

# Border-Crossings and Migration in the Croatian and Slavonian Military Frontiers in the Early Modern Period

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**Border-Crossings  
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## **Border-Crossings and Migration in the Croatian and Slavonian Military Frontiers in the Early Modern Period**

Significant geographical discoveries and the emergence of modern cartography, when combined with the concept of a territorial state, brought meaningful changes how borders were conceived during the early modern period. A diffuse image that had prevailed from antiquity to the late Middle Ages was replaced by a clear idea of a fixed border (Baramova, 2010). The role of the Military Frontier as a wider borderland was two-fold: It served as a buffer zone against the Ottoman Empire for the Habsburg hereditary lands and the still unconquered Croatian territories, and it was also an area of intense migration, especially for the Vlach population from the southeastern Dinaric region. After the suppression of the Ottomans and the first international demarcation of the Croatian territories in 1699/1700, migration to the Military Frontier increased, both from the central European area and from the southern and southwestern parts of the Balkan Peninsula. This paper discusses the role and perception of this borderland and especially of Croatia's Military Frontier. Through interpretation and explanation of several typical examples of border crossings in this area, both before and after the first official demarcation in 1699, the paper will attempt to answer the question of how the migration processes influence the development and strengthening of the early modern state and its institutions.

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### **KEYWORDS:**

border, demarcation, migration, Military Frontier, Habsburgs, Croatian Border, Slavonian Border, border control, passports, checkpoints

## Introduction

In the introduction to the book *Menschen und Grenzen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, the German historians W. Schmale and R. Stauber<sup>1</sup> claim that it was the early modern period in Europe that shaped modern notions of borders as spatial geopolitical markers.<sup>2</sup> In the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, borders were promoted as an instrument of order in political relations. The same basic concept has remained until the present day: Borders are still considered to be not only an expedient means of demarcating and controlling state territory but also as a powerful instrument of foreign policy that influences relations between sovereign states. Arguments over political jurisdiction and precise demarcation between states are not rare events in international relations. Although most of these arguments are resolved through agreements, there are still instances of territorial claims and border disputes that result in armed conflict. In modern Europe, administrative measures to facilitate the mobility of people and goods (such as those introduced by the Schengen Agreement)<sup>3</sup> are still sometimes compromised by occasional reinstatements of the principle of strict border control established in the early modern period. In this paper the focus will be on the administrative and political function of borders from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, which was a period of intense migration both into and within the Croatian and Slavonian Military Frontiers.<sup>4</sup> Special attention will be given to how borders were perceived by migrants and the authorities in that area.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Croatian territory became a place of interaction and conflict between the three great powers of the period: the Venetian Republic, the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Ottoman Empire. These empires attempted to resolve their conflicting political, territorial, military, and economic interests in southeastern Europe and along the coast of the Adriatic Sea. During the sixteenth century, successful Ottoman incursions into central Europe brought large parts of the Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom under Ottoman rule in the sixteenth century. The remaining parts of the Croatian historical lands were either under Venetian jurisdiction or were ruled by the Habsburgs.

In the sixteenth century, the Habsburg rulers and the estates of Inner Austria began organizing and financing a military frontier in Croatian

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<sup>1</sup> Reinhard Stauber and Wolfgang Schmale, "Einleitung: Menschen und Grenzen in der Frühen Neuzeit," in *Menschen und Grenzen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Wolfgang Schmale and Reinhard Stauber (Berlin: Berlin Verl. A. Spitz, 1998), 21.

<sup>2</sup> According to the authors, researchers of the period have been focused for far too long on physical boundaries in space and their political/legal and political/economic functions. It was not until a few decades ago that historians turned their attention to the complexity of the border concept and started to understand borders in a much broader sense than merely as an administrative or political instrument. Eventually, the social, economic and cultural aspects, among others, of this rich concept—often referred to as "invisible borders"—began to be appreciated and explored. Schmale and Stauber, "Einleitung," 16-18.

<sup>3</sup> On the integration of European countries into an economic and political union and the concept of "Europe without borders" see Emil Heršak and Sanja Lazanin, "Granice u Evropi," in *Etničnost, stabilnost Europe u 21. stoljeću: položaj i uloga Hrvatske*, ed. Silva Mežnarić (Zagreb: IMIN-Naklada Jesenski i Turk-Hrvatsko sociološko društvo, 2002): 149-54.

<sup>4</sup> In Croatian and Austrian historiography, this part of the Military Frontier is referred to by a single, hyphenated term and is often viewed as a single entity.

territory alongside the Ottoman Empire. In the middle of the sixteenth century, this zone in Croatia extended from the Adriatic town of Senj, across the Kapela mountains and the river Kupa, and through the western part of Slavonia up to the Drava River. Until the early eighteenth century, the Military Frontier in Croatia was not organized according to a territorial principle nor was it precisely demarcated. Strategic defensive positions were secured by individual fortifications with garrisons made up of regular and irregular soldiers stationed at fortresses, guard posts, watchtowers, etc. This entire structure was established to protect the remaining Croatian lands (*reliquiae reliquiarum regnorum Dalmatiae, Croatiae et Slavoniae*) and the Inner Austrian lands from Ottoman invasion. The old burgs of Žumberak, Brinje, Slunj, and Modruš, among others, were used as border fortifications. When the Long Turkish War ended at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the frontier along Ottoman-controlled territory stabilized. The regular and irregular soldiers were organized into captaincies and voivodships (*vojvodstva*).<sup>5</sup> The Military Frontier in Croatia in this period consisted of two parts: the Slavonian Border (*Windische Gränitz/Grenze*, with headquarters in Varaždin and later called the Varaždin Generalate), and the Croatian Border (*Kroatische und Meer Grenze*) with headquarters at the fortress of Karlovac, built in 1579 and later called the Karlovac Generalate).<sup>6</sup> The Inner Austrian estates provided funds to maintain the paid army in the Military Frontier.<sup>7</sup>

