

MIGRATION TO ISTRIA AND THE NORTH ADRIATIC IN THE MODERN AGE: SOCIETY, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

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THE ETHNIC IMAGE OF VENETIAN ISTRIA IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY¹

Prospero Petronio, a Piranese (from Piran, Pirano in Italian) according to some, and Capodistrian (Koper, Capodistria) according to others, gave the following interesting description of the peoples (*gente*) living in Istria in 1681, predicated on the writings of the bishop of Novigrad (Cittanova), Tommasini,² on Istrian peculiarities from half-a-century earlier. The first and most numerous were the Slavs (*schiaivi ch'altri chiamano Slavi*), who arrived from Dalmatia or *Schiavonia*, the ancient Illyricum: *popoli forti et atti alle fatiche*. They settled everywhere in the peninsula, so that the Slavic language became common to almost everyone and the inhabitants of many villages did not speak Italian at all. Most Slavs were farmers, living in villages in the countryside.

The second most numerous were the Carni: artisans spinning wool, weaving cloth and linen for the simple people and working as tailors, smiths, shoemakers, stonemasons, etc. They were reasonable and frugal, so that many soon at least recovered materially, if they did not get rich as well. They had a pleasant appearance and their qualities were very useful to the province. They lived in fortified villages (*castelli*) and towns (*terre*), but had not arrived in the province before the Slavs. The Carni —many called them *Cargnelli* or *Karnjeli*— were related to the Friulians, who were their neighbours. Many Friulians settled in the countryside, in smaller towns or on individual estates as seasonal workers, returning home with their earnings.

The third wave (*generatione*) was from Grado, born fishermen, used to the sea and sailing. They lived on the coast in Umag (Umago), Novigrad, Poreč (Parenzo), Vrsar (Orsera) and everywhere else they could trade fish and other seafood with neighbouring Venice. They were a simple people, speaking curtly in a language

that resembled the old Venetian dialect. They were not fond of noise and did not brag about their seafaring heroics. Many of them grew rich from trade, bought estates, merged with the locals and became citizens of the most important towns. In Novigrad, for instance, 12 of the 25 families originated from Grado.

The fourth people were the new inhabitants, who came from Albania and other places under Turkish occupation and were invited to Istria by the Venetian Republic. For more than a century, they were judicially



Figure 1. A Morlach couple, by Christian Geißler (1770-1844) (Figure: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Wikimedia Commons).

1. This paper is the result of research carried out in the project J6-9354 (A): «Cultural Memory of Slovene Nation and State Building», funded by the Slovenian Research Agency. Used abbreviations: ASV (Archivio di Stato di Venezia), DRI (Dispacci Rettori d'Istria), PTM (Dispacci Provveditori da Terra e da Mar).

2. Giacomo Filippo TOMMASINI, «De' Commentarj storici-geografici della provincia dell'Istria (1641)», *Archeografo Triestino* (Trieste), No. 4 (1837), p. 74-81.

subordinate to the Captain of Rašpor (Raspo), save for those in the territory of Pula (Pola), who, as old inhabitants, were subordinate to the governor (*provveditore*) and independent from the will of the rector (*rettori*) of individual towns and *castelli*.

Finally, Istria also had a native population, although it could not trace its roots further than two hundred years into the past due to numerous epidemics and wars. Immigrants to Istria like the Florentines, Bergamasques, Venetians and others who quickly settled in could also be regarded as natives.

In the last war with the Turks (the Cretan War of 1645-1668) many Morlachs —as the Venetians called the Vlachs, a mostly Slavicised nomadic people of the Balkans— were brought to Istria from Dalmatia and Albania, which at the time also encompassed a part of the Montenegrin Littoral. According to Prospero Petronio, Morlachs liked to steal and cause disorder, although he noted that it seemed that they had settled down with time.

MIGRATIONS AND ECONOMY

The dichotomy between Istrian towns and its countryside is regarded as constitutive for the towns, since they were always perceived as specific agglomerations in contrast to the countryside. This was enabled, and to some degree even demanded, by the surplus agricultural production. The towns were both consumers of this surplus and places for the exchange thereof, as well as places of a different kind of production, which represented and satisfied the needs of the countryside belonging to the towns.

