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Alaattin AKÖZ
Doğan YÖRÜK
Hüseyin MUŞMAL

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THE ROLE OF FORESTS IN THE SPREAD OF REVOLTS AND BANDITRY IN OTTOMAN SLAVONIA IN THE 16th and 17th CENTURIES

Anđelko VLAŠIĆ*

ABSTRACT

The state of forests of the Ottoman Empire during the 16th and 17th centuries and their socioeconomic and cultural importance is still a sparsely researched topic. It is difficult to research the state of forests because the majority of Ottoman sources are silent when it comes to forests in the mentioned period. This presentation will focus on Ottoman Slavonia, i.e. the three Ottoman sancaks: Sancak of Srijem (Sirem), Sancak of Požega (Pojega), and Sancak of Pakrac (Pakraç, Bakriç, Zaçasna, or Cernik). The aim of this presentation will be to describe the importance of forests for the local population of Slavonia, which used forests for hiding in the time of frequent wars in the proximity of the Habsburg-Ottoman border. In peacetime, Slavonian forests were a good place to hide if you were a *hayduk* or a bandit resisting the Ottoman rule. Dense Slavonian forests were often impassable and uncontrollable territories, and this is why a more than average number of pass keepers and bridge keepers populated the territory of Slavonia and had a duty to drive away *hayduks* and bandits who used to reside in forests. The presentation will be based on published and unpublished Ottoman tax registers for the three mentioned sancaks and on the bibliography on the situation on the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, Slavonia, Revolts, Banditry, Forests

* Dr., Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb, andelko.vlasic@gmail.com, CROATIA

1. Introduction

The name Slavonia used in the title of this paper and in all further mentions signifies the region delimited by the rivers Ilova, Drava, Sava, and Danube, in what is today the eastern part of the Republic of Croatia. It excludes Syrmia, which is a region situated further downstream both Danube and Sava, and in its current borders constitutes a part of the Republic of Serbia. In the 16th and 17th centuries, during Ottoman rule in Slavonia, i.e. from 1526 to 1690, the mentioned area was part of several administrative provinces. Its most eastern section was part of the Sancak of Srijem (*Sirem*); its central and biggest section was part of the Sancak of Požega (*Pojega*); and its southwestern section was part of the Sancak of Pakrac (*Pakraç*, *Bakriç*, *Zaçasna*, or *Çernik*). Setting aside this political fragmentation of Slavonia in the mentioned period, in this paper Slavonia will be regarded as a homogeneous territory because of its geographical characteristics set forth herein. Namely, Ottoman Slavonia was a sparsely populated region abounding in large areas of virgin forests. The same description can also be applied to Syrmia, or at least to its western part. Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi wrote that in 1660 the trees felled in one forest situated in western Slavonia were so huge that one could make three boats from a single tree.[1] Forests populated with such gigantic trees were probably present throughout the entire region. Proximity of the three aforementioned large rivers and the occurrence of regular floods caused by said rivers created numerous marshes in the region. The general situation concerning forests of Ottoman Slavonia was that they were vast and not easy to clear, or in other words, "if we combine the data from Ottoman surveys with Habsburg records that inform us about the size of farms belonging to the inhabitants of villages, a picture emerges of islands of cultivated land surrounding settlements scattered among a vast expanse of woods."[2]

The local population of Slavonia used forest areas for hiding in the time of wars, which were often in Slavonia, especially in the proximity of the Habsburg-Ottoman border. In peacetime, on the other hand, Slavonian forests could have been a good place to hide if you were a rebel, a bandit, or were hiding from Ottoman authorities for any other reason.[3] The term "revolt" used in the title of this paper is understood to refer to miscellaneous attempts to overthrow the authority of the Ottoman state – for example, rebellions directed against Ottoman authorities in Slavonia. These kinds of activities were frequent because of the proximity of the Habsburg-Ottoman border and due to incursions of Habsburg forces. As regards the term "banditry", it is understood as the activity of common robbers and outlaws throughout Slavonia. The

