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Vlachs in the Lowland Areas: Between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River in the 15th Century

Wołosi na obszarach nizinnych: między Górami Bukowymi i Ciszą w XV wieku

ABSTRACT

Although mountains and submontane areas were the main territories of development for the Wallachian colonization, the Vlachs would also appear in the lowland areas, situated further away from the mountains. The presence of Vlachs in the valley between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River in the 15th c. is an example of this phenomenon. Economic solutions they applied, based on pastoralism, allowed them to populate the areas which were difficult to reach and to diversify the agricultural model of the village. The aim of the article is to examine the Vlachs' presence between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River in the 15th c., with a particular attention paid to the reasons of their

PUBLICATION INFO			
			e-ISSN: 2449-8467 ISSN: 2082-6060
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SOURCE OF FUNDING: The article was written as a result of a 6-month research internship in Pázmány Péter Catholic University (Budapest, Hungary) as part of the project „UMCS Doctoral Schools – Your Success in Globalized World of Science”. The author is especially grateful to dr. Kristóf Szuromi, who was the internship supervisor.			
SUBMITTED: 2023.09.30	ACCEPTED: 2024.03.16	PUBLISHED ONLINE: 2024.10.22	
WEBSITE OF THE JOURNAL: https://journals.umcs.pl/rh		EDITORIAL COMMITTEE E-mail: reshistorica@umcs.pl	 
 DIRECTORY OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS			

appearance in the region, the course, and the effects of their stay. Archive and printed documents from that period are the fundamental sources for his work. The research results indicate that the Vlachs' settlement in the examined area was the result of the king's initiative, manifested in privileges, while their presence, although it faded away towards the end of the 15th c., had an impact on the shape of the region's economy.

Key words: Vlachs, Bükk Mountains, Tisza River, colonization, settlement, pastoralism

STRESZCZENIE

Choć głównym obszarem rozwoju kolonizacji wołoskiej był teren górski i podgórski, zdarzało się, że Wołosi pojawiali się także na terenach nizinnych, oddalonych od gór. Przykładem takiego zjawiska była obecność Wołochów w dolinie między Górami Bukowymi i Cisą w XV w. Stosowane przez nich rozwiązania gospodarcze, oparte na pasterstwie, pozwalały na zasiedlenie terenów trudnodostępnych oraz stanowiły urozmaicenie rolniczego modelu wsi. Celem artykułu jest zbadanie obecności Wołochów między Górami Bukowymi i Cisą w XV w., ze zwróceniem szczególnej uwagi na przyczyny ich pojawienia się w regionie, przebieg oraz skutki ich pobytu. Podstawę źródłową pracy stanowią dokumenty archiwalne i drukowane z badanego okresu. Wyniki badań wskazują, że osiedlenie Wołochów w badanym terenie było wynikiem inicjatywy królewskiej, objawiającej się w przywilejach, zaś ich obecność, choć zanikła z końcem XV w., wywarła wpływ na kształt gospodarki regionu.

Słowa kluczowe: Wołosi, Góry Bukowe, Cisa, kolonizacja, osadnictwo, pasterstwo

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The Wallachian colonization had an indisputable influence on the shaping of culture and economy of the entire Carpathian region. Even though the main area of its development was in the mountains and submontane, the Vlachs did appear in the lowland areas, situated further away from the mountains. An example of this phenomenon was their presence in the valley between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River in the 15th century. Despite carrying out a primitive lifestyle and using the economic based on animal grazing, the Vlachs reached a significant success in colonization¹. The Wallachian law applied by them was particularly useful in managing areas that were difficult to access, which should be referred to as peripheral². For centuries, the Carpathians were

¹ I. Czamańska, *Obszar zamieszkiwania, status prawny i kierunki aktywności gospodarczej Wołochów/Vlachów w średniowieczu i epoce wczesnonowożytnej*, „Balcanica Posnaniensia. Acta et studia” 2021, 28, 1, s. 30–31.