However, the division between towns and the countryside was not expressed only in economics, but also in the assimilation or integration of their inhabitants, since moving from the countryside to a town or vice versa also led to changes in ethnicity and culture: language, customs, attire and conduct.

The contrast between towns and the countryside in Istria can be traced back to pre-Roman times, to the establishment of the first towns as coastal urban centres, which can be attributed to Greek colonists/traders. By then the peninsula had already been settled by various Illyric, Celtic and Venetic tribes, which by the fourth century BC united in the Histrian tribal union, lasting until the Roman conquest in the first half of the second century BC.

In the following centuries, there was a very diverse fluctuation of the population, concurrent with the various rulers of the Istrian peninsula. The ruling Romans (178 BC), Goths (476), Byzantines (539), Lombards and Franks (788) as well as the rulers in the period of feudal fragmentation, with a presence of the ruling German(ic) element, were always followed by immigration

and emigration from the neighbouring Carniolan, Friulian, Carnian, Italian, Dalmatian and Greek territories. While the Slavic colonisation had already started in the seventh century and gradually established a new cultural, social and ethnic division between towns and the countryside, this process was not concluded before the fourteenth and in some places even by the seventeenth century. The Slavs arrived in Istria from the north and east and gradually moved from the remote parts of the Istrian Karst to the outskirts of the coastal towns.³

Smaller towns in the Istrian interior also had the status *terre* and similar privileges as the coastal cities (*citta*) —only the seats of bishoprics (Koper, Novigrad, Poreč, Pula) were regarded as cities in Istria by the Venetian administration— and larger *terre* or towns (for example, Rovinj or Piran). During the Venetian period, the towns in the interior, as Motovun (Montona), Oprtalj (Portole), Bale (Valle), Buzet (Pinguente), Buje (Buie d'Istria), etc., also had their own town captains or *podestas*, nominated by the Great Council of Venice, as well as patrician town councils. While the economic contrast between towns and the countryside was not as pronounced in these *terre* as in the coastal towns, the Italian ethnic element nevertheless dominated and assimilated in them, while the countryside everywhere was shaped by Slavic ethnic characteristics. This is corroborated by the report of the Venetian reviser Vito Moresini from 1560, who established that in the Capodistrian countryside *quasi tutti parlano schiavo, et non intendono gran fatto altra lingua*.⁴



FIGURE 2. Koper-Capodistria. Painting from the 16th Century (Figures: Regional Museum of Koper).

3. Milko Kos, *O starejši slovanski kolonizaciji v Istri*, vol. 1, Ljubljana, Slovenska Akademija Znanosti in Umetnosti, 1950, p. 127; Bogo GRAFENAUER, *Proces doseljavanja Slovena na zapadni Balkan i u istočne Alpe*, Sarajevo, Centar za balkanološka istraživanja, 1969, p. 40-47.

4. «Relazioni dei Podestà e Capitani di Capodistria», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč), No. 6 (1890), p. 73.

In the period from the late thirteenth century to 1420, the political situation in Istria changed fundamentally. The Venetian city state, accelerating its eastward expansion by subduing towns in western Istria (Poreč in 1267, Koper in 1279, Piran in 1283) and setting more favourable foundations for its own rise to a commercial centre between East and West, had occupied most of the peninsula and all of the Istrian west coast including Pula (1332) in this period. After the decline of the Aquileian Patriarch's temporal power (1420), this was followed by the occupation of the Istrian east coast with Labin (Albona) and the north coast with Muggia (Milje). Venice also occupied the relatively expansive territories surrounding these towns, so that the rulers to the north, since 1374 the Habsburgs, were left only with the central part of Istria around Pazin (Pisino), the so-called County of Pazin, and some smaller feudal territories in the Istrian Karst, including the northeastern coast from Brseč (Bersezio) and Mošćenice (Moschiena) to Rijeka (Fiume).