[1] Evlija Čelebi, *Putopis. Odlomci o jugoslovenskim zemljama*, Sarajevo-Publishing, Sarajevo, 1996, pp. 243-244; Nenad Moačanin, *Town and Country on the Middle Danube 1526-1690*, Brill Publishing, Leiden – Boston, 2006, p. 150.
[2] Moačanin, *Town and Country on the Middle Danube*, pp. 10-11, 26.
[3] Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, p. 47.

aim of this paper will be to describe the role of Slavonian forests in the spread of revolts and banditry during the 16th and 17th centuries.

The Ottoman sources that will be consulted for this paper are scarce due to the nature of these sources; for example, Ottoman tax registers offer numerous data on the taxable resources of Ottoman lands. However, forests are rarely mentioned in the registers and the data on forests often has to be obtained indirectly through the data on lumber cutting and taxes on livestock, fruit, vegetables, etc. As regards another important source for the Ottomanist historiography, the Mühimme registers, they are of more use for this topic because the Mühimme entries dealing with rebellions are relatively frequent. As for the narratives, Jesuit Bartol Kašić and Evliya Çelebi passed through Slavonia in the 17th century and have left us accounts in which they described the situation in Slavonia and the state of Slavonian forests. In addition, the Slavonian censuses conducted in 1698 and 1702 by the new Habsburg authorities after the Ottoman withdrawal from Slavonia give us valuable information on the situation in this region before the Habsburg conquest and the contemporary state of Slavonian forests.

2. The Use of Forests for Civilian and Peacetime Needs

Slavonia was a rural and agrarian region and this feature remained unchanged long after the withdrawal of the Ottomans at the end of the 17th century. There were numerous market towns throughout Ottoman Slavonia; however, this should not imply that the forest areas were interrupted by roads and settlements. In the late Middle Ages, larger numbers of settlers lived only in market towns of Eastern Slavonia and Western Syrmia and their number reached only 25% of the total population in these eastern areas. During Ottoman rule, only 10% of the population of the area around the town of Požega and 30% of the population around the town of Osijek (*Ösek*) and in Syrmia lived in urban settlements.[4]

How did these inhabitants of Slavonia use the Slavonian forest fund? Generally speaking, forest areas in Slavonia and throughout the Ottoman Empire were used very freely during the 16th and 17th centuries, and changes were introduced only in the later centuries. Most of the Ottoman forests were owned by villages in their surroundings or by wealthy officials of the state. The forests that belonged directly to the state, i.e. to the Sultan, were usually located in mountainous areas and could still be used by villagers.[5] Ottoman authorities did not tax the forest goods that were not subsequently sold in the market. In other words, peasants could collect everything from the woods without paying tax if they kept them for their own household needs. They used forests resources

[4] Moačanin, *Town and Country on the Middle Danube*, pp. 11, 23-24; Nenad Moačanin, *Požega i Požeština u sklopu Osmanlijskog carstva (1537-1691)*, Naklada Slap, Jastrebarsko, 2003, pp. 91-92.
[5] Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume II, Reform, Revolution, and Republic: the Rise of Modern Turkey*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p. 235.

for food, fuel and hunting. Moreover, there were no Ottoman laws in the 16th and 17th centuries concerning the administration of the forest fund and there is probably no *kanunname* of any Ottoman province that would mention the issue of forest preservation.[6] This is certainly true for Ottoman Slavonia, and if a *kanunname* does mention forests and their exploitation, it states that tree cutting was not prohibited.[7] This all seems to imply that there was a rather huge consumption of Ottoman forest resources and the danger of rapid reduction of the forest fund.[8] However, the population of Slavonia probably did not have a negative effect on the size of Slavonian forests, partly because the civilian population did not have excessive needs for timber. Peasants used to cut down woods only in small areas surrounding their settlements in order to create more farming land. Furthermore, they would cut down only smaller trees due to difficulties with transporting timber from deeper forests.[9] Extensive forest felling occurred only in the vicinity of larger Ottoman cities in the Balkans with a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants, for example around Belgrade and Sarajevo around 1600, but not in Ottoman Slavonia.[10]

