

THE MORLACHS OF DALMATIA:  
A GLIMPSE ON DAMAGES CAUSED BY MORLACH SHEPHERDS  
IN RURAL DALMATIA DURING THE 15<sup>th</sup> AND 16<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES

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The Morlachs of Dalmatia, as referred to in Venetian documents from the 15<sup>th</sup>-century onwards, were a heterogeneous and extremely mobile population of Vlach origin. Even if they were to be found also as merchants, soldiers, thieves, criminals, immigrants, etc., the principal occupation of the late medieval Dalmatian Morlachs remained the traditional sheep breeding. When analysing this latter aspect of Morlach life, we have to keep in mind that the lifestyle of the Morlach shepherds from Dalmatia was strongly connected with that of other Vlachs communities from the Balkans. Together with this, the Morlachs' commercial practices and the ubiquitous presence of Morlach sheep flocks in the agricultural space of the Dalmatian hinterlands in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>-century, contributes equally to the larger topic of the life in border areas.

Against this background, this paper exams the crop damages caused by the Morlach shepherds in Dalmatia's fields and vineyards. These damages reveal information about the legal status of Morlach shepherds in Dalmatian communes, about privileges, concessions, agreements, rental contracts, and also about diplomatic negotiations. Moreover, representative examples of crop damages will be used to study the relation and (partially) cross-cultural interaction of Morlachs shepherds with the great regional powers, particularly Venice's reaction to the disruptive Morlachs and its consequences at the diplomatic level with the authorities of the Ottoman Empire.

**Keywords:** Morlachs of Dalmatia, Morlach shepherds, coexistence, flexible population, border area.

The most popular feature attributed to the Morlachs of Dalmatia is their shepherding lifestyle, which is closely connected with the “Vlach identity”, as far as this term can be used for this extremely mobile group that rarely identifies itself in an ethnical manner. Taken together these two aspects of the Morlach portray, “shepherds” and “Vlachs”, they form the strongest criteria when it comes to define this population.<sup>1</sup> However, the “Morlach”<sup>2</sup> term is an exonym used by the

<sup>1</sup> The uncertainty about this aspect was also expressed regarding also different place, not necessarily far from the Balkans. See Jak Yakar, “Transhumance and the question of nomadism in Early Anatolia,” in *X.Türk Tarih Kongresi'nden ayrıbasım*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1990, p. 599: “differences in animal husbandry between contemporary regional cultures do not necessarily reflect differences in ethnic origins but should rather be considered the outcome of deep-rooted differences in the economic patterns of mixed-farming communities” and “since nomadic groups leave very little in terms of material culture we cannot be certain as to their ethnic affiliation, religion, or in some cases geographic locations”.

Venetians or by those under the Venetian influence to refer to the people arriving from beyond the porous Eastern border of Venetian Dalmatia, other than those identified with a specific ethnic term (Croats, Slavs, Bosnians, Greeks, Albanians, etc.). For the Venetians and the Venetian officials in Dalmatia, the Morlachs were those rather poor people who crossed Dalmatian lands from time to time in order to make a living by developing different types of activities. Mostly, they challenged the locals and the Venetian authorities by interfering with the “good administration” and the “peaceful coexistence” and by getting involved in different aspects of the daily life of Dalmatia.

### A GENERAL OVERVIEW

The lifestyle of shepherds and the transhumance practiced in the Balkans made the subject of numerous researches and studies about its functioning, social impact, the role in the survival and continuity of a population.<sup>3</sup> The common ground for most of these studies was given by the comfortable attributions of this lifestyle to the Vlachs. Consequently, it became one of the main features of the Vlachs: they were shepherds and lived in *katuns*.<sup>4</sup> This approach helped the researchers to make useful connections that led to the discovery of some Vlach settlements, some commercial or shepherd routes, but mostly to the understanding of the pastoral life.

Since animals were bred also by the permanent settlers of the Balkan rural world the distinction between the two types of the shepherding was made by the

<sup>2</sup> My choice is to use the “term of identification” as it appears in the used documents. It will prevail the use of the Morlach term since it is the one used by the Venetian sources when referring to the people arriving from Bosnian/ Hungarian/ Croatian/ Ottoman territories. When the case will allow (Hungarian documents or Venetian translation for Ottoman ones, relevant for the same event) I will also use the “Vlach” term to emphasize the fact that each state uses these terms as exonyms in order to identify a social group. The ethnical charge of this term (not denied here) is yet hard to be explained and definitely wrong to be generalized or extended to all Morlachs communities or groups that ever-entered Dalmatia. To what extent all the Morlachs were Vlachs? Or, all the Vlachs maintained a Romanic language? Answers for these questions demand a more intense and prolonged research. The reason is given by the unstoppable movement of people and the mixture of population which for the authorities of the time didn't seem to be important from an ethnical point of view. More important was for the states to control and use them as they developed similar activities in different places of the governed territories.

<sup>3</sup> See László Bartosiewicz, Haskel J. Greenfield ed., *Transhumant pastoralism in Southern Europe. Recent Perspectives from Archaeology, History and Ethnology*, Budapest: ARCHAEOLOGIA Foundation, 1999; Nikola Tasić, Dušica Stošić, eds. *Migrations in Balkans*, Belgrad: Srpska akademija nauka i umjetnosti, 1989; Milenko Filipović eds., *Simpozijum o srednjovjekovnom katunu odrađan 24. I 25 novembra 1961*, Sarajevo: akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine, 1963.

<sup>4</sup> See 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”, in *Res Historica*, 41, Lublin, Poland, 2016, p. 51–94; Ian M. Matley, “Transhumance in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, in *Geographical Review*, 58, 2, 1968, p. 233.

different forms of movement. Historians, archaeologists and ethnographers identified the movement of flocks driven by Vlach shepherds between summer pastures located on higher mountain slopes and winter grazing places in the river valleys or near the coast as semi-nomadic transhumance.<sup>5</sup> This helped to justify the lack of a material heritage of the Vlach culture, the difficulties of understanding the social organization of a *katun* and also in reconstructing the relations among different groups of Vlachs.<sup>6</sup> On the other side, this semi-nomadic transhumance assured the preservation of an autonomic form of government within the group and inside the states on which territory lived Vlach communities. Moreover, the Vlachs leaning toward shepherding were visible through the specific state decisions that encouraged them not to change their way of living<sup>7</sup>.

The shepherding practiced by the Morlachs in Dalmatia connected these people with the Vlach phenomenon in the inner Balkans. The laws and regulations they had to comply with, their internal social organization (*katun*) under the command of a *katun* leader and the products resulted from their herding activity are the most prominent aspects that can be found when researching other Vlach communities. In Dalmatia, Morlach shepherds usually stayed during the winter months, from November to April. During these almost six months spent in the lowlands, the Morlachs fed their animals in the existing pasturelands free or belonging to the locals. Since no information about hey reserves were to be found, we can only assume that the public pasturelands that they rented, and those far from the coastal cities, were not sufficient for them. Similar was the case for the water sources. Both these aspects periodically created tense situations difficult to control as will be discussed in the following pages. Also, the time spent by the Morlach in Dalmatia was used to establish commercial collaborations and to conclude renting contracts, thereby creating further opportunities for both economic exchange and sociocultural interaction.<sup>8</sup> Transhumance therefore was one of the main features of the Morlachs of Dalmatia that contributed to their adaptation to different political systems such as the Venetian and the Ottoman. The changes determined in Dalmatia by the Venetian-Ottoman neighbourhood assured both the survival of a transhumant lifestyle specific to the inner Balkans<sup>9</sup> and, paradoxically,

<sup>5</sup> Fernand Braudel, *Mediterranean and the World in the Age of Philip II*, translated by Mircea Gheorghe, I, Bucharest, Meridiane, 1985, p. 166.

<sup>6</sup> Ian M. Matley, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

<sup>7</sup> See Vasa Cubrilović ed., *Dispositions de la Législation positive et du droit coutumier relatives aux mouvements saisonniers des éleveurs du bétail dans l'Europe du Sud-Est à travers les siècles*, Proceedings of the International Symposium from Belgrade, 6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> November 1975, Belgrad, 1976; Emil Cernea, “Jus Valachicum”, in *Recherches sur l'histoire des institutions et du droit*, II, Bucharest, 1978; Miloš Luković, “Zakon Vlahom (Jus Valachicum) in the charters issued to Serbian medieval monasteries and kanuns regarding Vlachs in the early Ottoman tax registers (*defters*)”, in *Balkanica Posnaniensia XXII/1 – Jus Valachicum I*, Poznan–Bucharest, 2015, p. 29–46; Ian M. Matley, *op. cit.*, p. 231–261.

<sup>8</sup> Karen-edis Barzaman, *The Limits of Identity: early modern Venice, Dalmatia and the representation of difference*, Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2017, p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Ian M. Matley, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

at the same time accelerated the process of inclusion of the Morlachs into the Dalmatian society. Therefore, the Morlachs had to find particular ways to comply with Dalmatian laws and the regulations of the Serenissima.