² J. Buniowski, *Wallachian Law as a tool for colonising peripheral areas: Case study of the Sandomierz Forest in the 15th and 16th centuries*, „Colloquia Humanistica” 2023, 12, Article 2884, s. 4–7.

an ideal space for the development of the Wallachian culture. Throughout the ages, the Wallachian settlement kept developing intensively, the result of which was populating almost the entire Carpathian line.

The issue of the development of the Wallachian settlement in the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary has its place in the academic scholarship³. The problem was addressed by scholars from the countries of the Carpathian region. The Vlachs' presence in the areas between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River was recorded in the academic works. The problem of their presence in the researched area was first indicated by Dezső Csánki⁴ and Samu Borovszky⁵. However, these were short references, limited to generalized statements. The Vlachs' stay was mentioned by subsequent scholars, primarily in works considering regional issues⁶. The unique nature of the phenomenon of the appearance of this group of people between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River requires a more careful analysis, which is the aim of this work.

The sources for the presented research are archival and printed records from the 15th and 16th century. Particular importance for the discussed topic is held by the archival records in the collection of the Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár (National Archives of Hungary). This work uses source entries from the *Collectio Diplomatica Hungarica*⁷ and *Urbaria et Conscriptiones*⁸. Among the printed (published) sources, the collec-

³ K. Kadlec, *Valaši a valašské právo v zemích slovanských a uherských, s úvodem podávajícím přehled teorií o vzniku rumunského národa*, Praha 1916; V. Chaloupecký, *Valaši na Slovensku*, Praha 1947; J. Macůrek, *Valaši v západních Karpatech v 15.–18. století*, Ostrava 1959; P. Ratkoš, *Problematika kolonizácie na valašskom práve na území Slovenska*, „Historické štúdie“ 1980, 24, s. 181–222; R. Grzesik, *Włosi na Węgrzech*, „Balcanica Posnaniensia. Acta et studia“ 2021, 28, 1, s. 93–131.

⁴ D. Csánki, *Magyarország történelmi földrajza a Hunyadiak korában*, Budapest 1890, s. 165–166.

⁵ S. Borovszky, *Borsod vármegye története a legrégebb időktől a jelenkorig*, Budapest 1909, s. 83.

⁶ K. Tóth, *Mezőkeresztes története*, Miskolc 1928, s. 37–39; G. Klein, R. Péchy-Horváth, *Községi adattár, w: Borsod vármegye. Borsod, Gömör és Kishont k. e. e. vármegyék*, red. A. Csíkvári, Budapest 1939, s. 89; B. Varsik, *Osídlenie Košickej kotliny*, 1, Bratislava 1964, s. 17; I. Kápolnai, *Mezőkövesd város és környéke népességének alakulása a 20. század elejéig*, „A Herman Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve“ 2000, 39, s. 257; O. Demeter, *Egy észak alföldi mezőváros – Keresztes története a XV–XVI. században*, w: *Tisicum – A Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok Megyei Múzeumok Évkönyve*, t. 22, red. K. Gulyás, L. Horváth, G. Kaposvári, Szolnok 2013, s. 483; R. Grzesik, *op. cit.*, s. 105–106.

⁷ Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár [dalej: MNL], *Collectio Diplomatica Hungarica* [dalej: CDH].

⁸ MNL, *Urbaria et Conscriptiones* [dalej: UetC].

tion of documents on the castle of Diósgyőr, issued by Gusztáv Wenzel, deserves a special attention⁹. An important, although not corresponding to the chronology adopted in the work (for it refers to the period only until the end of the 14th c.) is a collection of source documents published in 1941 on their presence in the Kingdom of Hungary¹⁰. The research questions were formed in accordance with the current state of knowledge. Specificity of the studied topic requires comparative analysis with reference to international scholarship. The predominant research method in this work is the direct and indirect inference from historical sources.