By the end of the thirteenth century, there had already been a severe fluctuation of the Istrian population due to wars, plague and typhoid-fever epidemics, earthquakes, spring frost, poor hygienic conditions, etc. These were factors that enabled or caused each other in cycles, as shown by Jean-Noël Biraben in his study on the plague in France and other Mediterranean countries.⁵ However, immigration was also affected by economic factors, positively particularly by trade and negatively especially by various taxes and fees.

People from other regions also sought refuge in Istria due to the aforementioned dangers elsewhere. The Aromanians, fleeing southern Serbian and Albanian territories from Mongol invasions in the thirteenth and four-

5. Jean-Noël BIRABEN, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*, Paris, Mouton, 1976.

teenth centuries, settled the north-eastern parts of the peninsula. At the same time, individual families from neighbouring lands or other parts of Istria moved to the countryside belonging to Istrian towns, fleeing war and other troubles or simply seeking more favourable conditions for survival. These families formed a special social group, the so-called *vicini* (neighbours), who already at that time settled in the countryside on lease contracts, usually pledging to live on and work the designated plots for a period of at least five years. Although there was a great fluctuation of these settlers,⁶ the village as a whole still had to pay certain fees to its landlord, noble, town or the Church. In 1364, the raise of fees led to the emigration of the entire population of the village of *Vicinatus Sancti Petri* at Sveti Peter (San Pietro), then in the territory of Koper.⁷

At that time, particularly in the surroundings of the Romance-speaking Koper, the Slavic or Slovene population had firmly established itself. This is explicitly attested by the agrarian laws from ca. 1300,⁸ written for the country people, which equate Slavs with peasants, and perhaps even more so by the institution of the Captain of the Slavs (*Capitaneus Sclavorum*, later in Italian *Capitano di Schiavi*) in Koper's countryside, first recorded in 1349.⁹ The Captain of the Slavs had

6. Danilo KLEN, *Fratrija, feud opatije sv. Mihovila nad Limom u Istri i njegova sela (XI.-XVIII. st.)*, Pazin, Historijski arhiv u Pazinu, 1969.

7. Bernardo SCHIAVUZZI, «Cenni storici sull'etnografia dell'Istria», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč)], No. 17 (1901), p. 327.

8. *Codice Diplomatico Istriano*, vol. 3, ed. Pietro KANDLER, Trieste, Tipografia Riva Spa., 1886, p. 856-859 (No. 479).

9. Bernardo BENUSI, «La liturgia slava nell'Istria», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč), No. 9 (1893), p. 151-283; Sergij VILFAN, «Koprski glavari Slovanov v avstrijsko-beneški vojni», *Kronika: časopis za slovensko knjevno zgodovino* (Ljubljana), vol. 2, No. 1 (1954), p. 24-29; Darko DAROVEC, «Od prihoda Slovanov do propada Beneške republike», in Salvador ŽITKO *et al.* (eds.), *Kraški rob in Bržanija: zbornik v počastitev 500-letnice fresk v Hrastovljah*, Koper, Pokrajinski muzej Koper,



FIGURE 3. Pazin (Pisino), by Johann Weikhard Freiherr von Valvasor (1689) (Figure: Wikimedia Commons).

jurisdiction over the ca. 40–44 villages in the city's countryside in judicial, tax and, for a while, military matters. Hence, his title would be hard to understand without considering the fact that the Slavic element at the time represented the majority of the population in the area. Especially, since the position existed in this form or the other even before it was first recorded. Even then, many of the country people of Slavic origin were settlers from Croatian lands and their migrations continued in the following centuries.¹⁰

Thus, in the Istrian northeast, the typical Istrian ethnic division between towns and the countryside was already formed in the fourteenth century, as towns integrated the newcomers into the Romance or Italian ethnic group and the countryside into the Slavic ethnic group; north of the Dragonja (Dragogna) River into the Slovene and south of it into the Croatian assimilation circle. In the fourteenth century, the Romance-Slavic dichotomy was not yet typical for southern Istria, where the Croatian ethnic group was still in the minority, but published sources attest,¹¹ that it was firmly established nevertheless. Documents of the Pula cathedral chapter (1349–1371) show that many Slavs paid church fees at the entrances to individual town quarters or lived in neighbouring villages.