The pastoral activities of Morlachs and their seasonal movement might suggest that, up to some extent the authorities used their specific life style to justify one administrative decision or another. No one was responsible for the Morlachs decision of settling during the winter in some abandoned places or for their need to search for a better and warmer place for their flocks. Nobody could control or stop the traditional activity of the Morlachs, and that was the reason for the authorities from both sides of the Ottoman-Venetian border to try transforming the Morlachs' activities into an advantage for their own political agenda in the region: Venice in regaining lost territories, building fortifications and re-populating abandoned lands, and the Ottomans to ease their access to the ports of the Adriatic.

### THE MORLACHS IN VENETIAN DALMATIA

Beginning with 1409 and the acquisition of Zadar, the Venetian Republic extended its domains along the Eastern coast of the Adriatic covering the rural hinterland that since 1358, when Treaty of Zadar was concluded, belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary. Together with a very comfortable series of advantages offered by the control of the city ports of Zadar, Šibenik, Trogir and Split (and, of course, the islands), Venice gained access to the routes towards the inner Balkans. Providing equally the protection of the high mountains and the few ways of crossing them, the Dinaric range opened the Venetian civilization to the traditional world of the Balkans. The Morlachs became this way the most relevant agents of the cultural mixture and political diversity of the area, with whom the men of Venice had to interact on a daily basis. This interaction reflects substantially through the numerous letters exchanged between the officials from Dalmatia and the central authorities from Venice. The counts and captains<sup>10</sup>, the governors, inspectors or other temporary officials appointed to administrate the remote province asked in countless occasions the help and the advice of the Serenissima to solve a situation created by the Morlachs. According to different letters, Senate decisions, notarial contracts, and other types of documents, edited or yet unpublished, the Morlachs were to be found involved in a large panel of activities. They proved to be merchants with a significant role in providing subsistence goods

<sup>10</sup> During the Venetian administration of Dalmatia this was a joint office covering the social and military attributions of the Venetian official sent to administrate the province. Only in the case of Zadar were two different officials appointed, one as captain and one as count, to fulfill the official tasks. This office was hold by a member of the Venetian aristocratic families for a two years mandate. See Monique O'Connell, *Men of Empire. Power and Negotiation in Venice's maritime state*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009.

for the Dalmatian cities, soldiers who protected the Venetian strongholds, immigrants that settled in lands affected by natural disasters or by war, and also feared thieves, raiders, kidnappers and ambushers. However, in spite of their involvement in all of these aspects, their image as shepherds continued to prevail.<sup>11</sup>

This study aims to discuss a predominantly Venetian perspective on the role of the Morlach shepherds in the political, economical and social life in Venetian Dalmatia during the 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup>-centuries. It does not aim for bringing together all the mentions of the Morlach shepherds I found in the archives, but to emphasize some working theories worth to be considered for the following research. Therefore, my study will begin with a brief portray of the Morlach shepherds present in Dalmatia before the establishment of the Venetian administration. Two main ideas will be brought afterwards in discussion relating with the Morlachs shepherding activities developed in Dalmatia. The first focuses on the specifics of Morlach shepherding and the formal answer regarding its inclusion in the functioning of the administration in Dalmatia. Also, it will be analysed according to the jurisdictional changes issued from the establishment of a common border<sup>12</sup> with the Ottoman Empire. The second aspect is reflected by the relations these Morlach shepherds built with locals in Dalmatia, stretching from the joint use of resources to the place of Morlach shepherds in the criminal environment of the Dalmatian hinterland. All these aspects gravitate around the fact that Morlach shepherds caused damages in the Venetian province and challenged the good order desired by the Serenissima. However, we will see that a thin line separated the intended damages from the failed attempts of greater actors in achieving their own interests. Nevertheless, the entire puzzle will bring some insights on the Morlachs' particular history and on the benefits of an uncertain political situation for the survival of a population in motion.

<sup>11</sup> Up to this moment the research was developed on sources found in the State Archives in Venice. A number of almost 300 new documents (for the 16<sup>th</sup>-century) mentioning the Morlachs were found in different archival founds, of which I exemplify: *Senato Deliberazioni Mar* (files and registers), *Senato Deliberazioni Segrete* (files and registers), *Bailo a Costantinopoli*, *Lettere e scritture turchesche*, *Libri commemorative*, and many more.

<sup>12</sup> I use the term "border" with a general and open sense in order to emphasize the distinction between the territories administrated by the Venetians, Hungarian or the Ottomans. Obviously, in Eastern Dalmatian we cannot speak about a clear demarcation line between the empires, but rather about a "border area" as a space of interaction, coexistence, collaboration and cohabitation between the subjects and officials of the neighbouring states. Even if some sources might suggest a clear line that split the possessions (from tree to tree and stone to stone) it is more than clear that until Linea Nani in Eastern Dalmatia there was nothing like a clear respected border line. See more about these in Maria Pia Pedani, *The Ottoman-Venetian Border (15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup>-centuries)*, Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari Digital Publishing, 2017; Walter Panciera, "La frontiera dalmata nel XVI secolo: fonti e problemi," *Società e Storia* 114, 2006, p. 783–804; Walter Panciera, "Tagliare i confini: La linea di frontiera Soranzo-Ferhat in Dalmazia (1576)," in *Studi storici dedicati a Orazio Cancita*, eds. Antonino Giuffrida, Fabrizio d'Avenia and Daniele Palermo, Palermo: Mediterranea, 2011, p. 237–72; Giuseppina Minchella, *Frontiere aperte. Musulmani, ebrei e cristiani nella Repubblica di Venezia (XVII secolo)*, Rome: Viella, 2014.

### MORLACH SHEPHERDS IN DALMATIA BEFORE 1409

The presence of Morlach shepherds in Dalmatia is attested by the sources even before the official establishment of the Venetian administration<sup>13</sup>. It started by the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup>-century in the context created by the conflict of the pro- and anti-Venetian parties of the province, the later one supported by the Šubić family. In this context the first Vlachs were mentioned in Dalmatia playing a military role in favour for the Šubić family<sup>14</sup>, a powerful family who ruled in the name of the Hungarian king the inner territories of Dalmatia in the area of Šibenik and Split.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the endeavours of this family were unsuccessful and its decay made place for another noble Croatian-Hungarian family that of Nelipić counts. They had possessions in the province of Lika and extended them with the possessions of Šubić family, including those where the Vlachs lived. The involvement of the Nelipić family in the defeat of the Šubići could not pass without some recognition from the Venetians. Perhaps, such a form of reward was the act of 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1344 with which the Venetian Senate confirmed the right of Vladislava, the widow of the former count of Knin, and of her son, Ivan Nelipić, over two Morlach villages (“*duos catunos sous Morolacorum*”).<sup>16</sup> A year later, in 1345, when the Hungarian king, Louis the Great, accepted the loyalty of the Nelipić family and pardoned the family for supporting Venetian interests in Dalmatia and reconfirmed the family’s possessions, including those situated on the valley of the Cetina river, around the castle of Sinj and some possessions where Croats and Vlachs lived, with a royal privilege.<sup>17</sup> It was necessary

<sup>13</sup> This choice of words aims to emphasize the beginning of the long period of the Venetian direct rule over Dalmatia. Beginning with 1409 it put a formal end to the internal struggle between the pro-Hungarian and pro-Venetian factions, and also the Hungarian rule over the Eastern Adriatic coast.

<sup>14</sup> Johan Georg Schwander, *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum, Dalmaticarum, Craoticarum et Slavonicarum*, III, Wien, 1748, p. 647: *tandem banus Mladenus, videns, se esse confussum et devictum, sine bello, misit comitem, Georgium fratrem suum ad regem Ungariae, ut sibi impederent auxilium. Semper adhaesit amicitiae et auxilio Vlacorum et Policianorum* and p. 648: *Item Ioannes Banus Babonig cum suis sequacibus persecutes est Mladenum usque Bliscam, ibi pugnam feci magnam cum Vlacis, non modicum quantitatem bestialium, hominum et jumentorum accipiens.*

<sup>15</sup> Damir Karbić, “Šubići Birbirscki do Gubitka Nasljedne Banske Časti (1322.)”, in *Izvorni znanstveni rad* 22, 2004, p. 1–26; idem, “Odnosi gradskoga plemstva I bibrirskih knezova Šubića. Prilog poznavanju međusobnih odnosa hrvatskih velikaša i srednjovjekovnih dalmatinskih komuna”, in *Povijesni prilozi*, 35, 2008, p. 43–60; Florin Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle ages, 500–1250*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 342–344.