3. Activities of *Derbentçi*s and *Köprücü*s in Ottoman Slavonia

There were several civilian activities in Slavonia that connected forests and security on the roads. Dense forests, especially those in mountainous areas, were often impassable and uncontrollable territories. This is why the territory of Slavonia was populated by a more than average number of pass keepers (Ottoman Turkish: *derbentçiler*) and bridge keepers and repairers (*köprücüler*), who were assigned by

[6] White, *The Climate of Rebellion*, p. 47; Selçuk Dursun, "Forest and the State: History of Forestry and Forest Administration in the Ottoman Empire" (PhD diss.), Sabancı University, 2007, pp. 63-64, 74-75; Moačanin, *Town and Country on the Middle Danube*, pp. 44, 64, 234.

[7] Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü (TCBDAGM), Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı (OADB), Tapu Tahrir (TT), Tapu Tahrir Defterleri (TTD), 355, 672; Branislav Đurđev, "Požeška kanun-nama iz 1545. godine," *Glasnik Državnog muzeja u Sarajevu*, 1 (1946), pp. 129-138; Branislav Đurđev, "Sremska kanun-nama iz 1588/89. godine," *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja u Sarajevu*, 4-5 (1950), pp. 269-283; Branislav Đurđev et alia, *Kanuni i kanun-name za Bosanski, Hercegovački, Zvornički, Kliški, Crnogorski i Skadarski Sandžak*, Orijentalni institut, Sarajevo, 1957, pp. 70-92; Bruce Mcgowan, *Sirem Sancağı mufassal tahrir defteri*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara, 1983, pp. 1-6; Stjepan Sršan (ed.), *Popis Sandžaka Požega 1579. godine*, Državni arhiv u Osijeku, Osijek, 2001, pp. 19-24; Selçuk Ural, *Osmanlı Hakimiyetinde Pakrac (XVI. Yüzyıl)*, Türkiye Alim Kitapları, Saarbrücken, 2014, p. 82.

[8] Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 235.

[9] Emil Klimo, "History, Condition and Management of Floodplain Forest Ecosystems in Europe", in: Kyoji Sass (ed.), *Environmental Forest Science: Proceedings of the IUFRO Division 8 Conference Environmental Forest Science, held 19-23 October 1998, Kyoto University, Japan*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, 1998, p. 175; Dursun, "Forest and the State,", p. 36.

[10] Nedim Filipović, *Osmanski feudalizam u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Armis Print, Sarajevo, 2007, pp. 108-111; Luka Jakopčić, *Divljina s pečatom. Socioekološki sustav brodske Posavine u 18. stoljeću*, Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, Slavonski Brod, 2016, p. 45.

Ottoman authorities with the task of guarding and repairing bridges situated in woodland areas and marshlands, in exchange for a certain (or sometimes complete) amount of tax exemption. Sometimes *derbentçi*s had to clear large strips of forest, some several kilometers long, in order to secure the surroundings of roads and bridges. These services were not a Slavonian exception because Ottoman authorities organized the *derbentçi* and *köprücü* services in almost all sancaks of the Empire. The same situation was in the sancaks on the territory of nowadays Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, or in the 16th and 17th centuries on the territory of the Sancaks of Bosnia, Herzegovina, Zvornik, and Srijem, where wide woodland areas also affected security on the roads.[11]