THE VLACHS' SETTLEMENT EXPANSION IN THE TERRITORIES OF THE KINGDOM OF HUNGARY UNTIL THE END OF THE 14TH CENTURY

The Vlachs' settlement expansion in the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary progressed along the internal line of the Carpathians. The first area that was colonized was Transylvania, where the Vlachs settled at the beginning of the 13th c.¹¹ Their presence in the sources is revealed at first in the privilege of the King Andrew in 1222¹². The document uses the expression *terra Blacorum*, referring to the part of lands situated in the Fogaras county¹³. The local mountain pastures and forest glades were the first stage of the Wallachian colonization process in the territories of the medieval Hungarian state. From there, the settlement expansion was directed toward the Carpathian arch, in the north-western and north-eastern directions. Until the end of the 13th c., the presence of the Vlachs was recorded in the subsequent sources of Transylvania and in Banat, neighbouring from the west¹⁴. Towards the end of the 13th c. and the beginning of the 14th c., the Wallachian settlements appeared in Maramureş¹⁵. In the

⁹ G. Wenzel, *Diósgyőr egykori történelmi jelentősége*, Pest 1872.

¹⁰ *Documenta Historiam Valachorum in Hungaria illustrantia usque ad annum 1400 s. Christum*, red. E. Lukinich, L. Gáldi, wyd. A. Fekete Nagy, L. Makkai, Budapestini 1941.

¹¹ The Vlachs were in Transylvania already in the 12th c. participating in the raid of Manuel I Komnenos on Hungary in 1166. They must have acquainted themselves with conditions in the region at that time (R. Grzesik, *op. cit.*, s. 103).

¹² K. Kadlec, *op. cit.*, s. 170, 173.

¹³ *Documenta*, s. 3.

¹⁴ R. Grzesik, *op. cit.*, s. 104.

¹⁵ The first reference about their presence in the region is from 1326 (*Documenta*, s. 66–70; R. Grzesik, *op. cit.*, s. 104). Ludwik Wyrostek claims that the Vlachs came to Maramureş already in the 13th c. (L. Wyrostek, *Ród Dragów-Sasów na Węgrzech i Rusi Halickiej*, Kraków 1932, s. 3–6).

first half of the 14th c., the Vlachs' presence is mentioned in the counties of Ugocsy and Bereg. At the time, they also appeared in the territories of the Ung country, which is the first information about the presence of the Vlachs in Upper Hungary (the lands of today's Slovakia)¹⁶.

In the first stage, the Wallachian colonization encompassed all the wastelands and forest areas which were usually part of the royal lands¹⁷. The Vlachs were most probably seen by the management of the royal lands as a tool for colonizing difficult areas. The Vlachs' settlements were also determined by military matters as they were considered the guardians of mountains and communication routes¹⁸. On the nobility's estates, the Wallachian settlements appeared only in the next phase¹⁹.

In 1357, the Vlachs are mentioned for the first time in Zemplin, and towards the end of the century, they come to Šariš and Spiš, for their presence is recorded in the entries from the first years of the next century (1402)²⁰. In parallel with the settlement of these lands, the Vlachs probably appeared also in the lowland territory situated between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River, in the Borsod county. While the Vlachs' presence in the above-mentioned areas is by no means surprising, their appearance in the lowland valley situated between the south-eastern slopes of the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River, the area which was remote from the central Carpathian range, leads to some confusion. In the light of the existing research on the development of the Wallachian colonization, the Vlachs' living in Keresztes and its surrounding areas is a peculiar case taking into consideration this part of the region.

VLACHS IN KERESZTES

A place that was a specific Wallachian settlement centre between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River was Keresztes (today's Mezőkeresztes). The last settlement was said to be founded by the Order of Saint John which received land from King Béla IV in its vicinity in 1238, from which it also took its name (Keresztes means 'a Crusader' in Hungarian language). The village belonged to the Crusaders still in the first decades of the 14th c. but was later passed into the king's hands and belonged

¹⁶ J. Beňko, *Osídlenie severného Slovenska*, Košice 1985, s. 265.

¹⁷ K. Kadlec, *op. cit.*, s. 201.

¹⁸ R. Grzesik, *op. cit.*, s. 93.

¹⁹ K. Kadlec, *op. cit.*, s. 176.

²⁰ R. Grzesik, *op. cit.*, s. 105.

to the royal estates, which were attached to the Diósgyőr Castle²¹. Together with the neighbouring Mezőkövesd, it was the most remote part of the estate from the castle (thirty kilometres in a straight line south of Diósgyőr)²². Occasionally, Keresztes belonged to private owners, which is confirmed by records from 1437 and 1441²³. In 1456, the settlement was granted civil rights²⁴.