<sup>16</sup> Šimeon Ljubić, *Listine. O odnošajih između južnoga slavenstva i mletačke republike*, II (1336–1347), Zagreb, 1870, p. 219–222: *quare dilectionem suam requireat et roget, quatenus si quos Morlacos ipsius habeat, placeat illos sibi plenare restitui facere, et permittere ipsum suum nepotem integraliter perfrui suis, nem licet hov iustum sit, nobis tamen gratissimum erit. Exponat idem noster nuncius egregio viro Budislavo Curiaci, comiti Corbavie, fratti dicti Gregorii comitis, similem ambaxatam, except, quod de facto Morolacorum nichil dicat eidem.*

<sup>17</sup> Tadija Smičiklas, *Codex Diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavonie*, XI (1342–1350), Zagreb, 1913, p. 249–252, and *ibidem*, XIV (1367–1373), Zagreb, 1916, p. 441: *simul cum universis ipsorum tenutis, villis, possessionibus et eorum incolis seu populis Croatis et Olachis.*

for these two moments to be mentioned here because with them opens a long list of documents mentioning the Vlachs who entered with their flocks onto the crops and pastures of the Dalmatian communes. It happened in 1357 when at the 14<sup>th</sup> of December the Croatian ban, Ivan Nelipić, made peace with the inhabitants of Šibenik and promised them, among other things, to ban the Vlachs from grazing flocks on their communal pasturelands without their consent<sup>18</sup>. This incursion of Morlach shepherds, either if it was or was not connected with some political reasons, affected the fields of many villages from the hinterland of Šibenik. The document issued by the Croatian *ban* had also the role to confirm the belonging of the following villages to the commune of Šibenik: *Rakytnica* (Rachinica), *Dazlina*, *Grabovci*, *Nevest*, *Perimeth* and *Coprano*.<sup>19</sup> Mentioning the villages here is also important because we will find them again one and a half centuries later in similar situations, during the border negotiations with the Ottomans.

After the treaty of 1358, Hungary recovered Dalmatia from the Venetians and it was the duty of the Croatian ban to solve the misunderstandings that appeared in the region. Such a situation happened in 1362 when some Vlach/Morlach shepherds grazed their flocks in the pasturelands and fields of Trogir. Details about this event can be found in the document issued by Nicolaus de Szécsi, the Croatian ban, at 25 of March to answer at the complaints made by the inhabitants of Trogir against the Morlachs (“*particulam gentis Morlachorum*”), subjects of the king of Hungary.<sup>20</sup> They seem to have developed a habit of crossing the border of the town’s jurisdiction to build huts (*fingendi tentoria*) and to feed and water their animals in the possessions of Trogir. Nicolaus de Szécsi examined the complaints and confirmed the fact that the Morlachs descended from the mountains and damaged the crops owned by the citizens of Trogir.<sup>21</sup> To solve the matter, the ban stated that the Morlachs had to be removed, but postponed it because of the drought that affected other areas and also because the lambs were still too young and it would have caused a greater loss for the Morlachs. To avoid this, the *ban* asked the people of Trogir to tolerate the Morlachs until the day of Saint George’s celebration (23<sup>rd</sup> of April). However, he established some limits of the area where the Morlachs were allowed to stay, ordered them not to make more damages or to hurt the locals and also forbade them and their heirs to return to the hinterland of Trogir.<sup>22</sup>

About another example we learn from a document issued by the chapter of Nin as reconfirmation of a privilege issued by Queen Elizabeth of Hungary for Emerik Bebek, the Ban of Dalmatia and Croatia, on the 22<sup>th</sup> of December 1381<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Tadija Smičiklas, *Codex Diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavonie*, XII (1351–1359), Zagreb, 1914, p. 438: *item olachy vel villain in district ipsius civitatis absque licentia et voluntate civium pascua ipsorum seu gramina depascere non possint.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 439.

<sup>20</sup> Tadija Smičiklas, *Codex Diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavonie*, XIII (1360–1366), Zagreb, 1915, p. 212–213.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*: *quamplures Morlachos inter ipsorum confines et territoria descensus.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*: *nullus morlachorum, nec aliqua gens de ipsorum progenie.*

<sup>23</sup> Tadija Smičiklas, *Codex Diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavonie*, XVI (1379–1385), Zagreb, 1976, p. 243–244, doc. no. 201.

The document issued in Nin at 24<sup>th</sup> of February 1382<sup>24</sup> was addressed to *Duymus*, the representative of Šibenik, and contains the privilege of the queen. According to it, some Vlachs arrived from the possessions of Queen Elizabeth of Hungary and of those owned by Ban Ivan Nelipić and made damages in the hinterland of Šibenik. They acted as thieves, criminals, and, moreover, they exploited the pasturelands and the fields of the inhabitants of Šibenik's hinterland. To repay the loyal services of the people of Šibenik, the queen decided to remove the Vlachs and to settle them in three small settlements (*katuns*) in the upper areas of Krka River. The Vlachs had to be departed on the celebration of Saint George, and those who refused to leave had to pay 200 golden florins<sup>25</sup>. In addition to these, the queen's charter established that no other Vlach was allowed neither to live in Bossiglina village, nor to graze his sheep in its fields, nor to buy salt, nor to sail on the sea. Issued in Zagreb, the queen's charter was copied by the chapter of Nin and handed to *Duymo Zuratig*, citizen and ambassador of the city of Šibenik to be used against the Vlachs.<sup>26</sup> Two years later, the Vlach shepherds were once again doing damages with their flocks in the hinterland of Šibenik and again the queen of Hungary interfered to solve the complaints. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 1384 the queen informed Thomas de St. George, *ban* of Croatia and Dalmatia about a letter sent to his predecessor, Emeric Bubek, in the matter of Vlach removal.<sup>27</sup> As it was written in that document the *ban* Thomas was ordered to remove the Vlachs and to ask them to pay 200 florins. The amount was considered as compensation for the destructions.<sup>28</sup>

#### THE SPECIFICS AND REGULATION OF SHEPHERDING IN THE DALMATIAN HINTERLAND (AFTER 1409)

The Morlach/Vlach shepherds roaming the rural space of Dalmatia before the establishment of the Venetian administration created a context that allowed the inhabitants of the province to get used with them. Indeed, they caused a lot of damages and created a great discontent but their presence did not always have

<sup>24</sup> MNL, DL50034; Tadija Smičiklas, *Codex Diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavonie*, XVI (1379–1385), Zagreb, 1976, p. 269–270, doc. no. 221.

<sup>25</sup> Tadija Smičiklas, *Codex Diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavonie*, XVI (1379–1385), Zagreb, 1976, p. 243–244, doc. no. 201: *Ideo fidelitati vestre firmiter precipiendo omnes olachos cuiuscunque statu et condicionis sicut et existant de district et serviciis prescripte civitatis nostris Sibinicensis et eius tenutis removere et extra mittere debeatis et teneavivi auctoritate nostre (...) levatis omnis cum effectu preter duos catones seu descensus ex parte orientali et tercio ex parte occidental fluminis Cerche(...) si vero que etiam nostrum mandatum transgredi presumpserunt in ... ducentorum forenorum auri comitantur et incurant in eadem sive mora quorum medietas florrenosrum probonis exigatur et allia medietas per vos exacte ipsis civibus assignetur temporibus opportunis.*

<sup>26</sup> Tadija Smičiklas, *Codex Diplomaticus Regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavonie*, XVI (1379–1385), Zagreb, 1976, p. 269–270, doc. no. 221.

<sup>27</sup> Georgius Fejér, *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*, X, 3, Buda, 1838, p. 12–14; *ibidem*, X.8, Buda, 1838, p. 143–145.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 145.

negative consequences. The Venetian documents mentioning Morlach shepherds during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries place them in a variety of circumstances giving us the opportunity to learn more about how a population could survive and maintain a specific lifestyle in spite of political changes. However, one cannot state that only the Morlachs were shepherds in Dalmatia and neither that all the Morlach shepherds were Vlachs.

We can analyse the Morlach shepherds in Dalmatia also by following the effects of their activities over the autochthonous villages. In spite of the large number of sources attesting the fact that the Morlachs were mainly involved in sheep breeding practicing a “reverse transhumance”, they do not allow more than marking the presence of the Morlachs in the rural hinterland of Dalmatia.<sup>29</sup> Usually the documents resume to: “the Morlach shepherd caused damages”, “the Morlachs’ sheep destroyed the fields of the peasants” or “the Morlach shepherds are forbidden to...”. Though, these types of information and a few more scattered details permit a glimpse on the Morlach shepherding practices.

Like most of the Morlachs’ other activities in Venetian Dalmatia, shepherding placed them outside the rules, statutes and laws of the province, too. It happened not because it was something illegal but because the Morlach shepherds arrived in Dalmatia from beyond the border (depending on the time frame, from the kingdoms of Croatia, Bosnia, Hungary and the Ottoman Empire). Because of that, a clear distinction appeared between the autochthonous goat and sheep breeders in rural inland Dalmatia, but mainly on the Dalmatian islands,<sup>30</sup> and the Morlach shepherds periodically present in the coastal region. This distinction is firstly recognized, at the official level, in the statute of Trogir that in 1402 included a charter issued by Sigismund of Luxembourg, king of Hungary.<sup>31</sup> The decree of the Hungarian king aimed to organize and regulate the shepherding activities in the hinterland of the coast city. It contained information about the obligations of the sheep breeder, of the shepherd and of the men in charge with the mediation between the shepherd and the sheep owner, when it was the case. Recalling the similar organization of the Vlachs in the inner Balkans, the temptation is to use the

<sup>29</sup> As it was defined by Braudel when he referred to the sheep breeders that did not belong to the lowlands communities and travelled with their flocks as the cycle of seasons: F. Braudel, *Mediterranean and the World*, I, p. 166. For a more detailed discussion about the types of transhumance practiced in the Balkans and not only see M.L. Ryder, “Late Medieval Transhumance in Western Europe”, in *Atlas of Medieval Europe*, ed. Angus Mackay, David Ditchburn, Londra–New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 220; N.J.G. Pounds, *An Historical Geography of Europe, 1500–1800*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 40; Elizabeth R. Arnold, Haskel J. Greenfield, *The Origins of Transhumant Pastoralism in Temperate South Eastern Europe: a Zooarchaeological Perspective from the Central Balkans*, BAR International Series, 2006, p. 7–11.