The number of pass and bridge keepers in Slavonia increased heavily during Ottoman rule, especially in the initial period, i.e. from 1530s to 1570s. *Derbentçi* settlements were highest in number in central and eastern Slavonia. If we only take into account the biggest Slavonian sancak, the Sancak of Požega, Ottoman sources indicate that more than a quarter of the population of the sancak had a special status, here including *derbentçi*s and *köprücü*s. Rapid increase in the number of bridge keepers and repairers in the mentioned period and their overall abundance confirms the picture of Slavonia as a region of vast and virgin forests. They usually lived in settlements around impervious forests and marshes and, among other duties, had to drive away bandits who used to reside in those areas, which were a perfect place for raids and hideout, so much that bandits organized large and dangerous gangs. *Derbentçi*s used to control mountain passes, guide travelers through dangerous mountain roads and protect travelers' property and well-being. Suitability of the central and western Slavonian terrain for criminal activities becomes even more distinctive when it is taken into account that the eastern Slavonian plains and the lowland strips along the rivers Drava and Danube with rarer forests contained only smaller gangs. A trade route leading through central Slavonia and cities Požega, Orahovica (*Rahoviçe*) and Valpovo (*Valpova*) was surrounded with thick forests, so it was not surprising that those woods were full of bandits who were looking for easy prey on the roads.[12]

4. Rebellions in Ottoman Slavonia and the Effect of Forest Areas

In 1594, a Habsburg army led by General Hans Sigismund Herberstein in a smaller military campaign penetrated the Habsburg-Ottoman border and conquered and

[11] TCBDAGM, OADB, TT, TTD, 672; Moačanin, *Town and Country on the Middle Danube*, pp. 127, 153, 157, 172; Nenad Moačanin, "Pristup ekohistoriji Podravine prema osmanskim izvorima", *Ekonomska i ekohistorija. Časopis za gospodarsku povijest i povijest okoliša*, 1 (2005), pp. 142-143; Nenad Moačanin, *Turska Hrvatska. Hrvati pod vlašću Osmanskoga Carstva do 1791. Preispitivanja*, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 1999, pp. 92, 120-121; Nenad Moačanin, *Slavonija i Srijem u razdoblju osmanske vladavine*, Hrvatski institut za povijest, Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, Slavonski Brod, 2001, pp. 56, 116.

[12] TCBDAGM, OADB, TT, TTD, 672; Moačanin, *Town and Country on the Middle Danube*, pp. 127, 157-158, 172, 212; Moačanin, *Turska Hrvatska*, p. 41; Moačanin, "Pristup ekohistoriji Podravine prema osmanskim izvorima", pp. 142-143; Moačanin, *Slavonija i Srijem*, pp. 116, 144.

burned to the ground a settlement called Sirač (*Sirçe*) in the proximity of the town of Daruvar in western Slavonia, and then ravaged the surrounding area. Instigated by this attack, a part of the Christian population of the Sancaks of Pojega and Pakrac in the villages close to the mentioned border abandoned their villages and took refuge in the surrounding forests. They began to fight their Ottoman rulers and their army as rebels, i.e. *hayduk*s (Hungarian: *hajdúk*, meaning members of mercenary armies in 16th century Hungary; in later centuries it was a term most commonly referring to outlaws, highwaymen, or even freedom fighters).[13] Those involved in the rebellion of 1594 probably believed that the attack of the Habsburg forces meant that the time of liberation from Ottoman rule had come. Another raid of the Habsburg army under the command of Herberstein in 1595 reached the town of Cernik in the southeast of the Sancak of Pakrac. The Habsburg incursion reached far into Ottoman territory and, although it did not change the Habsburg-Ottoman status quo in the region, it instigated an even larger rebellion of the local Christian population than the year before.[14] The forests around mentioned settlements played a significant role in these events by enabling local Christian rebels to act as guerrilla fighters and ambush Ottoman forces.