The king's reign was a significant time for the settlement's development. In order to populate the settlements concentrated around the Diósgyőr Castle, numerous privileges, initiated by King Louis the Great, were granted²⁵. For the development of Keresztes, the reign of King Sigismund (1387–1437) was the key period. Even though we do not know the date when the Vlachs settled in Keresztes, it did most likely take place during his reign. The king's initiative is revealed in a document from 1409, in which the king urged to respect the privileges granted to the group of people who had settled in Keresztes years before²⁶. Some scholars erroneously interpret the date when the document was issued with the Vlachs' arrival in the settlement²⁷. In the document, the village is referred to as *Valahali Kereztes*²⁸, which proves that they established position in the settlement. Dezső Csánki states that the newcomers were the majority of residents²⁹.

The lack of clear proof from the sources makes it impossible to determine when and in what circumstances the Vlachs arrived in Keresztes. On the basis of experiences from other parts of the Carpathian region and from information in the sources about their presence in the researched area, one can formulate some hypotheses. Particularly important were the time, the circumstances, and the course of these people's stay in the region.

As is clear from the above-mentioned source, the Vlachs received the right to settle in Keresztes on the basis of the royal privilege, which was most probably issued during the reign of King Sigismund³⁰, probably still in the 14th c. It is clear from the document that the King had

²¹ S. Borovszky, *op. cit.*, s. 49.

²² G. Klein, R. Péchy-Horváth, *op. cit.*, s. 89.

²³ D. Csánki, *op. cit.*, s. 166; G. Klein, R. Péchy-Horváth, *op. cit.*, s. 89.

²⁴ G. Wenzel, *op. cit.*, s. 57.

²⁵ S. Borovszky, *op. cit.*, s. 48.

²⁶ G. Wenzel, *op. cit.*, s. 44–45.

²⁷ I. Kápolnai, *op. cit.*, s. 257.

²⁸ G. Wenzel, *op. cit.*, s. 44: „Ex insinuacione fidelium nostrorum universorum Valahorum in possessione nostra Valahali Kereztes nuncupata, ad castrum nostrum Dyosgyour vocatum spectante commorantium”.

²⁹ D. Csánki, *op. cit.*, s. 165–166.

³⁰ S. Borovszky, *op. cit.*, s. 83.

a significant role in bringing the Vlachs to the settlement and appealed on their behalf when the local governors did not want to give them the permission to live in Keresztes.

It is also difficult to determine the circumstances of this group's arrival in Keresztes. The king's privilege and the involvement of his administration in protecting the rights granted to the Vlachs indicates that the settlement of the newcomers was a result of an arbitrary decision. However, issuing the privilege to the newly arrived must have had some foundations. It is very likely that this idea was born on the basis of the Vlachs' presence in the researched area as part of their seasonal animal grazing.

Nevertheless, a question should be posed on how the managers of the royal estates decided about letting the Vlachs settle in the area. At this point, two directions that could have guided the initiators of the settlement action can be indicated. Firstly, the regions defences could have been strengthened. In many places along the Carpathian arch, the Vlachs were used as a military support, acting as guards along the communication and mountain routes³¹. In the case of Keresztes and neighbouring settlements, they could serve as a military backup for the Diósgyőr Castle.

The second and more likely factor was the intention of developing the area between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River through enriching the regional economy with the pastoral element, which the Vlachs' economy was based on³². The natural conditions of land between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River were favourable to animal husbandry. Particularly favourable was the terrain along the valleys of rivers and streams running down from the Bükk Mountains³³. Suitable conditions for animal grazing in this part of the Tisza River valley are also recorded in the sources from the 16th c.³⁴

Regardless of which factor was the most crucial, the decision on the Vlach's settlement must have been preceded by their earlier presence in this area. Their presence was most likely due to the transhumance practiced by the Vlachs, i.e. the seasonal change of place for grazing, from the mountain areas in the summertime to the lowlands in winter³⁵. This type

³¹ R. Grzesik, *op. cit.*, s. 93.

