. on both sides are often exaggerated. On the one hand they had a typical medieval literary function of impressing the readers with the importance of events. On the other hand, one could argue that the high figures on Croatian side were partly expressing, as well, a widespread sense of fear and anxiousness among the Croats, created by Ottoman actions. Fiction and reality mixed and nurtured each other.⁶³

Narrative sources, particularly the late medieval and Renaissance Croatian literature, are the basis for reconstructing the thinking and sensibilities of the population, due to the paucity and uniformity of non-narrative sources. The arrival of the Ottomans on the Croatian borders, which in turn resulted in a substantial threat for the very existence of Croatia and Croats, led to the creation of the so called "Turkish motif" in late medieval and Renaissance Croatian literature. This motif dominated during the second half of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries.⁶⁴ The main centers of such literature were the Venetian-held Dalmatian towns and Dubrovnik. The authors frequently covered events in the broader hinterland area. The oldest such a text, entitled "The elegy of devastation at Šibenik field", probably appeared in 1477.⁶⁵ In the introduction, the author Juraj (George) Šižgorić deplors his own faith, which prevented him from writing poetry, because of the overall circumstances that hindered his efforts. In the second part of the elegy Šižgorić described the Ottomans and briefly enumerated their conquests till then. The description of the Ottomans is loaded with stereotypes and what we would call today "hate literature". These typical phrases are repeated in later numerous anti-Ottoman texts, speeches and reports.⁶⁶ They could be justly interpreted as *topoi*, with the concrete task to provoke specific negative feelings against the "enemies" among the readers, serving in such way as a mobilizing force for the Christian side. On the other hand, one could analyze them even as an interesting testimony of how the Croatian and other intellectuals on the periphery of Catholic Europe perceived the essential otherness and diversity of the conquerors from the east. The so-called "total enemy" had to be absolutely and unconditionally demonized, which

⁶¹ MOL - DL, no. 45598.

⁶² Radoslav LOPAŠIĆ, *Bihać i Bihaćka krajina* [=The Town and Region of Bihać], Zagreb 1890., 299.-300.

⁶³ Tomislav RAUKAR, "Komunalna društva u Dalmaciji u XV. i u prvoj polovini XVI. stoljeća" [=The Communal Societies of Dalmatia in the Fifteenth and the First Half of the Sixteenth Centuries], *HZ*, 35/1982., 90.-92. ; T. RAUKAR, "Turci i hrvatsko kasnosrednjovjekovno društvo" [=The Turks and Croatian Late Medieval Society], *HZ*, 37/1984., 252.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, 249.

⁶⁵ Vladimir GORTAN / Vladimir VRATOVIĆ, *Hrvatski latinisti* [=Croatian Latin Poets], Zagreb 1969., (*Pet stoljeća hrvatske književnosti*, vol. 2.), 138.-143. On the other hand, Raukar claims that this text appeared perhaps in 1468, after the first major Ottoman raid into the hinterland of Zadar and Šibenik. Tomislav RAUKAR / Ivo PETRICIOLI / Franjo ŠVELEC / Šime PERIČIĆ, *Zadar pod mletačkom upravom 1409-1797* [=The Town of Zadar under Venetian Rule 1409-1797], Zadar 1987., 68., n. 113.

⁶⁶ T. RAUKAR, "Turci", 249.

in turn could increase the cohesion and homogeneousness of the Christian, in this case Croatian, society against the challenges and difficulties it was facing.⁶⁷

The central part of Šizgorić's text, containing a description of the Ottomans destroying the vicinity of Šibenik, is the most vivid and the most interesting part from the historical perspective.⁶⁸ One can deduce from it the crucial role of the superior Ottoman cavalry in those attacks. As well, the general participation in the defense is clearly shown, engaging all the population of the endangered Šibenik hinterland and neighboring medieval Croatia, namely warriors together with peasants and foreign mercenaries (archers) alike. The author gives a clear picture of the Ottoman tactics to burn down everything to the ground, thus destroying the resources and crippling the defense capability. The Ottomans burned crops, destroyed churches and other objects of religious cult, dragged people into slavery, tortured, beat, raped, etc.⁶⁹ One of the charters written in the Zagreb cathedral chapter in January 1478, although not in a literary form, suggests an essentially similar picture regarding the Ottoman incursions in medieval Slavonia at approximately the same period.⁷⁰

Texts of a similar kind written in medieval Croatia are more rare, at least those ones dating from the second half of the fifteenth century. The most important and well-known are surely the notes of a certain priest, Martinac (Martin), written in 1493, immediately after the Krbava field battle. He managed to describe briefly all the hardships that medieval Croatian lands had to endure, due to the fact that they were on the frontline of anti-Ottoman defense.⁷¹ After the fall of Greece, Bosnia, Bulgaria and Albania, claims Martinac, the Ottomans "came down on the Croatian tongue".⁷² The battles on the open fields, in the mountains and near the river passes were innumerable. The Ottoman incursions reached Croatia, Slavonia and Carniola, all the way down to the Adriatic coast. Martinac, like Šizgorić, described the gloomy reality. It was

⁶⁷ V. GORTAN - V. VRATOVIĆ, *Hrvatski latinisti*, 141.