<sup>30</sup> See Fabian Kümmeler, “Herdsman as a Socio-Professional Community in Late Medieval Dalmatia” In *Comunità e società nel Commonwealth veneziano*, ed. by Gherardo Ortalli, Ermanno Orlando and Oliver Jens Schmitt, Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2018, p. 111–127; Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Korčula sous la domination de Venise au 15<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Les Conférences du Collège de France), Paris, 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Ivan Strohal ed., *Statut I reformacije grada Trogira*, Zagreb, 1915, p. 190–193.

information for understanding the Morlach shepherds.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, it has to be put aside because the document continues with the mention that excluded the Morlachs from its provisions.<sup>33</sup> It happened because the Morlachs were outsiders and the authorities developed a different strategy in interacting with them. It could be still connected with Morlach shepherds but only for the occasions in which they were employed by sheep owners from the Dalmatian cities, or, more often, when they rented some villages, fields or pasturelands.

According to the statute of Trogir, shepherds had to declare the number of the sheep they own and graze in the hinterland of the city. The council members were the ones who had to verify whether they were registered and whether they paid the fees to the state, and also whether they respected the lands established for the feeding and watering of the flocks.<sup>34</sup> Responsible for the shepherds was a leading shepherd (*bravarius*) who was paid with a third of the profit and of the lambs, together with a third of the fresh cheese and wool. The last two items were shared with the shepherds. Other obligations and benefits, like receiving a quantity of barley for a hundred animals, two breads and a bucket of wine, or the payment of some fees and fines had to be fulfilled according to the relations between the leading shepherd and the shepherds. Grazing either their own sheep or those belonging to richer people, Dalmatian shepherds used public pasturelands just like private ones rented from other peasants who did not have animals. In any of these situations they had to fulfil the obligations they had as members of a clearly delimited community. Also, of importance are the dates marking the deadlines for the payment of these debts: the shepherds had to pay their obligations for the sheep owners until 15<sup>th</sup> of August on the Assumption day,<sup>35</sup> while the shepherds

<sup>32</sup> Silviu Dragomir, *Vlahii din nordul Peninsulei Balcanice în Evul Mediu*, Bucharest, 1959, p. 27. The Romanian historian analyzed the document as rule of internal organisation of the Vlach shepherds from Dalmatia. Indeed some words specific for the shepherding lifestyle from the inner Balkans support this interpretation: *primicer, celnic, bravarius, etc.*, but this document was issued in a time when the same king and also the Ostoja of Bosnia issued other documents that forbade the Morlach presence in the hinterland of Trogir, mainly because of the damages made with their flocks.

<sup>33</sup> Ivan Strohal ed., *Statut I reformacije grada Trogira*, Zagreb, 1915, p. 192–193: *Insuper quod qualibet celnicus vel pastor non audeat nec presumat tenere penes se ullum hominem Morlacticum seu extraneum cum animalibus vel sine animalibus sub pena librarum viginti quinque parvorum, cuius pene medietas sit communis et alia accusatoris (...) Ad hoc insuper quia sunt nonnulli Morlacchi commorantes in district Tragurii alicuius non tenentes animaia nec aliquam factionem civitas facientes, statutum et ordinatum est, quod a modo in antea nullus de genere Morlacorum posit aut valeat in district Tragurii manere, qui non teneat ad pascendum alicuius civis Traguriensis animalia modis, pactis et condicionibus superius explicates. Quin imo tales Morlachi non tenentes animalia civium Traguriensium debeat exire district Tragurii sub pena perpendi sua animalia, cuius pene medietas sit communis et alia accusatoris.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 190.

<sup>35</sup> John G. Nandris, "Ethnoarchaeology and Latinity in the mountains of the southern Velebit", in László Bartosiewicz, Haskel J. Greenfield ed., *Transhumant pastoralism in Southern Europe. Recent Perspectives from Archaeology, History and Ethnology*, Budapest, 1999, p. 119: The day of Saint Mary (Assumption Day) is in the calendar of the shepherds the moment when they started their descent from the mountains. Being celebrated equally by Catholic and Orthodox Christians, this day was of religious significance for both communities.

had to be paid until the day of Saint Martin (11<sup>th</sup> of November). These days coincide with the end of the time spent by the herds on the summer pasturelands on the mountains and their arrival in the winter places and the ending of the sheep counting which happened at Saint Demetrius (the 26<sup>th</sup> of October).<sup>36</sup>

Regarding the Morlachs, the royal decree forbade the shepherd leader to keep by force as shepherds Morlachs or other foreigners (*hominem Morlaticum seu extraneum*).<sup>37</sup> Therefore, Morlachs could not be obliged to work as shepherds for Dalmatian sheep owners. Additionally, they were forbidden to bring their own flocks into the Dalmatian hinterland. Such type of provisions issued from the need to stop these already usual incursions of Morlach shepherds and their flocks during the winter in the milder climate of Trogir's hinterland. The abusive use of the Dalmatian pastures, the destructions caused by Morlach flocks in the vineyards and crops of local peasants, together with the contracts concluded with the Morlachs who took care of the locals' sheep, suggest a broad range of situations of interaction and potential confrontation.

Similar measures were taken against the Morlach shepherds present in the hinterland of Zadar. A document issued by the doge Francesco Foscari for Petro Basadonna, the count and captain of Zadar, in November 1455 and included in the Statute of the city, *Statuta Iadertina*, mentioned the fact that the Morlachs, meaning Vlachs, should not be allowed to cause damages in the city's surrounding rural space<sup>38</sup>. In spite of formal and official decisions of Morlach exclusion, they were constantly present in the hinterland of Zadar. The frequent interactions with the locals helped, in time, the creation of some lesser threatening relations. In fact, they became the object of a compromise that assured some sort of autonomy and independence for the Morlachs, reconfirming the Venetian ability to exploit all the resources of the province, for the welfare of the subjects. The manner in which Venice reacted to Morlach shepherding was very nicely emphasized by the answer given by the rector of Coron (Koroni, Greece) in 1499 to the pasha of Morea who had complained about the incursions of Albanian shepherds into Ottoman lands. The Venetian official simply suggested that "our flocks go during the summer in your lands, while your flocks arrive in ours during the winter".<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Traian Stoianovich, *The Balkan Worlds. First and Last Europe*, London/New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2015, p. 63–64.

<sup>37</sup> Ivan Strohal, *Statutum et reformationes civitatis Tragurii*, Monumente Historico-Juridica Slavorum, Meridionalium, vol X, Zagreb, 1915, p. 194.

<sup>38</sup> DAZD, *Statuta Iadertina*, Venice, 1564: *quod ut debite ouietur, & occurratur furtis, derobationibus, & multis excessibus, ac delictis, quae committuntur in Comitatu, & territorio illo, tam per Morlaccos, sive Vlacos forenses, quam per districtuales nostros (...) quod aliquis Vlacorum, vel aliorum malefactorum ad aliquam villarum dictae ligae insultum faceret, vel aliquod furtum committeret, tam de die, quam de nocte, vel in pascuis & pertinentiis dictarum villarum intentione committendi aliquod damnum, furtum vel predam, quod tunc omni mora posta posita quilibet villanorum dictarum villarum subito audito murmure, vel campana teneatur, & debeat curere ad subueniendo damnum passis & insequendum fures & malectores & capto malefactore, teneatur ipsum quam citius poterunt ligatum Domino Comiti Iadrensi presentare...*

<sup>39</sup> F. Braudel, *Mediterana și lumea mediteraneană în epoca lui Filip al II-lea*, I, p. 167; Marino Sanudo, *Diarii*, II, Venice, 1879, p. 577.

Such an approach of a constant challenge encouraged nevertheless the collaboration between the people put to coexist in Dalmatia. The Morlach shepherds, at their turn, took advantage of the local's tolerance and concluded contracts<sup>40</sup> to use their pasturelands and water sources. These types of contracts were registered by the Venetian count and captain of Šibenik, Fantinus de Cha de Pesaro. The count himself rented in 1441<sup>41</sup>, to *Juraj Ratchovich* and *Marco Smoianovich*, in the name of Paul Medossevaç, a pasture and a water source in the hinterland of Šibenik, part of the communal property of the city. The Morlachs from the *katun* lead by Medossevaç were granted the right to use the pasture placed between the village of *Sirme*, near the village of Zaton (*Xaton*), and *Cofza* Lake,<sup>42</sup> in proximity of another pasture reserved for the inhabitants of the aforementioned Dalmatian villages. This pasture rented by Morlachs was also located between another pasture called *Gofnach*, owned by *Milota Craspich*, and the pastures located on *Tribocon* Mountain and along *Vodiza* River. In exchange for the use of this pasture the Morlachs had to pay 60 ducats of good gold and fair weight to the treasury of Šibenik. This amount had to be paid until the day of Saint George (23<sup>rd</sup> of April). For the time the Morlachs grazed their flocks on that pasture, they were allowed to sell their products in Šibenik, where they could also buy salt. Moreover, they had to pay 2 ducats for every chicken they took with them to their temporary village. This document also established that Paul Medossevaç had to be the responsible for the contract concluded between the Morlachs and the count in the name of people of Šibenik and the one to answer for the damages made by his Morlachs.<sup>43</sup>

This encouraging openness manifested by the authorities can be found also in a document issued by the Venetian Senate for the officials of Zadar on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 1445<sup>44</sup>. The Senate's document allowed the inhabitants of Nin to rent their pasturelands to the Morlachs. In exchange for it, the Morlachs had to pay at least 250 ducats, depending on the time they spent there. The parties were recommended to conclude a contract for one year with the possibility to extend it in case there were no problems. If the Morlachs would misbehave or refuse to pay their obligations, they could be banished from the place.