³² J. Buniowski, *Osady pastersko-hodowlane w kompleksach leśnych starostwa lubaczowskiego w XVI wieku*, „Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej” 2024, 72, 1, s. 62–71.

³³ O. Demeter, *op. cit.*, s. 486.

³⁴ There is an information in the register of the Tokaj Castle from 1581, in the description of the village of Szada (today's Taktaszada), situated thirty kilometres from Miskolc, that meadows around the Tisza River were suitable for grazing animals. In this settlement only, a few thousand sheep and a few hundred pigs were recorded (MNL, UetC, ref. 97:25(a), s. 39).

³⁵ I. Czamańska, *Obszar*, s. 26–27.

of pastoralism was cultivated by the Eastern-Romance population who lived in the territories of today's Romania³⁶. This phenomenon was also present in the Polish lands in the 15th and 16th c. where the Wallachian shepherds went to reach grazing areas situated further away from the mountain and sub-montane regions³⁷. These were primarily large forest complexes³⁸. Similar situation was taking place in the Balkans. There, however, the winter areas for grazing were the warm lowlands and valleys by the seaside.

Assuming that the Vlachs' settlement between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River was an indirect result of the transhumance, one should ask a question about where the Vlachs came from to this area. There are two directions from which they could come. The first one is the region of Gömör (Gemer in Slovakian), situated on the other side of the Bükk Mountains. The Vlachs arrived in Gömör at the beginning of the 15th c.³⁹, and thus it is highly unlikely that they came to Keresztes from here. The eastern direction seems more likely. If this direction is concerned,

³⁶ T. Herșeni, *L'organisation Pastorale en Roumaine*, „Arhiva pentru știință și reformă socială” 1936, 13, s. 248–249; B. Koczyńska-Jaworska, *Badania nad pasterstwem w Rumunii*, „Lud. Rocznik Polskiego Towarzystwa Ludoznawczego” 1960, 46, s. 512–513; S. Huband, D.I. McCracken, A. Mertens, *Long and short-distance transhumant pastoralism in Romania: past and present drivers of change*, „Pastoralism: Research, Policy and Practice” 2010, 1 (1), s. 58–59; C. Juler, *După coada oilor: long-distance transhumance and its survival in Romania*, „Pastoralism: Research, Policy and Practice” 2014, 4 (4), s. 1; I. Velcea et al., *Pastoral transhumance in mărginimea Sibiului*, „Romanian Journal of Geography” 2016, 60, 1, s. 85–86; R. Brigand et al., *Ovine pastoralism and mobility systems in Romania: an ethnoarchaeological approach*, w: *Historical Archaeologies of Transhumance across Europe*, t. 6, red. E. Costello, E. Svensson, London 2018, s. 259.

³⁷ K. Dobrowolski, *Studia nad kulturą pasterską w Karpatach północnych. Typologia wędrówek pasterskich od XIV do XX wieku*, „Wierchy” 1960, 29, s. 32–33; G. Jawor, *Seasonal pastoral exploitation of forests in the area of Subcarpathia in the 15th and 16th century*, „Balcanica Posnaniensia. Acta et studia” 2016, 23, s. 183.

³⁸ In 1422, the Vlachs were granted a subdivision of municipality (*kniastwo*) in the village of Lubicza in the Voivodship of Belz, a settlement situated further away from the mountain and sub-montane areas of the Carpathians (A. Janeczek, *Osadnictwo pogranicza polsko-ruskiego. Województwo bełskie od schyłku XIV do początku XVII w.*, Warszawa 1993, s. 146–147). Throughout the 15th century, the Wallachian settlement spread in the region (*ibidem*, s. 147–153). In turn, a seasonal presence of the Vlachs, who grazed sheep in the local forests, was recorded throughout the 16th century in the areas near Rzeszów, in the villages of Bratkowice and Borek Wielki (*Lustracja województwa sandomierskiego 1564–1565*, red. W. Ochmański, Wrocław 1964, s. 79, 114). The Wallachian shepherds ceased their migrations only towards the end of the 17th c. (Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie, Archiwum Skarbu Koronnego, dział XLVI, sygn. 99B, s. 956).