### Archival Sources and Approach

There is a wide range of historiographic approaches to the border phenomenon, and each focuses on a specific category of borders ranging from the physical (visible) to the linguistic, cultural, or mental (connected to human experience). An interdisciplinary field of research focused on borders as complex spatial and social phenomena and on their meanings and interpretations is known as Border Studies.<sup>8</sup> The focus of this paper,

<sup>5</sup> Captaincies were military defence units under the command of an officer who usually came from the ranks of the Inner Austrian or Croatian nobility, and consisted of infantry (*teutsche Knechte*) and cavalry, forts, burgs, and defensive structures. Voivodships were infantry units (*haramije*) that were called up if and when appropriate. They consisted of soldiers and commanders from the the local population and newly arrived settlers. For a more detailed description see Karl Kaser, *Freier Bauer und Soldat: die Militarisierung der agrarischen Gesellschaft an der Kroatisch-slavonischen Militärgrenze (1535–1881)* (Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1997), 114–17.

<sup>6</sup> The Croatian and Slavonian border areas were parts of a wider military border defense system for the Croatian–Hungarian Kingdom against the Ottoman frontier. In the second half of the sixteenth century, in addition to these two districts of the Military Frontier, four other sections formed the Hungarian–Croatian border with the Ottomans: the Hungarian Border from the Drava River to Lake Balaton, the Hungarian Border from Lake Balaton to the Danube River, a Border that included the Mining Towns, and the Upper Hungarian Border. Nataša Štefanec, *Heretik Njegova Veličanstva: povijest o Jurju IV. Zrinskom i njegovu rodu* (Zagreb: Barbat, 2001), 69.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Sanja Lazanin and Nataša Štefanec, "Habsburg Military Conscription and Changing Realities of the Triplex Confinium (16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Centuries)," in *Constructing Border Societies on the Triplex Confinium*, ed. Drago Roksančić and Nataša Štefanec (Budapest: Central European University, 2000), 96–100.

<sup>8</sup> On the interdisciplinary approach to the borders see Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, "Theorizing Borders: An interdisciplinary Perspective," *Geopolitics* 10, no. 4 (December 2005): 633–49.

however, will be on the administrative and political formation of borders as an instrument of international politics.

The concept of borders is indispensable when studying the origins of modern statehood. According to Baramova, this notion of a border as a line dividing entities emerged in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries alongside the concept of a territorial state.<sup>9</sup> The political conception of borders in the seventeenth century was based on the idea of "natural borders" (*limites naturelles, fines naturales*) derived from topographic features.<sup>10</sup> In addition to a physical/spatial dimension, the principle of linearity was introduced as a means of visualizing borders. In early modern Europe, an ideology of the state took root that emphasized the roles of state territory and absolutism. Consequently, borders became a way to demarcate this "natural" territory and supply it with ideological content.<sup>11</sup>

Considering the importance of the border concept for state authorities between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, it is no wonder that the idea of natural borders began to be applied in certain legal conceptions during this period. Therefore, in this paper I will attempt to show the connection between space and borders within the context of the extensive migrations that took place within the part of Croatian state territory under Habsburg rule during the early modern period. The goal here is to identify changes in how the state authorities treated borders before and after they were officially demarcated. The two questions I will focus on are (1) Was the gradual establishment of administrative border-crossing procedures within Croatian territory a consequence of formal/legal demarcations between states at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries?; and (2) How did these procedures affect the large amount of migration recorded in this area? Furthermore, experiences and perceptions of the border will be presented, insofar as the historical sources allow, that can be attributed to migrants passing from territory controlled by one authority to territory controlled by another before and after the border demarcation that was agreed to under the Treaty of Karlowitz.

Although there are numerous written sources available regarding this topic, I primarily made use of Austrian sources for this study, and most were gathered from archives in Zagreb, Vienna, and Graz that contained data on migrations and border crossings from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. This analysis uses narrative sources such as various reports, letters, orders, and others that circulated among the central military authorities in Vienna and Graz and the local commanders stationed at specific

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<sup>9</sup> For border demarcation, different topographic features are used such as watercourses, mountains, vegetation, etc., or man-made landmarks in the landscape such as forts, various strategic military installations, settlements, or roads. Maria Baramova, "Grenzvorstellungen im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit," in *Europäische Geschichte Online* (EGO), ed. Institut für Europäische Geschichte (IEG), (Mainz; 2010-12-03): 2-3. URL: <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/baramovam-2010-de> (visited 17. September 2020).

<sup>10</sup> Wolfgang Schmale, "Grenze' in der deutschen und französischen Frühneuzeit," in *Menschen und Grenzen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Wolfgang Schmale and Reinhard Stauber (Berlin: Berlin Verl. A. Spitz, 1998), 57-58; Baramova, "Grenzvorstellungen," 5.