If we take into consideration numerous other information about the activities of *hayduk*s in Ottoman Slavonia, we can conclude that the use of forest areas of Slavonia for flight and hiding from Ottoman authorities was a constant activity of the local Christian population throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. This sequence of events (Habsburg incursion, local Christian population's rebellion, flight to forests and subsequent rebel activities) repeated itself on occasions throughout the period of Ottoman rule in Slavonia. In 1596, Habsburg army led by General Juraj Lenković broke into Ottoman territory of the Sancak of Požega and ravaged the town of Voćin and numerous surrounding villages. In 1597, a Habsburg detachment under the command of Captain Georg Laibacher ravaged the surroundings of Ottoman settlements Slatina,[15] Orahovica, and Stupčanica. In the same year, after the local Christian population allegedly called on the Habsburg forces to attack and help them pass to the other side of the border, a Habsburg army led by General Herberstein and Croatian viceroy Ivan Drašković penetrated the Habsburg-Ottoman border. If the sources are correct, the Habsburg attackers returned to Habsburg territory in the company of 1700 civilians,

[13] Ive Mažuran, "Požega i Požeška kotlina za turske vladavine", in: Marijan Strbašić (ed.), *Požega 1227-1977*, Skupština Općine Slavonska Požega, Požega, 1977, pp. 181-183, 193; Vjekoslav Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX stoljeća*, Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, Zagreb, 1988, Vol. 5, pp. 515-516; Vijoleta Herman Kaurić, *Krhotine povijesti Pakraca. Povijest naselja od prapovijesti do 1918. godine*, Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje u Slavonskom Brodu, Slavonski Brod, 2004, pp. 85-88; Vladimir Anić, *Rječnik hrvatskoga jezika*, Novi Liber, Zagreb, 1998, p. 169.
[14] Mažuran, "Požega i Požeška kotlina za turske vladavine", pp. 172, 181-182; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena*, Vol. 5, pp. 515-516, 538; Moačanin, *Town and Country on the Middle Danube*, p. 193; Herman Kaurić, *Krhotine povijesti Pakraca*, pp. 85-87.
[15] Today Podravska Slatina.

who mostly resided in the hilly and forested areas of the Sancaks of Pakrac and Požega and decided to flee into Habsburg territory.[16]

Historical sources suggest that during those Habsburg incursions local rebels organized in advance, actively participated in the fighting and cooperated with the Habsburgs. Every time Habsburg forces penetrated the Habsburg-Ottoman border and attacked Ottoman settlements, the *hayduk*s would gather and reside in the thick forests of Slavonia. They often were the most active element in the fights that followed the Habsburg incursions because of their knowledge of the terrain and the ability to surprise attack the Ottoman forces. Furthermore, after the retreat of Habsburg armies, the *hayduk*s would retreat into the woods on a regular basis and would continue to resist for a longer period. The rebels would even attack Ottoman forces stationed in Slavonian settlements; this was the case especially during the Long Turkish War (1593-1606). In 1599, for instance, when General Herberstein and Captain Tamás Erdődy led a Habsburg attack into the Požega Valley, in the center of the Sancak of Požega, a force of around 500 *hayduk*s led by voivode Luka Senčević joined the Habsburg army during their raid and pillage of Požega. Another source from the same year cites that the *hayduk*s defeated Ottoman forces at Osijek and burned the Osijek Bridge and its surroundings. In 1600, a Habsburg force led by Gaspar Gleispach, Captain of the town of Ivanić, broke into the Sancak of Pakrac and returned with around 800 civilians to the Habsburg territory. This raid was probably closely related to the rebellion led by *hayduk* voivodes Mato and Marko Lapsanović. Their *hayduk* forces allegedly razed the Ottoman settlements Bijela Stijena, Pakrac, Gradiška, Brod, and Drenovac. Ottoman forces managed to defeat them and force them to retreat into the surrounding forests, where the *hayduk*s continued to reside for some time.[17]

Constant conflicts between Habsburg and Ottoman forces in Slavonia continued also in the later years, and the above-described pattern remained the same. In 1603, when a Habsburg detachment led by Viceroy Drašković and General Sigmund von Trauttmansdorff penetrated as far as Požega, a *hayduk* force led by Mato Lapsanović joined them after raiding the settlements Parkac, Trojeglava and Kamenska, which were situated in a hilly area and surrounded by thick forests. This combined attacking army heavily damaged Požega and the surrounding villages.[18] Ottoman authorities' subsequent retaliation influenced the occurrence of lawlessness and banditry that were even more widespread throughout Slavonian forests and along insecure roads.