³⁹ V. Chaloupecký, *op. cit.*, s. 46–47.

the group arrived in the studied area via the valley of the Tisza River⁴⁰. There is also the third solution, i.e. the Wallachian people's arrival to the studied area directly from the territories of Transylvania. This solution was considered in regional studies⁴¹. In order to reach the studied area, the Vlachs would have to cross over one hundred kilometres of lowland areas with similar natural conditions. Therefore, this direction seems to be thoroughly unjustified.

The first half of the 15th c. was certainly the period in which the Wallachian population in the region developed most intensively. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that Keresztes had its own governors (*wojewoda*) whose presence is confirmed in a document from 1456⁴². They already had Hungarian names and surnames which proves an ongoing assimilation process⁴³. Assimilation and integration with the local Hungarian people was an inseparable element of the Vlachs' social advancement within the borders of the Kingdom of Hungary⁴⁴.

It is symptomatic that the Vlachs had different duties from other subjects, which are confirmed by records in the Upper Hungarian sources from the second half of the 15th c., and in the 16th c. they were referred to as *census Valachorum*⁴⁵. The Vlachs living in Keresztes offered the so-called *Quinguagesima*, i.e. a tribute in the form of one sheep for every fifty sheep they owned⁴⁶. The *Quinquagesima* was the most popular tribute paid by the Vlachs in the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary in the late Middle Ages⁴⁷. Such tribute was known e.g. in Maramureş and Transylvania⁴⁸. Its value differed depending on time and place.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Vlachs' presence between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River entailed an ongoing conflict with the owners of neighbouring estates

⁴⁰ B. Varsik, *op. cit.*, s. 17.

⁴¹ K.L. Marjalaki, *Adatok Hejőkeresztúr és vidéke néprajzához*, „Észak-Magyarország” 1958, 14 (15), s. 5.

⁴² G. Wenzel, *op. cit.*, s. 57.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ R. Grzesik, *op. cit.*, s. 120–121.

⁴⁵ M. Diaconescu, *Census Valachorum in mid-16th century upper Hungary*, „Balcanica Po-snaniensia. Acta et studia” 2015, 22, 1, s. 17–28.

⁴⁶ MNL, CDH, DL, ref. 25989.

⁴⁷ R. Grzesik, *op. cit.*, s. 112.

⁴⁸ G. Jawor, *Vigesima agnorum et decima porcorum. Redevances pastorales dans les villages valaques en Pologne aux XVe et XVI siècles*, „Banatica” 2018, 28, s. 465–479.

of the noblemen. Already in 1409, King Sigismund intervened in the matter of violating the Vlachs' right to settlement in Keresztes⁴⁹. The main reason of this conflict was the destructions taking place during animal grazing carried out by the Wallachian shepherds. The newcomers needed vast areas, mainly meadows and forests, in order to breed the animals. Possibilities for animal grazing within the limits of Keresztes were limited and thus the Vlachs moved with their herds to neighbouring areas, which was met with resistance from the local owners.

In 1418, the Eger Chapter made a complaint to King Sigismund that '*populi et wolachi*' from Keresztes had destroyed the fields and meadows, and cut down the trees in the neighbouring village of Abrany (today's Bükkábrány) situated to the north⁵⁰. Similar situation probably took place in Gelej, a village situated a few kilometres east of Keresztes, because in 1451 the local noblemen put a ban on the grazing of cattle and sheep in the areas that belonged to the settlement⁵¹.

Nevertheless, the shepherds' migrations were not limited to the closest neighbourhoods of Keresztes. The area penetrated by the shepherds was much larger, equivalent to the expanse of almost the entire valley of the Tisza River from the south-eastern part of the Bükk Mountains. The local noblemen who were the owners of the majority of land in this area did not agree with the Vlachs letting their herds to graze on their land, and in various ways made it difficult for them to use the pastures⁵². In response to these occurrences, a document was issued in 1473 that confirmed the right to free grazing of cattle and hogs on both sides of the Tisza River⁵³.