*... Est genus invisum cunctis in partibus orbis,
Turcorum semper perfida turba fuit.
Vivit et hic populus Maomethis lege nephanda,
gens Alcorano credit et ipsa suo.
Est tamen huic generi fas ille vel ille cupido
fas Veneris crimen, fas Ganymedis amor.
Lex vetat his semper ferventis pocula Bacchi,
saepe tamen vino turba sepulta iacet.
Lex data, ne porcis utatur turba prophanis,
foedior est porcis Turchia turba tamen.
Dedita perpetuo et scevo gens dedita bello,
unica spes ferrum, parmula, cuspis, equus.
Gens inimica sacras ardescit perdere leges,
quas Deus electis fixit in orbe suis...*

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, 141., 143.

⁶⁹ Describing the Ottoman incursion into the hinterland of Dalmatian towns in 1468, which was perhaps the basis for Šizgorić's elegy, the Venetian authorities in a letter to the pope in Rome claimed that *...tedet, miseretque referre cedes, rapinas et inauditas crudelitates, quas nuper ultra predam abactam ex agro nostro hiadertino, imanissimi Turci in agro Crovatie ad Scardonam usque excursantes igni et ferro omnia vastantes intulerunt*. Š. LJUBIĆ, *Listine*, 414.

⁷⁰ *... inclitum quoque regnum nostrum cum omnibus circumvicinis terris, regnis ac provinciis gloriosissimis continuis eorumdem bestiarum bellicis incursibus pene attritum et compressum est adeo, ut iam maiori parte vastitati et desolacioni subactum, finale excidium pretoletur...* Ivan Krstitelj TKALČIĆ, *Povjestni spomenici slobodnog kraljevskog grada Zagreba* [=Monumenta historica liberae regiae civitatis Zagrabiae], vol. 2., Zagreb 1894., 385.

⁷¹ Vjekoslav ŠTEFANIĆ, *Hrvatska književnost srednjega vijeka* [=Croatian Medieval Literature], Zagreb 1969., (*Pet stoljeća hrvatske književnosti*, vol. 1.), 82.-84.

⁷² Note here the identification of Croats as an ethnic group with their own language.

marked with looting, arson, sacrileges of all kinds, as well as dragging of young people, women and children into slavery.

The anti-Ottoman wars during the second half of the fifteenth century destroyed Croatian villages. Uncertainty and fear became the daily routine in all medieval Croatian lands. The Ottomans inflicted serious damage upon them, particularly between 1470 and 1480. The political division between the Venetian and Hungarian-Croatian state territories did not mean anything in this context. The districts of the Dalmatian towns as well as the neighboring Croatian territories were equally badly hit.⁷³ The period of “dismembering” of Croatia had thus been initiated, as it was put with full justification in 1481 by the Croatian Glagolitic priest Šimun (Simon) Klimantović, in his comments on the death of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror.⁷⁴

One might conclude that the Ottomans significantly influenced medieval Croatia during the second half of the fifteenth century in a variety of ways. Changes in politics, economy, society, demographics, everyday life and the thinking of Croats, throughout the period in question, show without exception a strong influence of the conquerors from the east. From the political perspective, the Ottomans succeeded in undermining the territorial integrity of medieval Croatia, conquering the areas between the Cetina and Neretva rivers, namely the southeastern edges of the country. As an immediate consequence of the Ottoman incursions and raids was the gradual transfer of Croatian state and church centers and institutions to safer areas, from the south to the north. It ended in 1557, when Zagreb became the capital of Croatia and the permanent seat of the Croatian noble diet. This process was coupled with the ever-larger extension of the term *Croatia*, in a political sense, onto the neighboring regions of medieval Slavonia. From 1476 onwards, for defense reasons, all medieval Croatian lands were placed under the control of one common *banus*. This fact enabled a stronger political integration between the kingdoms of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia in the following period, as well as the rise of the importance and prestige of the Croatian ban in the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom.

The Ottoman influence on the economy of medieval Croatia during the second half of the fifteenth century did not manifest itself in commercial relations and other forms of peacetime economy. On the contrary, the Ottomans were connected with the war events, being a principal cause of economic slow-down and difficulties in the wider area. The immediate effects of Ottoman raids into Croatia were destruction, huge material damage and insecurity in everyday life. The economic consequences were numerous, starting from problems in the organization of production on the landed estates, through the changes in form and size of feudal rents, to the weakening of the overall economic potential and the military and defense capabilities of the country. The Ottoman incursions significantly influenced on the way of life of the Croatian population. The whole economy was gradually adapted to strengthening of the military component in the everyday life. The wartime economy gradually became the main source of income for the whole population during the sixteenth century. The beginning of all those tendencies can be clearly traced to the second half of the fifteenth century.