[16] Ivan Švear, *Ogledalo Iliriuma, iliti Dogodovština Ilirah, Slavinah, stražnji put Horvatah zvanih od potopa, to jest god. sveta 1656. na četiri strane razdeljena*, F. Suppan, Zagreb, 1839, pp. 426-427; Mažuran, "Požega i Požeška kotlina za turske vladavine", pp. 181-182; Moačanin, *Town and Country on the Middle Danube*, p. 193; Herman Kaurić, *Krhotine povijesti Pakraca*, pp. 85-87.
[17] Mažuran, "Požega i Požeška kotlina za turske vladavine", pp. 181-182; Moačanin, *Town and Country on the Middle Danube*, pp. 152, 193; Herman Kaurić, *Krhotine povijesti Pakraca*, pp. 85-87.
[18] Mažuran, "Požega i Požeška kotlina za turske vladavine", pp. 182-183; Moačanin, *Town and Country on the Middle Danube*, p. 193; Herman Kaurić, *Krhotine povijesti Pakraca*, pp. 87-88.

This was coupled by general insecurity on the Slavonian trade routes and consequential economic stagnation, because the fleeing population evaded their tax and other obligations towards Ottoman authorities.[19] Habsburg forces' intrusions stopped and the intensity of *hayduk* activities diminished only with the end of the Long Turkish War in 1606.[20]

It was not only during wars that the banditry and rebellions flourished in Ottoman Slavonia. Ottoman authorities were not able to control the rebellious local population in the aftermath of wars, when insecurity was at its peak. Armed conflicts between Ottoman authorities and local rebels continued throughout the first half of the 17th century. The slow establishment of pre-war conditions and peacetime rule suited the rebels and bandits residing in Slavonian forests. During this period, even the usually peaceful Christian and Muslim subjects of the Empire participated in criminal activities and subsequently hid in the woods. Furthermore, during their attacks, rebels did not make a distinction between Muslim and Christian passersby on the Slavonian roads. In the autobiography of the Ragusan Jesuit Bartol Kašić, who traveled through Slavonia in 1612-1613 and 1618-1619, we can find assertions about widespread banditry in eastern Slavonia and Syrmia in the mentioned years.[21]

The same sequence of events (Habsburg incursion, local Christian population's rebellion, flight to forests, rebel activities) including economic stagnation and flight of the population repeated itself especially during the Great Turkish War (also known as the War of the Holy League). The war lasted from 1683 to 1699, and was the conflict during which Ottoman Empire, lost Slavonia among other regions.[22] With the start of the Habsburg-Ottoman fighting in Slavonia in 1684, the local Christian population began to flee into the forests. They fought together with Habsburg forces and by 1691 managed to drive the Ottomans out of Slavonia. Moreover, at the same period the forests in Slavonian mountains were most probably the place of hiding for the Muslim population of Slavonia, which was fleeing to northern Bosnia during the Habsburg conquest of Slavonia in the 1680s and up until 1691.[23]

[19] Mažuran, "Požega i Požeška kotlina za turske vladavine", pp. 172, 181-183, 193; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena*, Vol 5, pp. 515-516; Moačanin, *Turska Hrvatska*, p. 191; Moačanin, *Town and Country on the Middle Danube*, p. 193; Herman Kaurić, *Krhotine povijesti Pakraca*, pp. 85-88.
[20] Moačanin, *Turska Hrvatska*, pp. 186-189.
[21] Moačanin, *Slavonija i Srijem*, pp. 141-144; Moačanin, *Turska Hrvatska*, pp. 186-189; Bartol Kašić, *Autobiografija isusovca Bartola Kašića u prijevodu i izvorniku (1575.-1625.)*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 2006, p. 49; Moačanin, *Town and Country*, pp. 208-209, 212.
[22] For more on this see: Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Enemy at the Gate: Habsburgs, Ottomans, and the Battle for Europe*, Basic Books, New York, 2008.
[23] Mažuran, "Požega i Požeška kotlina za turske vladavine", pp. 172, 181-183, 193; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata od najstarijih vremena*, Vol 5, pp. 515-516; Moačanin, *Town and Country on the Middle Danube*, p. 193; Herman Kaurić, *Krhotine povijesti Pakraca*, pp. 85-88; Moačanin, *Turska Hrvatska*, p. 191.