<sup>11</sup> Schmale, "Grenze'," 59; Baramova, "Grenzvorstellungen," 6.

posts along the Croatian and Slavonian Military Frontiers during this period. The archival sources this paper draws from are of exclusively Habsburg provenance, so the border and its administrative role will be approached from the perspective of the Croatian state territory under Habsburg rule.<sup>12</sup>

### The Military Frontier in Croatia and Slavonia: Terminology and Organization

*Vojna krajina* and *Vojna granica* are two Croatian names for the Military Frontier (*Militärgrenze*, which also has some other variations in German sources) that are used interchangeably; however, contemporary Croatian historiography prefers the term *Vojna krajina*. The *Vojna krajina* (Military Frontier) was significant for two reasons. First, was a “margin” or a “border zone” (in Croatian, *krajina* or *krajište* designates the rim or the edge of an area) with a particular legal status and where the way of life and how things were organized differed significantly from that in the interior. Here, the border with the Ottoman Empire was by no means a stable one. Raids by groups of irregulars from both sides of the border (as part of strategy of *Kleinkrieg* or “Little War”) were common occurrences between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries. It should be added, however, that despite this border zone being an area of direct and ongoing conflict, there was still a great deal of cross-border activity.<sup>13</sup>

In its second meaning, the term Military Frontier indicates a demarcation. The first official border between the three great empires of southeast Europe—the Habsburg Monarchy, the Venetian Republic, and the Ottoman Empire—took place subsequent to the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699.

<sup>12</sup> The early modern European absolutist states had a significantly different understanding of the border concept than the Ottoman Empire. In northern, western, and central Europe, the concept of the border changed gradually from “diffuse” to “linear,” while in the Ottoman Empire, which ruled in Southeast Europe, the notion of stable borders was practically unknown until the late seventeenth century. The Ottomans considered borders to be changing and mutable entities that were dependant on military power. Even at the end of the seventeenth century they resisted forming a demarcation commission in accordance with the 1699 Treaty of Karlowitz. For more on understanding the border from the Ottoman perspective see Baramova, “Grenzvorstellungen,” 11-17; Maria Pia Pedani, “The Border from the Ottoman Point of View,” in *Tolerance and Intolerance on the Triplex Confinium. Approaching the ‘Other’ on the Borderlands Eastern Adriatic and beyond 1500-1800*, ed. Egidio Ivetic and Drago Roksandić (Padova: Cleup, 2007), 195-214.

<sup>13</sup> Several recent studies have recently been published on the so-called little war that took place along the border with the Ottoman Empire. These studies provide well documented examples of cooperation not only between the inhabitants of the border region but also between military commanders of the three involved powers: the Ottomans, Venetians, and Habsburgs. For example, see Marko Šarić, “Inter-confessional Relations and (In)tolerance among the Vlachs,” in Ivetic and Roksandić, *Tolerance and Intolerance on the Triplex Confinium*, 181-94; Snježana Buzov, “Friendly Letters. The Early 18th Century Correspondence between Venetian and Ottoman Authorities in Dalmatia,” in Ivetic and Roksandić, *Tolerance and Intolerance on the Triplex Confinium*, 215-21; Wendy Bracewell, “Frontier blood-brotherhood and the Triplex Confinium,” in Roksandić and Štefanec, *Constructing Border Societies on the Triplex Confinium*, 29-45; Elisabetta Novello, “Crime on the Border: Venice and the Morlacchi in the Eighteenth Century,” in Roksandić and Štefanec, *Constructing Border Societies on the Triplex Confinium*, 57-73; Drago Roksandić, “Stojan Janković in the Morean war, or of Uskoks, Slaves and Subjects,” in Roksandić and Štefanec, *Constructing Border Societies on the Triplex Confinium*, 239-88.



The point where the three frontiers met was called the *Triplex Confinium*, and the borders were determined by an official commission. On the Austrian side, the commission was led by Count Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, and the task of mapping the border was assigned to Johann Christoph Müller, an Austrian military engineer and one of the best cartographers of his time. He was also assisted by the Croatian historian, poet, and lexicographer Pavao Ritter Vitezović, who represented the Croatian Estates.<sup>14</sup> On the ground, the border was marked by something natural, such as a tree, or something artificial, such as an earth pile (referred to in the sources as *Hunken*). Whenever possible, natural formations, known as natural borders, such as rivers, streams, or mountains were used for demarcation.

Due to the the anti-Ottoman wars fought the end of the seventeenth century and the expansion of the Habsburg territories to the east, the Military Frontier underwent significant reorganization. During the first half of the eighteenth century, the region was territorialized: Captaincies and voivodships were abolished, and the entire Habsburg frontier, from the Adriatic Sea to the Carpathian Mountains, was divided into regiments with under one central command (*Generalcommando*) with local commands—the Karlovac, Varaždin, Banal and Slavonian sections—responsible for both civil and military matters. For the military situation on the Croatian side of the border, this change was momentous. During the sixteenth century the entire Kingdom of Croatia had been in a defensive position against Ottomans, but now the newly organized buffer zone played an active role in repelling Ottoman incursions.

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### **Migrations to the Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia**

The Military Frontier served as a defence for both the Austrian hereditary lands and the unconquered areas in the Kingdom of Croatia;

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<sup>14</sup> During this demarcation, the first topographic maps of Croatian territory were created in 24 sections. Cf. Borna Fürst Bjeliš, "Geographic Perceptions of the Triplex Confinium and State Power at the Beginning of the 18th Century," in Roksanđić and Štefanec, *Constructing Border Societies on the Triplex Confinium*, 206; Mirela Slukan-Altić, "Razvoj i osobine habsburške vojne kartografije," in *Hrvatska na tajnim zemljovidima XVIII. i XIX. stoljeća: Srijemska županija*, ed. Mirko Valentić (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2001), 9.

however it was also an area of migration. The migrations of Vlachs<sup>15</sup> from the Dinaric areas in the north were particularly large. From the fifteenth century onwards, Ottoman incursions that brought widespread pillaging and destruction and also the devastating battles on the Balkan Peninsula provoked an extensive migration of the indigenous population that mainly sought refuge in neighbouring countries. Croatian nobles moved from the area of the kingdom exposed to Turkish attacks to safer areas in the north (the Kupa River and then to Hungary, Carniola, the Venetian Republic, etc.), taking their serfs with them to work in their northern possessions. As Štefanec has shown, these migrations induced a “shift” of the ethnonym Croat to the north.<sup>16</sup> The name Croatia spread to the areas across the Kupa River belonging to the Kingdom of Slavonia, which resulted in the two kingdoms, Croatia and Slavonia, actually merging.