Apparently, there was a distinction between the Morlachs shepherds and the local ones. In most of the cases the Morlachs presence caused discontent, reason for which they were not formally accepted in the province. However, to exploit the

<sup>40</sup> See also Dana Caciur, "Considerations Regarding the Status of the Morlachs from the Trogir's Hinterland at the Middle of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century: being Subjects of the Ottoman Empire and Land Tenants of the Venetian Republic", *Res Historica* 41, 2016, p. 91–110.

<sup>41</sup> Josip Kolanović ed., *Spisi Kancelarije Šibenskog kneza Fantina de Cha de Pesaro 1441–1443*, Šibenik, 1989 p. 63–64.

<sup>42</sup> Probably part of the lake Prokljansko, on Krka River, between the villages of Raslina and Zaton.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 63–64.

<sup>44</sup> Šimeon Ljubić, *Listine. O odnošajih između južnoga slavenstva i mletačke republike*, IX (1432–1452), Zagreb, 1890, p. 218–219; *ASVe (Archivio di Stato di Venezia) – SDM (Senato Deliberazioni Mar)*, reg. 2, p. 77r–v.

benefits that occurred the authorities allowed the above-mentioned rental contracts. These might therefore be considered aspects that connected Morlach shepherding with the transhumant herding traditions specific to the inner Balkans. It is worth to go back again to the case of Paul Medossevač and the document representing his renting contract for the pastureland near Šibenik. He received the right to use the pastureland and the watercourse in November, after they had left the summer pasturelands in the mountains and arrived to the coast of the Adriatic. They had to fulfil their obligation until the day of Saint George (23<sup>rd</sup> of April)<sup>45</sup> before returning up to the mountains.<sup>46</sup>

The establishment of a common border with the Ottoman Empire after the wars of 1463–1479 and 1499–1503 and of a continuously conflicting atmosphere changed the status of the Morlachs. Firstly, they were not anymore only semi-nomadic shepherds, living for the summer in *katuns* on the mountains and for the winter in lower lands, but they became inhabitants of Ottoman lands. Even if they managed to preserve their traditional lifestyle, Morlach shepherds became subjects of the Sultan with which the Venetian authorities had to interact carefully not to cause undesired misunderstandings with the Ottomans.<sup>47</sup>

In this new context that affected dramatically the territory of Dalmatia, the Morlach shepherds continued to be mentioned in the documents in contexts similar to the previous period, but with different consequences for the new political realities. Some of these consequences arose from the Ottoman way of adapting the traditional organization and the status established by the medieval kingdoms for the shepherd communities<sup>48</sup>. Ever since their first mention, the Balkan Vlachs have been identified as shepherds in permanent movement, representatives of an extended economic branch specific for mountainous areas. The Ottoman offensive toward Northwest integrated the lands where the Vlach shepherds lived and carried their lifestyle. Since their movement could not be stopped, the Ottoman officials had to find a way to control and profit on shepherding activity in the Balkans.

Halil Inalcik observed that the inclusion of the Balkan provinces into the Ottoman Empire was not followed by a total transformation of the local specific legislation. Certain of the previous rules were inherited, translated and applied the way they had been set out by the Serbian and Bosnian kings<sup>49</sup>. Among the

<sup>45</sup> Traian Stoianovich, *The Balkan Worlds. First and Last Europe*, London/New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2015, p. 8–11; John G. Nandris, "Ethnoarchaeology and Latinity in the mountains of the southern Velebit", in László Bartosiewicz, Haskel J. Greenfield ed., *Transhumant pastoralism in Southern Europe. Recent Perspectives from Archaeology, History and Ethnology*, Budapest, 1999, p. 119.

<sup>46</sup> Šimeon Ljubić, *Listine. O odnošajih između južnoga slavenstva i mletačke republike*, IX (1432–1452), Zagreb, 1890, p. 218–219; *ASVe (Archivio di Stato di Venezia) – SDM (Senato Deliberationi Mar)*, reg. 2, p. 77r–v.

<sup>47</sup> Vjeran Kursar, "Being an Ottoman Vlach: On Vlach identity(ies). Role and Status in Western Parts of the Ottoman Balkans (15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup>-centuries)", in *OTAM*, 34, 2013, p. 115–161.

<sup>48</sup> Halil Inalcik, *Imperiul Otoman. Epoca clasică. 1300–1600 (The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age. 1300–1600)*, Bucharest, 1996, p. 160–161.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 160.

beneficiaries of these surviving laws were also the Vlach shepherds. Inevitable changes appeared, however, after 1463 and the transformation of Bosnia from border province into a sanjak. In this moment, even if the Vlachs kept their organization and lifestyle, they had to pay levies to the Porte as the status of subject of the Sultan required.<sup>50</sup>

The obligations demanded by the Porte from Vlach shepherds consisted of the payment of one ducat (*florin*) and in giving a sheep with lamb and a ram (or their value in money, of 12 to 15 aspers) for each house at the day of Saint George (*rusum-i eflak*)<sup>51</sup>. To these were added some other taxes for those who also were in possession of some lands and a set of taxes for the right to use public pasturelands. The first one was called *resm-i filori* and set the bases for differentiating among the Vlachs and their statutes: the landowners and the non-owners. They were different of the Vlachs shepherds and had to pay *resm-i yaylaks*<sup>52</sup> and *resmi kichlak*<sup>53</sup>, amounts written in the income registers of the spahis<sup>54</sup>. All these taxes and obligations can be found, in different forms in the border area of Dalmatia, recalling at the same time some of the provisions of the so-called *jus valachicum*.<sup>55</sup>

The lack of detailed sources explaining and confirming this status of the Morlachs is compensated with documents issued by the authorities of both powers while negotiating the administration of the region. After the Hungarian defeat at Mohács (1526), the Ottomans focussed more on Central Europe, leaving the Dalmatian hinterland to local officials. This is one of the reasons that transformed the Morlachs into agents of Ottoman regional politics, especially after the war of 1537–1540. Their presence in a depopulated and uncultivated area offered political leverages and advantages to the Ottoman authorities.<sup>56</sup>

In the case of the negotiations for the border of Šibenik the Ottoman officials complained about the losses the Morlachs would suffer if forced to leave those villages that caused the misunderstandings with the Venetian subjects during winter.<sup>57</sup> The presence of the Morlachs during winter is also mentioned by the

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>51</sup> As exemplified with the regulations of Baiazid II (1481–1512) regarding the Valchs of Pavlovića and Maglay from Bosnia published by Nicoară Beldiceanu, “Les valaques de Bosnie à la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle et leurs institutions”, *Turcica. Revues d'études turques* 7, 1975, p. 122–134.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. W. Padel, L. Steeg, *De la Législation foncière ottomane*, Paris, 1904, p. 33: *Kichlaks* – winter pasturelands, situated in an area with a milder climat where shepherds could find enough grass and water to pass the cold season.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*: *Yailaks* – summer pasturelands situated on the mountain slopes far from the heat of the lower lands.

<sup>54</sup> Aleksander Matkovski, “Le juridiction turque touchant l'élevage des moutons dans les sanjaks de Skopje et Salonique depuis le XV<sup>ème</sup> jusqu'au XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle d'après un manuscrit inédit turc”, in *X. Türk Tarih Kongresi, 22<sup>nd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> Septembrie 1986*, Ankara, 1968, p. 1757.

<sup>55</sup> For an overview see Neven Isailović, “Legislation concerning the Vlachs of the Balkans before and after Ottoman conquest: An overview”, in *State and Society in the Balkans before and after the Establishment of Ottoman Rule*, ed. Srđan Rudić, Selim Aslantaş, Belgrade: The Institute of History Belgrade/Turkish Cultural Center Belgrade, 2017, p. 25–41.

<sup>56</sup> *ASVe–SDS (Senato Deliberazioni Segrete)*, reg. 67, p. 183r–183v.

<sup>57</sup> Šimeon Ljubić, *Commissiones et relationes Venetae*, III (1553–1571), Zagreb, 1880, p. 93.