The social changes in Croatia during this period occurred as a combined result of various factors. The Ottomans were an influence together with the royal power in Hungary and with the other neighboring countries, most of all Venice and the Empire. For the future social development in Croatia the most important fact was the decrease in power of the magnate families, such as the Kurjakovići and particularly the Frankapani. The battle with the Ottomans on the Krbava field, in 1493, significantly undermined the social position of the Croatian elite. It sped

⁷³ T. RAUKAR / I. PETRICIOLI / F. ŠVELEC / Š. PERIČIĆ, *Zadar*, 71.

⁷⁴ *Historija naroda Jugoslavije*, 755.; T. RAUKAR, “Društveni razvoj”, 78., n. 5., 83.

up the already initiated processes of disintegration of its institutions, forms of social organization, its cohesion, etc. Particularly hard hit were the lesser and the middle nobles on medieval Croatian soil, who almost disintegrated as social groups until the year 1527.

The Ottomans became the main factor for demographic changes in medieval Croatia. One has to emphasize, however, that till the end of the fifteenth century those changes were not as significant as during the first half of the sixteenth century. As the Ottomans were conquering the medieval Croatian territories part by part, the population started to migrate to safer areas. The first ones to migrate were the peasants, whom the Ottoman raids deprived of any basis for further existence in the old country. They were followed by lesser and middle nobles, particularly after the Krbava battle, while the magnates during this period remained in their seats, due to the strength of their fortified residences. The Croatian emigration in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries reached a very wide area, including the Italian Adriatic coast, particularly Marche and Venice, Istria, Burgenland, western Hungary, the area of Zagorje (in the hinterland of Zagreb) and other regions in medieval Slavonia. The most numerous were migrations to the Venetian-held Dalmatian towns and islands. In the evacuated areas of medieval Croatia, during the centuries that followed, the Ottoman, Habsburg and Venetian military authorities settled many newcomers of various ethnic, religious and social backgrounds.

Constant threats and fears of war, destruction and loss of freedom, together with all other forms of physical and psychological violence, marked everyday life in medieval Croatia. Those feelings became apparent after 1463. The Ottoman threat became, as well, the main motif of late medieval and early Renaissance Croatian literature. The chaos created in everyday life spread growing feelings of insecurity, fear and fragility, in some cases even pessimism and resignation in the face of the challenges that seemed to surpass the defense capabilities of medieval Croatian society. However, such feelings were throughout this and the following periods coupled with active armed resistance and many examples of individual and group bravery and audacity. The syndrome of society as a besieged fortress, created by constant clashes and wars from 1463 till 1791, spread to all social levels. It was aided by the concept of *antemurale christianitatis*, which revived the old ideology of the Crusades with its typically medieval warrior ethics and system of values. One cannot underestimate the importance of these facts on the current collective mentality of the Croatian population, as well as their relevance in the creation of modern national ideologies, myths, stereotypes, etc. It all started in Ottoman times, from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards.

Osmanski utjecaji na Hrvatsku u drugoj polovici 15. stoljeća

Hrvatska povijest u drugoj polovici 15. stoljeća obilježena je dolaskom Osmanlija na granice srednjovjekovnih hrvatskih zemalja. Nakon sporadičnih upada u prvoj polovici 15. stoljeća, napadači s istoka su, napose nakon osvajanja srednjovjekovnog Bosanskog Kraljevstva 1463., postali najvažniji vanjski čimbenik za kasnosrednjovjekovnu Hrvatsku. U ovom radu analiziraju se različiti osmanlijski utjecaji na politiku, društvo, gospodarstvo i demografiju te njihov izraz u mentalitetima i svakodnevnom životu druge polovice 15. stoljeća u Hrvatskoj. Promjene na svim područjima društvenog razvoja nedvojbeno su pod znatnim utjecajem osvajača s istoka.

S političkog motrišta Osmanlije su uspjeli potkopati teritorijalnu cjelovitost srednjovjekovne Hrvatske, osvojivši područje između Cetine i Neretve. Osmanlije su postali glavnim uzrokom gospodarske stagnacije i poteškoća na širem području. Društvene promjene u Hrvatskoj tijekom tog razdoblja velikim su dijelom posljedica kombinacije utjecaja različitih vanjskih čimbenika. Jedan od njih bili su i Osmanlije, uz ostale susjedne sile, poglavito Veneciju i Carstvo. Osmanlije su bili i glavni uzrok demografskih promjena. Ipak, treba naglasiti da te promjene

do kraja 15. stoljeća nisu bile toliko naglašene kao što će biti u prvoj polovici 16. stoljeća. Osmanlijska prijetnja postala je tada glavni motiv kasnosrednjovjekovne i ranorenesansne hrvatske književnosti. Kaos stvoren u svakodnevnom životu širio je osjećaje nesigurnosti, straha, krhkosti i pesimizma. Katkad je čak vodio do rezignacije pred izazovima koji su se činili prejakima za obrambene sposobnosti društva. Ipak, takvi osjećaji u ovom i u narednom razdoblju miješali su se s djelatnim oružanim otporom osvajačima te brojnim primjerima pojedinačne i grupne hrabrosti.