The population of the southeastern Dinaric regions under Ottoman rule, which was also on the move, was directed to Christian territory and along the Croatian along border with the Ottomans. In archival sources these migrants are known under various names: *prebjezi* (refugees), *Vlasi* (Vlachs, in the sources as Wallachen or Valachi), *uskoci* (Uskoks), etc. The authorities in the Military Frontier permitted the settlement of refugees, but settlements were not always formally planned out or directed. For example, once a migrant family in the Karlovac Generalate obtained formal permission from the authorities, it was up to the family to find a suitable place to settle. As a result, the settlements were spread out across the Generalate, which was detrimental in terms of defence.<sup>17</sup> In the early to mid-eighteenth century, various plans and projects to reorganize the Generalate were proposed that mentioned the necessity of building small wooden forts (*palanka*) to accommodate these newcomers. These structures were built next to important fortifications and as close to the border as possible. A fitting example of such a settlement built in the seventeenth century

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<sup>15</sup> The term Vlach has two meanings in Croatian historiography. As an ethnonym, it is used to designate a group of Roman origin; otherwise, it denotes a group that enjoyed a special legal and socio-economic status in the Balkan regions under Ottoman rule. Croatian medieval sources use the terms Vlach or Morlacs for the nomadic herders of the Dalmatian hinterland. According to some historians, the term Vlach or personal names of Vlach origin have been mentioned in medieval sources for Croatian history since the tenth century, which then became more frequent, especially from the fourteenth century. Cf. Ivan Botica, „Prilog istraživanju najstarijeg spomena vlašskog imena u hrvatskoj historiografiji,” *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest* 37, no. 1 (October 2005): 35-37. In the early modern period, the name Vlach appeared frequently in sources reporting on the population movements from area conquered by the Ottomans to Croatian territories under the Habsburg rule. More simply, the term designated various groups, Orthodox and Catholic, given a special status by the Ottomans. After moving to the Habsburg side, these groups settled in the Military Border and received land in exchange for military service. Considering the abundance of historiographical works on Vlachs published since the nineteenth century, it is sufficient to mention a single monograph providing an overview of such sources. See Zef Mirdita, *Vlasi u historiografiji* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2004).

<sup>16</sup> For more on this see Nataša Štefanec, *Država ili ne: ustroj Vojne krajine 1578. godine i hrvatsko-slavonski staleži u regionalnoj obrani i politici* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2011), 18-19, 455; Zoran Velagić, “Razvoj hrvatskog etnonima na sjeverno-hrvatskim prostorima ranog novovjekovlja,” *Migracijske teme* 13, no. 1-2 (June 1997): 43.

<sup>17</sup> On the settlement of the Karlovac Generalate see Kaser, *Freier Bauer*, 176-87.

for Vlach settlers comes from the Slovenian polymath Johann Weichard Valvasor in his famous book *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*.<sup>18</sup>

Habsburg military commanders encouraged people in Ottoman-controlled territories to resettle on the Croatian, or rather Habsburg, side of the border. Many of these migrants and refugees became military frontiersmen (*graničari/krajišnici* or *Grenzer*). In return for military service they and their families received a portion of land, usually from a former nobleman's estate. Croatian noblemen complained bitterly against the settlement of Uskoks, Vlachs, or other refugees in the Kingdom of Croatia. Over time, a rivalry developed between the Austrian military authorities and the Croatian nobility over who had jurisdiction over the refugees arriving from the Ottoman side. These disputes concerned the exploitation of refugees for military purposes and their potential status as feudal subjects of the Croatian nobility.<sup>19</sup>

Due to the victory over the Ottomans by the end of the seventeenth century, the Habsburg Monarchy managed to expel them from Hungarian territory and push them out to the south of large parts of Croatian territory. The main migration flows to the Croatian lands and the Croatian and Slavonian Military Borders in the following period came from the south. For the most part, it was Christian Slavs, both Catholic and Orthodox, who migrated from Venetian and Ottoman possessions. At the same time, there was a wave of migration from the north made up of Germans, Slovaks, Hungarians, Czechs, and others moving from central Europe to the areas evacuated by the Ottomans.

The issues regarding the border and its instability due to border skirmishes are important, but so too was the relationship between the borders and the spaces they encompassed, especially because the former gives the latter its identity. From this perspective, the most interesting issue is that of the wider implications of border crossings during the ongoing wars between the Ottomans and the European Christian powers. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, population movements, primarily of Vlachs, from the Ottoman side to previously abandoned lands on the Christian side brought changes in social status and a need to adapt to a new normative framework and socioeconomic situation. When migrant families moved to new places, they brought with them their way of life, language, cultural patterns, and religious practices.