Dalmatian chronicler Paolo de Andreis who argued that this periodical presence of Ottoman subjects in the Venetian hinterland rendered the establishment of the border impossible.<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, it might have rather been the case of some bureaucratic errors that led to an application of the Ottoman agricultural legislation than of some conquering tricks.<sup>59</sup> The investigations on site made by the Ottoman map makers and described in a letter sent to Venice, emphasized clearly enough the fact that the Ottoman officials registered in the books of deeds the Ottoman conquered lands not by fighting but by this form of illegal temporary settlement (they registered as conquered the villages where the Ottoman subjects lived).<sup>60</sup> The Morlachs played this way an important role in occupying new lands in Dalmatia for the Ottomans, using fields and pasturelands they not always had the right to do. The permissive attitude of the Ottomans and the tolerance of Venice determined “an almost total pastoralization of the hinterlands of Šibenik and Trogir”.<sup>61</sup>

On the other side, the Venetian authorities tried to transform the area shared with the Ottomans into something less conflicting by means of their usual practices (renting or leasing the lands). The 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries offer enough examples of collaboration between the subjects of the Serenissima and the Porte. In many cases the Morlachs themselves were the ones who arrived in front of the Venetian official to promise a fifth of the cereals they intended to cultivate and a part of the animals in exchange for the right to use the pasturelands and the watercourses.<sup>62</sup> The contracts concluded with the Morlachs for the right to use the villages Radošić and Sbiche (Zbice) enumerate the obligations set upon the Morlachs, obligations specifically tailored to their shepherding lifestyle. The first contract exemplified here was concluded in January 1534.<sup>63</sup> According to it, the family of the Morlach *Radoslavo Bubotus* promised to live and develop the village and to send to the nobles Hieronimo and Paulo Cippico who lived in Trogir a ram, a sheep and a pig (for Christmas) and also a fresh new cheese for the day of Saint George.<sup>64</sup> The

<sup>58</sup> Paolo de Andreis, *Storia della città di Traù*, Split, 1908, p. 290.

<sup>59</sup> Cemal Kafadar, “Evliya Çelebi in Dalmatia: An Ottoman Traveler's encounters with the Arts of the Franks”, in *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean Portable Archaeology and the Poetics of influence*, Alina Payne ed., Leiden, Brill, 2014, p. 68. The author explains the presence of the Morlachs shepherds in the border area of Dalmatia as it follows: “the insistence on the notion *vacant land* could be a matter of political strategy, no doubt, but one's eyes were also trained by education and experience, whether politically motivated or not: certain populations could indeed remain invisible, and certain political economies could indeed be equated with uncivilized nature when viewed from a certain perspective.”

<sup>60</sup> *ASVe- I libri Commemoriali*, reg. 22, p. 120v–121v.

<sup>61</sup> Cemal Kafadar, “Evliya Çelebi in Dalmatia: An Ottoman Traveler's encounters with the Arts of the Franks”, in *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean Portable Archaeology and the Poetics of influence*, ed. Alina Payne, Brill, 2014, p. 68; Snježana Buzov, “Vlaška sela, pašnjaci i čifluci: krajolik osmanlijskog prigraničja u šesnaestom e sedamnaestom stoljeću”, in *Triplex Confinium (1500–1800): ekohistorija*, D. Roksandić, I. Mimica, N. Štefanec, V. Glunčić-Bužančić eds., Split-Zagreb, 2003, p. 227–241.

<sup>62</sup> Šimeon Ljubić, *Commissiones et relationes Venetae*, III (1553–1571), Zagreb, 1880, p. 239.

<sup>63</sup> *ASVe-BaC (Bailo a Costantinopoli)*, b. 365.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*.

second contract, concluded also in January 1534, established for the Morlachs of *Juaray Simonichi* to send to the noble the pig heads for Christmas, a goat for the Carnival, a good lamb for Easter and a fresh new cheese for Saint George's Day.<sup>65</sup>

These types of measures aimed to limit the damages caused by Morlach shepherds in the crops and possessions of Dalmatian locals. However, the Morlachs proved themselves to be very skilful in finding opportunities to avoid the payment of the debts and the supervision of the authorities. One must not forget that in some occasions the Ottoman officials also suggested to the Morlach that they might not be so committed in fulfilling their obligations. One of them was Ferhat beg, the sanjak-bey of Klis, who in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century convinced the Morlachs that they don't really have to pay the taxes required by the Venetians. The Ferhat's beg involvement proved that all the Venetian efforts invested in binding the Morlachs to the rented lands and their owners to be in vain. New incursions took place in the area beginning with Semptember and reset the previous state of things with the Morlachs damaging the crops and disobeying the rules of the Venetian officials.<sup>66</sup>

So far, we saw that the sources might suggest some resemblance between the Morlach shepherds and the traditionally identified Vlach shepherding communities roaming the Balkans. The rules that direct the functioning of these communities, the laws that organize the practice of this activity in different Balkan states and the relations they built with the agricultural communities seem to follow a pattern which preceded the Venetian and Ottoman administrations over the Balkans.

#### **MEDIATING THE RELATIONS BETWEEN MORLACH SHEPHERDS AND THE INHABITANTS OF DALMATIA**

Further information about Morlach shepherds can be collected from the documents stemming from their interactions with the local population. Most of these documents are responses of Venetian authorities to the complaints of peasants and owners of pasturelands, lakes, vineyards, olive orchards, etc. Fantinus de Cha de Pesaro, count and captain in Šibenik, between 1441 and 1443, copied in his register such very interesting examples.<sup>67</sup> According to it, the Morlachs lead by *Bartholo Ceprinich* (Bartolu Cepriniću), inhabitant of a *katun*, were asked on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 1442 not to enter with their animals in the area of the village of Komnjane (*Comgnane*).<sup>68</sup> In the presence of some witnesses, the count ordered the Morlach to keep his herd of animals, big or small, far from the crops, fields, and vineyards belonging to the village of Komnjane. If he did not respect this, he and his Morlachs would be banished from the hinterland of Šibenik.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>66</sup> *ASVe-Miscellanea materie miste e notabile*, b. 33; *ASVe-BaC*, b. 365.

<sup>67</sup> Josip Kolanović ed., *Spisi Kancelarije Šibenskog kneza Fantina de Cha de Pesaro 1441–1443*, Šibenik, 1989.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 230, no. 131.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*.

A little more complex was the case with the Morlachs of Stefan Morgasich and their conflict with a noble from Šibenik, *Georgius Radoslafcich*, also mentioned in the register of count Pesaro, in January 1442.<sup>70</sup> The conflict started after the Morlachs watered their sheep in the portion of the lake owned by the noble *Radoslafcich*. Iohannes Franciscus de Serenis, the chancellor of Šibenik, was the one who travelled to the village of Zaton, near Cofza Lake, to gather testimonies about the conflict from different inhabitants of the villages of Zaton and Raslina.<sup>71</sup>

The first witness was *Vuch Polizanni*, and his testimony was translated (probably from Slavic) by *Civitani Gersizich*. According to Vuch, the Morlachs of Stefan Morgasich were not the ones guilty for watering their flocks in the lake without any permission. Vuch supported his statement by recalling a confrontation between two groups of Morlachs that ended with grave injuries for Stefan almost killing him. The Morlach attackers were former members of Stefan's *katun* ("*cum eo aliquos ex morlachis eius catune*") who, according to Vuch, at the moment of the altercation were living in Tuzain village situated on the property of noble *Iohannes Tobolovich* from Šibenik. Vuch supported the idea of a case of *vendetta* and argued that the 20 Morlachs from Tuzain village that attacked Stefan probably wanted to punish him for some sort of crime. Also, the witness suggested that since these Morlachs were not afraid to use swords, shields and knives ("*cum ensibus et scutis et cultellesiis*") to make their own justice, they might as well have been those who used the water of the lake without the right to do it.<sup>72</sup>

Another witness, however, seemed to confirm the fact that the Morlachs who used the water were from Stefan's *katun*. The 80-years old *Michael Scoravich* from *Daxlina* (Daslina; Raslina) said that the Morlachs always watered their flock in Cofza Lake. However, the old man said that they used the public share of the lake and his own share. He also mentioned that the Morlachs used the lake *Drazeviza* (probably part of the bigger lake) owned by the accuser and situated near Zaton and the fountain and another lake both known under the name *Guduchie*.<sup>73</sup>

Another witness, *Xitcho Matycich*, mentioned that in the past 20 years, since he had moved to the village of Raslina, he never saw any Morlachs using the lakes from the Zaton area or those near *Guduschie*. In contradiction with him, another witness said that since he had moved to the hinterland of Šibenik, ten years before, he saw the Morlachs and their flocks in that area several times.<sup>74</sup>

The last three testimonies are closer to the cause of the conflict and provide some explanations about it. They were collected on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January and belong to *Gregorie Xuxustich* from Komnjane, *Dobrovaç Domianich Damiani* and *Georgius Marich* from Raslina (Raxlina; Daslina). The first two testimonies were translated into the Venetian dialect by *Civitani*, and the last one by *David*. All three witnesses

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 222–226, no. 119.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem*.

lived for a long time in their villages and were actively involved in military activities in region (*Gregorie Xuxustich*, for example, was a soldier). They confessed that the Morlachs once used to water their sheep in Cofza Lake, but stopped doing it at some point. According to *Gregorie Xuxustich* that change occurred when the lake became public property of the villages surrounding it. *Dobrovaç Domianich Damiani* also recalled the fact that the Morlachs from the *katun* of Martin Morgasich, father of Stefan, used to water their sheep in the mentioned lake. More surprisingly is the testimony of *Georgius Marich*. He said that the Morlachs from the *katun* lead by Martin and afterwards by Stefan Morgasich had the right to use the lake and the pasturelands nearby for their sheep in exchange for 100 ducats they had to pay to the treasury of Šibenik. The Morlachs, however, had lost this right when (unfortunately, we do not have the details of the event) Iohannes Subchovaç and Paulus Brancich, both Morlachs from the *katun*, used it (the right) without paying.<sup>75</sup>

The matter was closed one year later with the document issued on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 1443<sup>76</sup>. The knight of Šibenik (responsible with police activities in the province), *Vlatchus Manzinus*, fined Stefan Morgasich with 5 *liras* for letting the Morlachs use pasturelands and water reserved for the local inhabitants. The fee had to be paid and they had to respect the verdict concerning the use the lands of the locals.