It seems that the Vlachs' presence in the area was the bone of contention between the local noblemen, who were the main owners of lands, and the royal authority, which guarded the privileges issued for the newcomers earlier. The noblemen's objections seem to be justified. The animal grazing in the meadows, clearings, and forests led to a significant destruction of landscape. Aggressive exploitation of land, mainly in the form of forest destruction, was an integral part of economic activities carried

⁴⁹ G. Wenzel, *op. cit.*, s. 44–45.

⁵⁰ I. Sugár, *Borsodi oklevelek a Heves Megyei Levéltárban 1245–1521*, Miskolc 1980, s. 18.

⁵¹ MNL, CDH, DL, ref. 70240.

⁵² G. Wenzel, *op. cit.*, s. 64: „nonnulli essent ex nobilibus, qui pecora eorundem macarent, pastores vero similiter eorundem verberarent, aliterque diuersimode impedirent, contra libertatem eorundem”.

⁵³ *Ibidem*.

out by the Wallachian shepherds in the Carpathians⁵⁴. Their practice was also well-known in the area under examination.

THE IMPACT OF THE WALLACHIAN COLONIZATION ON THE REGION'S ECONOMIC PROFILE

There is no doubt that the presence of Vlachs had a great impact on the development of pastoralism in Keresztes and the region, which is confirmed by the treasury records from the 16th c.⁵⁵ According to research, the branch of the economy that was predominant in the following centuries (16th–19th) in Keresztes, as well as the neighbouring Mezőkövesd, was animal breeding, mainly cattle and sheep⁵⁶.

Limited options for grazing in Keresztes forced the Vlachs to migratory husbandry in the valley of the Tisza River in order to find food for animals they bred. There are a few indirect evidence confirming their settlement expansion in the region. In the first place, they extended their area of influence in the villages situated in close proximity to Keresztes. Apart from their presence within the borders of the above-mentioned settlements of Abrany and Gelej, there are serious grounds to believe that the Vlachs took part in the colonization of the village of Csincse, situated a few kilometres north-east of Keresztes. Csincse, similarly to the stream of the same name by which the settlement was situated, come from the Romanian language⁵⁷. This is the example of the influence the Wallachian colonization had on the local names in the region. However, Ivan Kápolnai argued that this name derived from the Hungarian language, being a derivative from the word 'csinca', which served to refer to a swampy place⁵⁸. The Wallachian origin of the name is nevertheless supported by the Vlachs' strong influences on the area close to the settlement.

The above-mentioned document from 1473 allowing for the grazing of cattle and sheep on both sides of the Tisza River is the evidence that the Wallachian shepherds were active all over the studied area. Kiss Lajos Marjalaki, a historian of the Borsod region claimed that apart from

⁵⁴ G. Jawor, *Changes in the Natural Environment around the Wallachian Villages on the Northern Slopes of the Carpathians in the 15th and 16th centuries*, „Annales UMCS. Sectio F” 2022, 77, s. 54–57.

⁵⁵ É. Gyulai, *Termelés és kereskedelem a középkori Miskolcon, w: Miskolc története*, t. 1, red. I. Dobrossy, Miskolc 1996, s. 299.

⁵⁶ O. Demeter, *op. cit.*, s. 486.

⁵⁷ K. Tóth, *op. cit.*, s. 39.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, s. 279.

Keresztes and Keszi (today's Tiszakeszi), the Vlachs were also staying in Keresztúr (today's Hejőkeresztúr), although their presence was of a seasonal nature, associated with a seasonal animal grazing⁵⁹. However, there are grounds for this statement because in the 16th c. hogs were still grazing in oak forests within the borders of the settlement⁶⁰.

The Vlachs' presence left its mark on the landscape of the region. A particularly visible aspect of the Vlachs' stay in Keresztes and its surrounding areas was an increase in the significance of pastoralism in the economic nature of this land. This direction continued for a long time and was important, particularly in the next century. As has already been mentioned, the marshy valley of the Tisza River situated south-east from the Bükk Mountains was a place favourable for grazing swine. Suitable conditions and a large number of pigs was recorded in Hatház⁶¹. It seems that sheep grazing, particularly important for the Vlachs, became exceptionally important. In Hernádnémeti, the residents had one thousand sheep in 1564⁶², while in the village of Szada (today's Taktaszada) – a few thousands of sheep and a few hundred pigs⁶³.