### Ways of Crossing the Border

To determine whether there is a difference between the ways in which migrants moved to the Croatian and Slavonian Military Frontiers before and after the first official demarcation in 1699, there are several different sources and notions to be considered. What did border crossings mean in Croatia during the broader clashes between the Ottomans and Christendom and during the ongoing border raids of the sixteenth and seventeenth

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<sup>18</sup> Johann Weichard Freiherr von Valvasor, *Die Ehre des Herzogthums Krain*, vol. IV/XII, Laibach-Nürnberg, 1689 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Rudolfswerth, 1877-79), 98.

<sup>19</sup> Kaser, *Freier Bauer*, 75-78, 131-33; Štefanec, *Država*, 68-69.

centuries? Examples from archival sources will be used to illustrate the change of attitude regarding the border as a spatial marker.

1) *Before the first official demarcation and without a standardized process*

As was previously mentioned, those fleeing the Ottoman Empire were mainly labelled in historical documents Vlachs or Uskoks. Thus, in 1530 a group of about fifty Christian families from various areas under Ottoman rule<sup>20</sup> gathered near Bihać, under the leadership of the chief (*knez*) Stipković and crossed to the Croatian side. These migrants, typically referred in archival sources to as Uskoks,<sup>21</sup> were directed toward Žumberak, an area along the contemporary Croatian–Slovenian border in the northwestern part of modern-day Croatia. In Croatian, the word *uskok*, derived from the Croatian verb *uskočiti* (to jump) designates a displaced person who has “jumped” into a new territory.<sup>22</sup> Throughout the sixteenth century, new Uskok groups from the Ottoman and the Venetian controlled areas continued to arrive in Croatian territory under the Habsburg rule. Thus, in the period from 1538 to 1540, a further group of about 300–400 families migrating from the Ottoman-controlled areas (more precisely from areas around the town of Srb and the Cetina river valley) to the Croatian side, were settled in Žumberak to join other members of their ethnic group who were already there.<sup>23</sup> Although the Austrian authorities encouraged migration from Ottoman territory, there is archival data indicating that the authorities themselves, along with the local population were suspicious of these newcomers, who until recently had fought for the Ottomans.

Important information about how immigrants influenced the local population comes from a document sent in 1570 from the office of the *vicedom* in Carniola to the Archduke Charles in Graz. It discusses the possibility of settling thirty Uskok families in the empty estate of Lož (Laaß) in the southeastern part of Carniola and raises the question of how this would affect the inhabitants already living there.<sup>24</sup> According to the source, the elderly subjects expressed their concern that settling newcomers in the

<sup>20</sup> These immigrants came from the area around Srb on the upper Una, then from the area on the middle course of the river Unac and from Glamoč in Herzegovina. Kaser, *Freier Bauer*, 67.

<sup>21</sup> They were called in the documents *Rasciani Voskoky*, *Valachi Uskoky*, *Pribegi*, *Vsskhokhen*. See Herm. I. Bidermann, “Zur Geschichte der Uskokken in Krain,” *Archiv für Heimatskunde: Geschichtsforschungen, Quellen, Urkunden und Regesten*, ed. Franz Schumi, vol. 2 (Laibach: 1884/1887), 175, 188; Kaser, *Freier Bauer*, 68.

<sup>22</sup> For more on the first occurrence of the name “Uskoks” for armed groups of refugees passing from the Ottoman to the Christian side see Catherine Wendy Bracewell, *Senjski uskoci. Piratstvo, razbojništvo i sveti rat na Jadranu u šesnaestom stoljeću*, trans. Nenad Popović and Mario Rossini (Zagreb: Barbat, 1997), 39.

<sup>23</sup> Kaser, *Freier Bauer*, 74. In the charter of King Ferdinand I from 1538, granting privileges to the newly arrived families, these migrants and their leaders were referred to as “esse nonnullos capitaneos et voivodas Seruianos seu Rascianos,” see Radoslav Lopašić, *Spomenici Hrvatske krajine*, 2 vols. (Zagreb: JAZU, 1884), 1: 5–6; also, the relevant correspondence between King Ferdinand I and Croatian noblemen refers to the same group of settlers as “Sirfen” or “Rasciani siue Seruiani,” cf. Emilij Laszowski, *Habsburški spomenici Kraljevine Hrvatske, Dalmacije i Slavonije*, vol. 2 (Zagreb, 1916) (= Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum Meridionalium, vol. 38), 409–11.

<sup>24</sup> Austria-Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (A-StLA), Meillerakten, Kriegswesen, XIII-o-2, January 30, 1570.

fields of Babno and Cerknica could lead to shortages of hay and cattle, which would then force at least the half of the local peasants to leave. In addition, there were fears that they might sometimes go over “to the other side” and pass along information to the Turks.

A report from 1598 from General Baron Sigismund von Herberstein, the commander in Varaždin, to the authorities in Graz claims the opposite—that the Vlachs who had settled in the Varaždin Generalate were still loyal, and that another 500 Vlachs had fled to the Habsburg side that year. Herberstein disagrees with the authorities’ decision not to accept any more Vlachs on the grounds of them being unreliable. To support his claim, he cites examples of conflicts with the Turks, during which the Vlachs had proven to be much more reliable than some military commanders were eager to portray them.<sup>25</sup>

However, an extensive 1626 report by the Inner Austrian Commission to the authorities in Graz on the situation in the Žumberak captaincy indicates that this mistrust of newcomers continued during the following period.<sup>26</sup> The report expresses fears about the possibility of Uskoks and their priests passing information to the Turks during their visits to the Ottoman-controlled territories.<sup>27</sup> As a precautionary measure, the commission proposed expelling Orthodox priests from the Žumberak captaincy. Another potential source of instability mentioned in the report was that settling Orthodox refugees in predominantly Catholic areas under the jurisdiction of a Catholic ruler created issues of confessional demarcation and religious conflict. The Habsburg authorities tried to avert this problem by converting the Orthodox Vlachs to the Catholic faith and preventing new of “Vlach” priests from arriving, by land or sea, from Ottoman-controlled territories. However, as the commission warned, this plan was to be executed with great caution, considering the Uskok people were very much attached to their priests and, if there was heavy-handed conduct by the authorities, they could start a rebellion and return to the Ottoman side. So, apart from documenting attempts by the Austrian government to alleviate confessional tensions by bringing the Vlach Orthodox population into union with the Catholic Church, this document is clear evidence of what kind of issues uncontrolled migration from Ottoman territory presented for the authorities in Vienna.