This case study is rich in clues about the relations between Morlachs and the inhabitants of the villages and cities of Dalmatia. They were perceived by the inhabitants of Dalmatian and by the Venetian officials as a separate and external group placed under the command of a leader called *katunar* who was responsible for the group's functioning and for applying their own justice among themselves.<sup>77</sup> However, to continue their activities and maintain their specific lifestyle, the Morlachs tried to respect the rules demanded by the authorities of the lands they stayed on during the winter. In exchange for the right to use a pastureland or a watercourse, they had to pay a specific amount of money (in this case 100 ducats) to the authorities or to the rightful owner, and were fined when refusing to do it. Additionally, the sources emphasize the fact that two types of pastureland existed in the Dalmatian hinterland: one that Morlachs could use and others that they were not allowed to enter. Most of those pastures, where the Morlachs were allowed to graze their flocks were communal territories, in the direct administration of urban authorities, while only a few pastures were on private lands. The latter could only be used with a public contract concluded with the owner(s) and with a promise for rent payment and other specific conditions.<sup>78</sup> Again, it is worth noticing the time of the year when the investigations of the conflict take place, during winter, mostly in January and February, some time after the Morlachs had descended from the mountains.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 316, no. 258.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibidem*.

The Morlachs' transhumance continued to cause damages and discontent for the inhabitants of Dalmatia also after the settlement of a common border with the Ottomans, and there were several occasions when these conflicts had to be solved by the Venetian Senate. It is the case of the inhabitants of Trogir who sent their representatives *Zuan Nicolo Andreis* and *Piero Claudio* to Venice in the winter of 1550. Among other complaints, they asked the Senate to interfere in stopping the Morlachs to arrive from beyond the border to feed their flocks in the crops of the locals. The answer of the Senate dates from 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 1550 and contains more information about the causes and the possible solutions to the matter.<sup>79</sup> According to the representatives of Trogir, the Morlachs descended from the mountains and ruined the partially public and partially private crops and pasturelands located in the area of the villages of *Mezlina* and *Drage*.<sup>80</sup> Worth noticing is the fact that the envoys of Trogir asked the Senate to order the count and captain not to allow anymore the Morlachs to stay in those places nor to let them use the lands and the pastures of those villages.<sup>81</sup> This fact suggests that Venetian official had a personal arrangement with the Morlachs; otherwise he would have been the one who would have asked the Senate for help. Moreover, the document points out that the Morlachs were not entirely guilty for the damages, since a previous decision of the Senate established that the Morlachs could use the lands of the Republic as long as they stayed at a greater distance from the city and assured the protection of the province in front of the attacks of the Ottoman *martolosi*.<sup>82</sup> Therefore the Morlachs were guilty only for not respecting their promise to stay away from the city, while the authorities had to be questioned for allowing their presence. Further on, the Senate asked the official from Trogir to send soldiers (*stratioti*) to remind to the Morlachs the fact that they had to stay in the border area, to freely use the pasturelands and to stay away from the crops and fields owned by the inhabitants of Trogir.<sup>83</sup>

Ten years later, the Venetians ended a similar situation quickly. In January 1561, the Venetian *rettor* of Trogir was advised by the Senate to improve its relations with the Ottomans.<sup>84</sup> The reason of the detriment of mutual relations was, again, the damages caused by Morlach flocks in Dalmatian fields. The Venetian official received the task to negotiate, with caution and diligence, with the Ottomans to recover the lands and to remove the Morlachs. Also, he was advised to forbid any Morlach attempt to work or exploit the Venetian possessions. These lands had to be worked, cultivated and rented by Dalmatians and not by Ottoman

<sup>79</sup> *ASVe-SDM*, fl. 8, p. 413–422.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>82</sup> *ASVe-SDM*, fl. 8, p. 413–422: “essi Murlachi essendo come guardie del suo territorio et che li perservavano dalle depredationi del Martolossi habbia permesso che depasceno li suoi aimali su questo territorio ma molto luntan dalla citta”.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>84</sup> *ASVe-SDM*, fl. 25.

subjects who, by refusing to pay taxes, caused only problems. The decision of the Senate had to be presented in public and written in the registers of the local chancellery for the use of the officials that would have followed.<sup>85</sup>

However, during the same month, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 1561, the Venetian Senate sent to all the officials from Dalmatia a series of regulations to be followed in cases of Morlach shepherd incursions.<sup>86</sup> These provisions were put together after some discussions with one of the Ottoman sanjak-beys<sup>87</sup> and a local voyvode on the subject of Morlach shepherds. As the Senate wanted to eliminate all possible pretexts for conflicts the officials received the task to order to oblige their Dalmatian subjects not to let Morlachs work their lands anymore. Neither Morlachs nor other Ottoman subjects were allowed to graze their animals or to rent lands from the subjects of the Serenissima, who in turn were also forbidden to lease lands from the Ottoman side of the border. The Senate even forbade renting lands to Morlachs in exchange for the fourth part of the products obtained at the end of the agricultural process. The decision was influenced by the experience of previous years that taught the Venetian officials that Morlachs and other Ottoman subjects were not capable to pay their debts. Accordingly, in order to avoid any other similar unpleasant situations, the lease of land was forbidden and the decision had to be put in the registers of the cities.<sup>88</sup>

These examples of Venetian responses to incursions of Morlach shepherds emphasize a peaceful and diplomatic approach to the issue. However, the local reactions and interactions usually reveal a diversity of other ways in preventing the damages done by the Morlachs' herds. Thus, in January 1555, the Venetian Senate answered to the complaints presented by the envoys of Šibenik.<sup>89</sup> The Senate decided to help the community of the Dalmatian city also because its official asked for advice and support in the protection of the territory. According to the Senate's decision, the official from Šibenik had to make some constructions and repairs at the tower newly built near the village named Dastria (Daslina) destined to serve as residence for the company of *stratioti* that will be sent to protect the surrounding area. The presence of this *stratioti* company in the region was necessary in order to stop the incursions by Morlachs and others and the damages resulting from it.<sup>90</sup> The expenses had to be paid with the money sent by Venice to the city's count and captain. The report presented by Filippo Bragadin in front of the Collegio in January 1555 offers further insight into the matter.<sup>91</sup> Among other issues from Dalmatia, Bragadin exposed to the ministers the matter of the Morlach incursion in

<sup>85</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>86</sup> *ASVe-SDM*, reg. 35, p. 158r-v.

<sup>87</sup> Probably the sanjak-bey of Klis, Ferhad beg.

<sup>88</sup> *ASVe-SDM*, reg. 35, p. 158r-v.

<sup>89</sup> *ASVe-SDM*, fl.14.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem*: *la qual guardia si possi oviar alli danni et incursioni che potessero esser fatti da Morlachi et altri*.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem*.

the lands of the village named Daslina. According to his report, the peasants living near the river, close to Daslina castle, suffered great damages because of the Morlachs who grazed their flocks in the peasants' crops and vineyards. Not only the peasants but also the officials themselves raised complaints since they aimed for the establishment of a guard of at least 10 men on horses in the area. In addition to the damages caused by Morlachs, the guard was needed to protect the border because of the close vicinity of the Ottomans. Interestingly enough, the explanation of the reason of the Morlachs incursions given by the count unveils that it is something absolutely normal that Morlachs grazed their flocks in Venetian lands during winter, since they used to do it already for a long time.<sup>92</sup> However, the count absolutely rejected the Morlachs' explanation, reminding the Senate of the case of those 33 villages from the hinterland of Šibenik claimed by the Morlachs (actually by the Ottoman regional authorities), arguing that they used to graze their flocks there and that they, according to their view, thus would also be the rightful owners of these villages. This is why the cavalry guard had to be enrolled in the tower placed between Dastria and Rachiniza, as they had to be in the heart of the territory in order to face and stop the Morlachs' incursions and plundering (*ladri morlacchi*).<sup>93</sup> The answer of the Senate arrived on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January, a full year later, in January 1556, establishing that 50 ducats could be used for the payment of the stratiots guard from Dastria (Daslina).<sup>94</sup> The positive answer was, once more justified by the utility of the guard in reducing the damages caused by Morlachs and their flocks in the crops of Venetian subjects<sup>95</sup>. However, this answer was issued thankful to the successor of Filippo Bragadin, Ioannes Garzonibus who at the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 1556 (1555 *more veneto*) reiterated the request through a letter sent to the Senate.