FIGURE 4. Piran (Pirano), by Jacobo Tintoretto (1518–1594)
(Figure: Municipal palace of Piran).

At first, migrations were self-initiative and spontaneous or at the request of individual landlords or towns, while the first attempt at organised settlement of Istrian towns and the countryside is attested in the decree of

1990, p. 31–62.

10. Vjekoslav ŠTEFANIĆ, «Glagoljaši u Kopru g. 1467–1806», *Starine JAZU* (Zagreb), No. 46 (1956), p. 203–329.

11. Mirko ZJAČIĆ, «Knjiga podavanja i prihoda posjeda katedralnog kaptola u Puli», *Vjesnik Državnog arhiva u Rijeci* (Rijeka), vol. 4 (1957), p. 59–85.

the Venetian senate from 1376. It stipulated that everyone, who would permanently settle in Venetian Istria within a year, would be exempt from paying any fees for the next five years and could keep the property in hereditary possession, although without the right to its disposal. The decree was later taken up by individual Istrian towns, loosening the then quite strict measures for the admission of individuals into towns and granting civic rights without regard to the applicant's assets. In the fourteenth century, this greatly improved the demographic situation in the province, which continued to suffer from several plague epidemics (including the Black Death in 1348), wars and natural disasters. In the same century, these were joined by another regular feature in Istria, malaria, which was in many aspects even worse, since it did not only lead to mortality but also to the chronic inability to work.¹²

Figure 5. The Golden gate of Pula (Pola), by Louis François Cassas



(1782) (Figure: Joseph LAVALLÉE, *Voyage Pittoresque et Historique de l'Istrie et de la Dalmatie. Rédigé D'après l'Itinéraire de L. F. Cassas*, Paris, De l'Imprimerie de Pierre Didot L'Ainé, 1802, No. 20).

Initially, immigration measures brought good re-

12. Bernardo SCHIAVUZZI, «La malaria in Istria. Ricerche sulle cause che l'hanno prodotta e che la mantengono», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč), No. 5 (1889), p. 319–472.

sults. Pula, for instance, reached its highest population of 4,500 in the mid-fifteenth century, which dropped below 1,000 in the following decades and did not rise beyond this number until the mid-nineteenth century. It seems that the most resilient part of the population was the specific type of the country people who remained farmers, yet made their home in towns. They lived in Bale, Šišan (Sissano), Vodnjan (Dignano) and Rovinj (Rovigno) and from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century made up a compact element of the old Istro-Romance population. Only in those places, as well as in Fažana (Fasana) and Galizana (Gallesano), has the Istriot language persevered until today, as a part of the Dalmato-Rhaetoromance languages; elsewhere it was gradually replaced by Venetian Italian due to new waves of colonisation.

The relatively favourable economic situation in the province certainly contributed to the growth, or at least to the stagnation, of the population in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, despite the aforementioned troubles. Especially in the fourteenth century, many Florentines immigrated to Istria, stimulating development in urban areas with mercantile, artisanal and money-lending activities. Along with Friulians and Carnians, people from other Italian regions immigrated as well, including from cities and towns in the Romagna, the Marches and, of course, Veneto. Venetians or Venetian subjects from Lombardy, Bergamo, Brescia etc. bought estates and houses in Istria and other Slovene lands, stimulating trade and commerce.¹³ They can also be found among the local nobility; in Koper, for example, the families Badoer, Barbo, Del Bello, Besenghi, Carpaccio, Contarini, Riva, Trevisan, etc.