Another recorded case of transborder migration in the seventeenth century is the relocation of Vlachs from the Ottoman-controlled Lika and Krbava regions, and specifically to a village called Brlog in Gušićevo polje. The relocation took place in 1611 at the initiative of the military authorities and the Vlachs themselves and with the approval of the Archduke in Graz and King Matthias personally. According to this source, Sigismund Gusić, a captain in Senj, informed Archduke Ferdinand of the request from the Vlachs from Lika and Krbava to be moved Austrian-controlled territory along with their wives, children, and belongings. The request was given to the captain by a priest who conveyed the wishes of the Vlach leaders (*knezovi*). Before

<sup>25</sup> Lopašić, *Spomenici* 1: 266.

<sup>26</sup> A-StLA-Meillerakten-Kriegswesen, XIII-o-16, fol. 227, November, 1626.

<sup>27</sup> In this source, the settlers are called both Uskoks (*Vsskhokhen*, *das Vsskhokhische Volkh*) and Vlachs (*Wallachen*). Several names are used for their priests: *grüggische*, *walachische*, *vskhokhische* or *schismatische Pröester*.

approving the request, the Austrian side stipulated that the Vlachs were not to be provided with any kind of assistance in freeing themselves from Turkish servitude. They were expected to resolve this themselves without any kind of involvement from the Habsburg authorities, who were eager to maintain peace with the Turks.<sup>28</sup>

This traditional way for crossing the border and founding settlements with permission from military commanders also took place during the Vienna War. In August 1690, two Vlach leaders, Jovan Drakulić and Milin Lalić, were permitted to settle thirty Vlach "houses" each in the community of Korenica, in the recently liberated parts of Lika and Krbava.<sup>29</sup>

It should be noted the terms "border" and "border crossing" were not actually mentioned in these sources. In the modern sense, these concepts did not even exist; instead of administrative borders, there were forts, towers, watchtowers (*Tschardacks*), and guard posts that protected the territory from attacks and invasions by the Ottoman army. Typical phrases used to indicate a transfer of territorial control from one ruler to another, or an intention to do so, were referred to respectively as "to exit with force" (*mit gewalt herauskommen*) and "to be intent on settling" (*niderzulassen und anzusiedeln vorhabens sein*).<sup>30</sup> It was also typically said that the commanders of the Military Frontier brought Vlach/Uskok families "out of Turkey," or the "Vlachs had fled Ottoman territory," or the "Turks jumped over" (*der heruber entsprungenen Turckhen*).<sup>31</sup>

After the Ottomans were forcibly expelled in the eighteenth century, migrations from central to southeast Europe affected the newly established parts of the Military Frontier. These migrations were followed by those from areas in the south and southwest under Ottoman and Venetian rule.

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## 2) *Regulating border crossings: Border administration in the Habsburg Monarchy*

Strict administrative regulation of border crossings did not come about immediately after the Treaty of Passarowitz and the demarcations of 1699 and 1718. A report from 1709 by Count Joseph Rabatta, a commanding general in Karlovac, tells of extensive population movements into the Military Border.<sup>32</sup> This was not surprising considering how impossible it was to effectively control who crossed the border, when they crossed, and why.

Unlike in previous periods, in the eighteenth century, the central government was eager to control and regulate its population through its newly established professional administration in order to better govern and ensure common prosperity. As an important part of this ambition, travel and

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<sup>28</sup> Lopašić, *Spomenici 2*: 4-7. Other Vlach crossings followed. Thus, the inhabitants of four Vlach villages from the Ottoman-controlled area moved to the Croatian, or rather the Austrian side. Altogether twelve families (households), including women, children, livestock and other property, made their way from Podlapac (on the Ottoman side) and arrived in Otočac (on the Croatian side), expressing their wish to finally settle in the village of Brlog. The relocation was approved by the Archduke and carried out by the military commanders.

<sup>29</sup> Lopašić, *Spomenici 2*: 416.

<sup>30</sup> Lopašić, *Spomenici 2*: 5.

<sup>31</sup> A-StLA, Meillerakten, Kriegswesen, XIII-o-2, January 30, 1570

<sup>32</sup> Austria-Kriegsarchiv-Hofkriegsrat (A-KA-HKR), Expedit, 1710-VI-219.

migration were also supervised and regulated—at least to the extent to it was possible—both within and across state borders. In so doing, the Habsburg administration sought to distinguish between foreign and domestic subjects. Consequently, the state increasingly assumed a role previously reserved for local institutions (provinces), the Church, nobility, guilds or other social agents responsible for controlling and regulating people's whereabouts.<sup>33</sup>

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Habsburg central authorities paid a great deal of attention to travelling groups and foreigners, which led to systematic regulation of population movements. At first, this process took place in the border zones and the state capital but was soon extended to all state territory. Although travel documents or passports (*Pass*) had also been used in earlier periods, they were not individualized nor did they indicate citizenship. Instead they were used primarily for the bearer's personal protection.<sup>34</sup> This all changed in the second half of the eighteenth century.