Yet, much more difficult proved to be the issue of the Morlach shepherd incursions when the Uskoks were involved. About a situation like this, we learn from a letter sent by the Venetian Senate to its bailo in Constantinople in February 1544 to answer at four of his letters.<sup>96</sup> Following the specific format of the official Venetian letters, the Senate praised the skilful negotiations with the Ottomans regarding the peace in the hinterland of Zara, in Cyprus and Zante, after which brought into discussion the situation of Dalmatia. In first place the Senate demanded the bailo to obtain from the sultan an interdiction for Rusten pasha and his brother to participate at the border negotiations given their lack of honesty. In the second place, the Senate informed the ambassador about an Uskok raid in the hinterland of Šibenik. Around 300 Uskoks crossed the border and attacked the lands and the subjects of the Serenissima, plundering the territory on a surface of

<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem*: dove hano pascolato altre volte.

<sup>93</sup> ASVe–SDM, fl. 14.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibidem*: e favorevole havendo bisogno questo territorio da quella banda di una guardia continua per ogni rispetto et massimo per i molti danni che connotti ... inferiscono i Morlacchi con i loro animali nelle terre seminate di questi poveri sudditi

<sup>96</sup> ASVe–SDS, fl. 20.

15 miles. Reaching their goal and being probably on their way back to the hinterland of Segna, the Uskoks encountered some Morlachs, Turkish subjects who had entered Venetian territory to graze their sheep. The Morlachs became prisoners of the Uskoks who also stole a part of their animals to the great inconvenience and restlessness of the regional authorities of the both Venice and the Ottoman Empire. The failure of the Venetian officials in protecting the Ottoman subjects from the Uskoks – a role assumed during the negotiation for the peace after the war of 1537–1540 and challenged by the frequency of the Uskoks raids both on land and on sea and by the reduced number of guards<sup>97</sup> – determined the Senate to inform the bailo about the events and to delegate him to expose the Venetian position seriously affected by this type of actions and its eagerness to do everything possible in obliterating these practices.

In July 1560, the Senate informed the Venetian ambassador at the Habsburg court about plunderings carried out by some subjects in the region of the mountain called *Morlacchia* (the Velebit mountains), in Lika, at that time Ottoman territory, where they stole some animals.<sup>98</sup> In the same time, these Habsburg subjects attacked and robbed some Istrian shepherds in the hinterland of Zadar, referred to as *Morlacchi Istriani*, descendants from the Morlachs brought and settled in the Venetian territory by Alvise Badoer in 1538.<sup>99</sup> The fact had been previously discussed with the Habsburg ambassador in Venice who recommended to send a letter to *Lencovich*, the captain of Segna, who would be able to tell more about what needs to be done in order to have the prey recovered and the prisoners released. An immediate audience to Ferdinand I (1556–1564) was required for the Venetian ambassador in order to accelerate the return of the stolen animals and to release the prisoners being firmly convinced that the emperor is also interested in the safety of the Venetian subjects and goods.<sup>100</sup>

However, also the Ottoman authorities undertook measures against the Morlach shepherds damaging Venetian lands in Dalmatia. To exemplify this, it is worth while to mention the letter sent by the Great Vizier to the *kadi* of Seraglio in January 1552 to inform him about some requests of the Venetian bailo in Constantinople, concerning the damages caused by Vlachs in the hinterland of Šibenik.<sup>101</sup> From this letter we learn that the bailo received letters from Šibenik, “*luoco di Venetiani*”, in which the city’s officials complained that, in the lands surrounding the city (“*in quelli luochi del detto castello*”), and in the villages and castles from the hinterland (“*et in le loro ville et castelli et luochi*”), some people called Vlachs used to come to spend the winter with their flocks of sheep and rams

<sup>97</sup> Tommaso Stefini, “Irregolarità e rapport di forza nella Dalmazia del cinquecento”, in *Studi Veneziani*, LIX, 2010, p. 634.

<sup>98</sup> *ASVe-SDS*, reg. 72, p. 19v.

<sup>99</sup> See Dana Caciur, “Migrații spontane și organizate în teritoriul Zarei (Zadar-ului) la mijlocul secolului al XVI-lea. Cazul Morlacilor Istrieni,” in *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 24, 2016, p. 73-104.

<sup>100</sup> *ASVe-SDS*, reg. 72, p. 19v.

<sup>101</sup> *ASVe-Bac*, b. 365.

(“*li huomini detti Vlachi veneno la invernata con le bestiame et castroni loro a pascolare in quelli luochi et terreni*”).<sup>102</sup> The discontent of the Venetian subjects was also caused by the fact that these Vlachs attacked and harmed them making impossible any understanding between them.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, the Morlachs cut the locals’ access to the mills along the Skradin River and the river itself.<sup>104</sup> On behalf of the Great Vizier, the *kadi* had to travel in the mentioned places in order to confirm or not the words of the bailo. In either case, the Great Vizier had to be immediately informed.<sup>105</sup>

### THE MORLACHS’ SEMI-NOMADIC LIFE IN VENETIAN DALMATIA

Analyzing the Venetian sources mentioning the Morlach shepherds’ presence in Dalmatia we find ourselves in front of a delicate yet to be researched topic. The multiple perspectives from which the research can be developed demands an increased attention to the meaning of *ethnicity* term, to the political context of a flexible border, to the permanent movement of people within the Balkan space and beyond its “limits”, to the social implications of an activity developed but moreover to the nature of sources used to argument for a pre-established hypothesis. The present study, din’t aimed to establish some methodologic groundbracking approaches. The intention was to emphasize some aspects that might help in understanding the background of the “uncertainties” and “difficulties” that lay behind the recovery of the history of the Morlachs.

Within the pages of this study, I shortly discussed the legal framework in which the Morlachs developed their shepherding activities in Venetian Dalmatia and the manner in which they created and developed their relationship with the inhabitants of Dalmatia. In order to reach this objective, I described the nature of the Morlach shepherds’ presence in Dalmatia before the settlement of the Venetian administration and also, I followed their activities during the political changes that affected the Dalmatian rural hinterland during the Fifteen and Sixteen centuries. Some important observations must therefore be made. When analyzing the presence of the Morlach shepherds in Venetian Dalmatia one must consider the fact that this activity is one among the many others in which they got involved during the chosen time frame. The Venetian sources equally spoake about Morlachs as immigrants or new settlers in abandoned lands/villages from the Venetian territories; they also were known as merchants, soldiers or disturbing factor (criminals, robbers, or

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem: et li nostri di Sebenico non volendo lasciargli et consentir a questo li predetti Vlachi danno delle botte et delle ferite alli nostri sudditti di Sebenico.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibidem: et piu di alcuni molini nostri ne tolleno le vie delle acque, si che le molini nostri restano deserti et a questo modo ne ha fatto sapere.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibidem.*

others). All of these aspects of the Venetian Morlach portray have a single connecting red line: the Morlachs arrive from territories that were not administrated by Venice. Accordingly, are understandable the efforts in controlling and exploiting the benefits offered by the Morlach shepherds, especially if these efforts were framed by a delicate diplomatic situation, as it happened especially after the Ottoman arrival at East of Dalmatia.

What remains for us, as traces useful for a history of the Morlachs shepherds from the Venetian Dalmatia, (so far, given the use of sources found only in the Venetian Archives) reside in a few regulations and laws, in renting contracts and conflictual situations that had to be solved by the Venetian officials. Nevertheless, these apparently few sources, mostly external given the lack of the Morlach voice, provide us with useful working hypothesis. First of all, we can identify a similarity between the rules established by the Venetian and Dalmatian authorities for the Morlachs shepherds with those applied for the Vlach shepherds in Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia or elsewhere. Therefore, it easily can be connected with the *jus valachicum* and might be used as argument for an exclusive Vlach/Romanic origin for the Morlachs. If the origin and the usual usage of rules and laws specific for the shepherding communities spread all over the Balkans and even further might be justified and obvious, the use of these regulations as argument for ethnicity has to be done with very much caution.

In the second place, the sources and examples presented in this study aim to be used as arguments for explaining the continuous presence of the Morlachs in Venetian territories and the survival, as an “enigmatic” figure, of these rural mobile people. The Morlach shepherds were present in Dalmatia during the winter months. In this time slot they interacted with the locals to contract some lands in rent, to pay some obligations, to take sheep in their care or became subject of a conflict that has to be solved by the authorities. Moreover, the Morlachs were Ottoman subjects and were connected with the Ottoman authorities by some fiscal obligations, especially since during the winter months they “own” lands. As long as the Morlachs were identified in the documents as foreign subjects they are granted informally with the freedom to disobey and to refuse the payment of the debts. By doing so and by maintaining their closed/familial organization the Morlach provide us with an amazing example of a community that managed to avoid total assimilation and settlement. The case does not apply for the Morlachs colonized in the Venetian territories and recognized as Venetian subjects, but then they were not semi-nomadic shepherds anymore.