The hills and mountains of Slavonia and its widespread forests were a suitable terrain for the development of revolts in later years too. This enables to posit that there was a continuity of usage of Slavonian forests for banditry from the second half of the 16th century up until the first quarter of the 20th century.[24]

5. Conclusion

We can ascertain that the forests of Slavonia positively affected the frequency of revolts and banditry and thus diminished the effectiveness of Ottoman rule. In fact, the borders of Slavonian forests marked the boundaries of effective Ottoman control. This, in turn, facilitated the effectiveness of Habsburg attacks, because the invading Habsburg forces could rely on the local *hayduk*s and their reconnaissance, i.e. their excellent knowledge of the terrain and the ability to gather crucial military information. Ottoman authorities, on the other hand, could not relieve their situation and strengthen their control over the local population and forest areas because the forests were, as explained earlier, huge and difficult to control. Although there were no laws concerning the issue of forest preservation and no restrictions on free civilian use of forests, not even the civilians had a diminishing effect on the distribution of forests, especially because Slavonia lacked large towns with large needs for provisions, and thus for extensive forest cutting. The only solution for Ottoman authorities in Slavonia was to employ the local population in the military and security roles and raise the number of *derbentçi*s and *köprücü*s in their effort to secure roads and bridges and put a stop to prevalent lawlessness in the region.

There are examples of different solutions used by Ottoman authorities in order to stop revolts and banditry in mountains and dense forests. In other parts of the Empire in the second half of the 16th century, for example in Macedonia, rebellious villagers from the mountains were forced to resettle in the valleys. In Albania and Thrace, on the other hand, forests were cut down so that the local bandits would lose a place to hide and commit crime. These solutions were effective – although they were harmful for the forest fund.[25] There is no evidence so far that the Ottoman rulers used the same methods in Slavonia. The method that they did use in insecure frontier areas such as Slavonia can be seen in some of the *kanunname*s for the sancaks on the territory of present Bosnia and Herzegovina – we presume that due to geographical similarities of Bosnia and Slavonia (dense forests in mountainous areas) the methods used were the same. Namely, those *kanunname*s indicate that Ottoman authorities specifically passed laws purporting to encourage the population of newly conquered provinces to expand and

[24] Anđelko Vlašić, „Iskorištavanje šuma u Slavoniji u osmanskom razdoblju“, *Scrinia Slavonica*, 16 (2016), pp. 83-84.
[25] White, *The Climate of Rebellion*, pp. 46-47.

regularly cultivate lands that were overgrown and/or neglected and, if necessary, clean them by cutting forest.[26]

Another conclusion from the researched data could be that the population that could rely on the close proximity of forests – and we have seen that the population of Slavonia could – always took refuge in forests when their well-being was at stake, or when they decided to oppose Ottoman rule. Forests represented an important factor in the life of the inhabitants of Slavonia; without them, the situation on this part of the Habsburg-Ottoman frontier in the 16th and 17th centuries would have been completely different.

These conclusions could also be applied to other Ottoman provinces in the Balkans, here including the Ottoman sancaks on the territory of Hungary, Serbia, Bosnia, and other neighboring countries, because in the 16th and 17th centuries those regions were also known for their large and thick forests, therefore suitable for revolts and banditry.

[26] Đurđev et al., *Kanuni i kanun-name*, pp. 85-86, 119-120, 123-124.

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