During the first half of the eighteenth century, the Habsburg Monarchy paid particular attention to the movements of Ottoman subjects, primarily because Ottoman merchants enjoyed important privileges (low custom tariffs) after the 1718 Treaty of Passarowitz that enabled them to attain a significant trade influence in the monarchy in subsequent period.<sup>35</sup> Ottoman subjects had to have passports issued by their local authorities, a health certificate (*Sanitäts-Zertifikat*), and an Austrian certificate (*Passbrief*) proving they properly crossed the border. The last one was necessary because Austrian officials registered each person entering Habsburg lands. By issuing these documents, the Habsburg administration was able not only to monitor goods imported from the Ottoman side but also to provide protection for Ottoman traders. Thus, by monitoring the movements of Ottoman merchants (especially between the 1750s and 1760s), the authorities were also able to control their activities.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> More in Jovan Pešalj, "Putovanje i nadzor u Habsburškoj monarhiji u vreme prosvetiteljstva," in *Hrvati i Srbi u Habsburškoj Monarhiji u 18. stoljeću: interkulturni aspekti 'prosvijećene' modernizacije*, ed. Drago Roksančić (Zagreb: FF Press, 2014) 187–88.

<sup>34</sup> Pešalj, "Putovanje i nadzor," 190–91.

<sup>35</sup> Austrian engineering officer Maximilian von Traux wrote in his work *Festungen Dalmatiens und Albaniens nebst vorliegenden Inseln und Beschreibung* (Zadar, 1805) about the provisions of the 1718 Treaty of Passarowitz. These provisions were extremely favorable for Ottoman merchants and they were still in force in the areas of the formerly Venetian Dalmatia at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Traux's treaty is kept in the National Library of Serbia in Belgrade. Cf. Andrej Žmegač, "Priručnik za Dalmaciju: De Trauxov opis iz 1805.," *Ars Adriatica* no. 6 (December 2016): 199.

<sup>36</sup> According to the orders addressed to the commander of the Slavonian Military Frontier by Maria Theresa November 20, 1767, point 24, passport control was mandatory for foreigners entering or traveling through Slavonia due to its proximity to the Turkish territory. Only when the passports were found to be valid (*die Passports gut, und ohne Verdacht zu seyn befunden worden*) were travellers allowed to pass. It is, however, noteworthy that the imperial order cautioned the authorities against any irregularities during the inspection of travel documents, such as pressure or confiscation of money, livestock, goods, etc., and instructed them to allow travellers to continue their journey as soon as possible once the *Visum* mark was stamped on their travel document. Croatia-Croatian State Archives (HR-HDA), fund 430-Slavonska generalkomanda (SGK), Opći spisi, box 10, 1767-12-48. See also Pešalj, "Putovanje i nadzor," 190. For travel documents as means of controlling the imported and exported goods in the Military Frontier see: Alexander Buczynski, *Gradovi Vojne krajine*, vol. 1. (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 1997), 206.



At the beginning of the nineteenth century, new provisions regarding passports were decreed by Emperor Francis II. A decree issued on March 25, 1801 required all foreigners and imperial subjects from other parts of the Habsburg Monarchy to present a passport when entering the imperial hereditary lands.<sup>37</sup> The procedure for obtaining passports, conditions for their use, and how they would be controlled were detailed in the Emperor's decree. A sample of the travel document (*Reisepaß*) showing what information was required was later added to the decree.<sup>38</sup>

In this context, it is also necessary to mention the Sanitary Cordon<sup>39</sup> built in the eighteenth century along the Habsburg border with the Ottoman Empire along the Sava and Una rivers. There was a similar system in Dalmatia, which had been established by the Venetian Republic. The cordon had a significant impact on the residents of the border area. It consisted of check points through which all travellers from the Ottoman Empire were required to pass. Such measures were implemented to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and to control Ottoman trade in the region.<sup>40</sup>

Important elements of the Sanitary Cordon were containment stations (*kontumaci*), places where merchants and other travellers from the Ottoman Empire could legally cross if they possessed official passports. Before entering the Habsburg Monarchy, they were required to quarantine (21, 28, or 42 days depending on the epidemiological situation)<sup>41</sup> in a *kontumac*.

Among the travellers were also apprentice artisans seeking employment in the Habsburg Monarchy (*Wanderung*, peregrination). For most of the eighteenth century, this category of travellers was exempted from carrying a passport. However, after the Patent of Emigration was adopted in 1784, they were required to have a certificate from their respective guild (*Kundschaftzettel*) in addition to the military authorities' consent to enter an apprenticeship.<sup>42</sup>

Another category of travellers required to hold passports were colonists, also referred to in some sources as transmigrants. They moved from more populated parts of the Habsburg Monarchy or the Empire to less populated areas such as Hungary, Banat, Slavonia, Syrmia, etc. They were required to present a travel document permitting them free passage throughout the Habsburg lands. The same document granted the colonists the right to settle in their assigned destinations and authorized them to receive assistance from the local authorities for housing and establishing themselves new homeland.

<sup>37</sup> HR-HDA, 430-SGK, Opći spisi, box 42, 1801-12-129.

<sup>38</sup> The travel document had to contain the following information: name of the institution issuing the passport, name of the person travelling, description of the person (place of birth, age, build, face, hair, eyes, and nose), traveling companions, handwritten signature, direction of travel (from-over-to), expiration date and date of issue.