DISAPPEARANCE OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE VLACHS

With the beginning of the 16th c., the direct information about the Vlachs between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River vanished. However, this does not mean that they ceased to exist but that they probably succumbed to the assimilation process. This phenomenon is an inseparable element of the Wallachian colonization in the Carpathians. Branislav Varsik pointed out that already in the 13th and 14th c. the minorities in the Kingdom of Hungary had quickly become assimilated⁶⁴. The Vlachs' integration proceeded with various intensity, particularly among the Orthodox Slavic population⁶⁵. This was the result of contact between the Vlachs and the indigenous population who was most often occupied with agriculture. The mountain basins and lowland areas, situated in close proximity to mountains, were the place of integration. It should

⁵⁹ K.L. Marjalaki, *op. cit.*, s. 5.

⁶⁰ MNL, UetC, ref. 89:2, s. 23.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, s. 78.

⁶² *Ibidem*, s. 49.

⁶³ MNL, UetC, ref. 97:25(a), s. 39.

⁶⁴ B. Varsik, *op. cit.*, s. 16–17.

⁶⁵ I. Czamańska, *Vlachs and Slavs in the Middle Ages and Modern Era*, „Res Historica” 2016, 41, s. 21.

be assumed that the further away from the Carpathian hills, the stronger the assimilation process was, which could result in a quick integration with the local population living in the area between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River.

Establishment of high-rank offices by the Wallachian communities was an integral part of the process of ennobling the Vlachs. Transitioning to the nobility in the Kingdom of Hungary resulted in the Magyarization and conversion to Catholicism of this group⁶⁶. This is clear in the case of Keresztes where the Wallachian governors had Hungarian surnames⁶⁷. The transfer of the upper-class Vlachs to the Hungarian nation influenced the decrease of the rank and significance of the Wallachian population in the areas where they lived⁶⁸. Even if the lower class of the Wallachian community living in Keresztes tried to preserve their native language and religion, the lack of subsequent flows of migrants who could maintain their distinctiveness made the assimilation with the local Hungarian population inevitable. Apart from the probable tendency to omit the Vlachs in historical sources as part of the residents of the region, this factor was the reason why their earlier distinctiveness faded away. It is worth emphasizing that with the development of colonization, the nature of the Wallachian settlement changed. Ethnic features gradually died out while the community was determined by economic and social solutions⁶⁹.

SUMMARY

Although peculiar, the cases when the Vlachs went beyond the mountain and sub-montane areas are a basis for reflection on their colonizing potential. There is no doubt that the key factor in the Vlachs' settlement between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River was the initiative of the king's administration which issued the privilege of settlement and guarded the laws granted to the newcomers. The intention of the policymakers was to develop sparsely populated areas, for which the Vlachs – having high adaptability skills – were well suited. This decision must have been made on the basis of earlier contact, such as the seasonal visits of the Wallachian shepherds with their animals in the studied area as part of transhumance.

⁶⁶ R. Grzesik, *op. cit.*, s. 121.

⁶⁷ G. Wenzel, *op. cit.*, s. 57.

⁶⁸ R. Grzesik, *op. cit.*, s. 120.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, s. 93, 124–126; A. Janeczek, *op. cit.*, s. 184–185.

Their presence between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River was opposed by the local nobility who tried with various means to make the Vlachs' stay in the region more difficult. At the end of the 15th c. information about their stay between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River disappeared. The transition of the Wallachian elites to the Hungarian population and the lack of migration wave which could have preserved the ethnic distinctiveness were the major reasons for the loss of information about the Vlachs in the region. Despite this fact, this group of people left behind a lasting mark of an increased significance of pastoralism in the region's economy, as well as in the local and personal names.

The Vlachs' presence between the Bükk Mountains and the Tisza River is another confirmation of their great disposition to colonize. The results of the research should serve as an encouragement to further studies on the examples of the influence of the Vlachs and their Wallachian laws on the management of peripheral areas outside of the mountain and sub-montane zones.

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