<sup>39</sup> For an overview of the circumstances in which the Sanitary Cordon and the public health care system in Croatia were established under Habsburg rule cf. Ivana Horbec, *Zdravlje naroda bogatstvo države – Prosvijećeni apsolutizam i počeci sustava javnoga zdravstva u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2015).

<sup>40</sup> Mirela Slukan Altić, "Povijest sanitarnih kordona i njihova uloga u razvoju dalmatinskih gradova," *Ekonomika i ekohistorija* 2, no. 2 (2006): 56.

<sup>41</sup> Horbec, *Zdravlje naroda*, 94.

<sup>42</sup> Pešalj, "Putovanje i nadzor," 192.



There are numerous examples in archival sources from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that mention state-organized transports of settlers from Germany or other parts of the monarchy to the southeastern Habsburg provinces. Some of these examples touch on the use of passports as a means of controlling the movements of transmigrants.<sup>43</sup>

One such case is a transport of German families from Vienna to Banat in June 1790. A letter sent from authorities in Vienna informing the military command in Petrovaradin that these settlers' passports (issued in the Holy Roman Empire) had been confiscated as a precautionary measure to prevent abuse of them that had taken place earlier. Such abuses typically involved these settlers leaving the place they had been sent to after taking advantage of the assistance they were offered. To prevent such incidents, the military authorities had to keep close track of these settlers' whereabouts and movements. They were required to remain in the place they had been assigned to; otherwise, they could face various consequences such as losing their home or finances.<sup>44</sup> To cite another example, in 1791, Slovak families being relocated from the estate of Count Kolonich in Pozsony County in Hungary to the Slavonian Military Frontier were required to obtain an *Entlassungspass*, a document stating they had been released from all their duties and obligations to their former feudal lord, in order to legally settle elsewhere.<sup>45</sup>

When larger groups of people from areas under Ottoman and Venetian rule wanted settle in Habsburg lands, each family had to present a passport before being allowed to enter. In times of disease, they had to be quarantined before permanently settling in Habsburg territory. Another example from 1791 mentions a group of about a thousand Serbian families who wanted to flee "Turkish tyranny" and join their compatriots who, according to the source, had already settled in the Military Frontier in exchange for military service. Border crossings were possible only at designated points.<sup>46</sup> Travel documents were required even for temporary migration within the Military Frontier. For example, if a family wanted to travel for seasonal work from the Karlovac Regiment to the Brod Regiment,<sup>47</sup> they were required to present travel documents (*Pass*) issued by the local military authorities.

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<sup>43</sup> For circumstances under which colonists had to present passports cf. Johann Eimann, *Der deutsche Kolonist, oder die deutsche Ansiedlung unter Kaiser Joseph dem Zweyten in den Jahren 1783 bis 1787 absonderlich im Königreich Ungarn in dem Bácsér Comitat* (Pesth, 1822), 79-83; Sanja Lazanin, "Naseljavanje njemačkih protestantskih obitelji u Slavonsku vojnu krajinu krajem 18. i početkom 19. stoljeća." *Migracijske i etničke teme* 34, no. 2 (August 2018): 179, 185-86.

<sup>44</sup> HR-HDA, 430-SGK, Opći spisi, box 30, 1790-66-75.

<sup>45</sup> HR-HAD, 430-SGK, Opći spisi, box 31, 1791-66-106.

<sup>46</sup> HR-HDA, 430-SGK, Opći spisi, box 31, 1791-66-8.

<sup>47</sup> HR-HDA, 455-Brodská graničarska pukovnija (BGP), Satnija u Vinkovcima, Knjiga tjednih zapovijedi, book. 200, April 12, 1815.

## Conclusion

By studying specific examples of migration to the Croatian and Slavonian Military Frontiers, it is possible to trace changes in how borders were perceived throughout the early modern period. The Military Frontier, established as a pre-emptive buffer zone within the Croatian historical lands along the long and unstable border with the Ottoman Empire, had a specific administrative organization and way of life that were dependent on the military situation and the need for defence. It was also an area with extensive population movements and frequent territorial changes.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, migration mostly happened spontaneously and moved from the south to the north. It included Croatian nobility and their serfs fleeing northward, and refugees from the areas conquered by the Ottomans moving to the Croatian Border. From the eighteenth century onwards, along with the expansion of the Military Frontier to the regions of Slavonia, Syrmia, and Banat, migration came from the south with the Slavic population moving from the Venetian and Ottoman possessions as well as from the north with a mostly (but not exclusively) German population from central Europe heading primarily for the Slavonian Military Frontier.

In the initial period of the Military Frontier, from the perspective of the Habsburg military commanders, the purpose of migration and settlement in this area was to provide a population (e.g., Vlachs, Uskoks, refugees, etc.) capable of military service and an effective defence against unpredictable Ottoman attacks. After the establishment of a stable demarcation between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, during the eighteenth century migrations became a means of settling depopulated areas that came under Habsburg rule after the expulsion of the Ottomans. In addition to securing a permanent and effective military garrison, the goal of these mostly organized migrations was to economically revive the depopulated areas in accordance with the general political goals of an increasingly centralized Habsburg state.

These migrations from areas under the jurisdiction of one authority to areas under the jurisdiction of another over a period of several centuries—from the time the Military Frontier was established, to when it was consolidated and then later abolished—testify to changes in the way a state's territory was conceived and how it was controlled.

As these examples indicate, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, the borders along the Military Frontier gradually assumed purposes and organization comparable to their modern equivalents. The most important feature was being a strictly outlined but flexible regime for border crossing for the purposes of travel and temporary and permanent migration.

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