They could also acquire estates relatively cheaply, as can be seen from the Capodistrians' complaint from 1597 against the confiscation of land, which had been owned by the city or its inhabitants for centuries. The land that had been common property of the Capodistriean fiscal chamber at the time of Koper's surrender to Venetian rule, and thus became property of Venice, had in the fourteenth century been rented out for one solidus per field to those, who wanted to settle in Istria and cultivate the land for the common good for the centuries.¹⁴ «Istria was much more sparsely populated than it is now», argued Dr Nicolò Manzuoli, sent to Venice to obtain the revocation of the decree of confiscation, issued by the Capodistriean podesta and captain Francesco Capello on the October 1, 1595 for all plots recorded in the documents of Koper's fiscal chamber, «because this measure caused quite a scan-

dal». Manzuoli further explained that the land is already sparsely populated,

poiché essendo la sentenza generale, e senz'alcuna destinazione di tempo, vien à includer infinita quantità de beni possessi già tre cento, e più anni, così di ragion della Magnifica Communità, come di persone particolari, che hanno posto tutti i loro poderi, et haueri à coltiuare quelle terre concesseli, che erano sterili, e boschiue, delle quali quando si vedessero privi, sarebbero necessitati di abbandonare quel Paese, che la serenità Vostra desidera, che sa habitato con tanta spesa, etiam di gente suddita al Sig. Turco, per esser la provincia dell'Istria povera di gente, e contigua ai confinui di altri Principi, per poterli nelle occasioni (che il Signor Dio guardi) di esse prevalere; Et se spiacquero tanto a Vostra Sublimità le Inquisitioni, che già voleua fare il Clarissimo Camerlengo di Capodistria contra li possessori di simili terreni, che dell'anno 1449, vltimo Ottobre si rissolse la Vostra Serenità di scriver (come fece) à quello, perché desistesse, sotto pena della disgrazia sua per il scandalo, che potea riuscire.¹⁵

However, the podesta's measures were also directed particularly against the sale of land and real estate at the border to foreigners, mostly Carniolans, which seems to have happened often, as even in 1652 the Venetian senate still had to remind the Capodistriean podesta of this, providing him with the authority to harshly sanction such sales.¹⁶

The Venetians were also attracted by trade with the hinterland, particularly with the neighbouring provinces of the Holy Roman Empire, from where many peasant traders were supplying the province with much needed grain, which was mostly exported to Venice, dried meats, hides and ore and buying products of Istrian towns such as salt, wine and (olive) oil, but also overseas goods from Venetian merchants for their feudal lords.

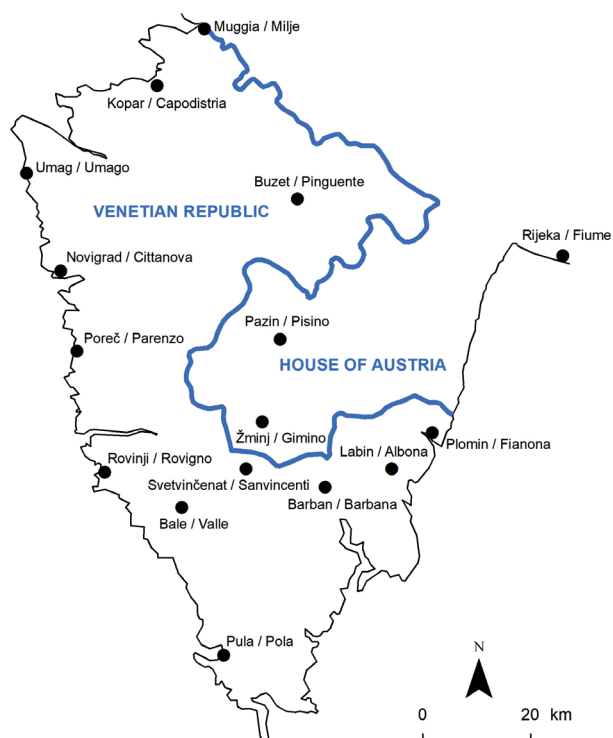
FIGURE 6. Borderline between Venetian Republic and Holy

15. «and that it is in Your interest, for it to be populated, hence a huge injustice has been done to these people, who turned uncultivated and overgrown land into fertile ground; with much labour and constant troubles at the borders with other masters, the Turks and *archiducali*, by stopping their hostile intentions, yet now the esteemed Capodistriean chamberlain would like to take measures against certain landowners that are not in accord with the valid decision from 31 October 1449, which acknowledge the then existing conditions. Therefore such a measure would cause much harm to the *podesta*, since he has made no inquiry in accordance with Your directions about the commune's jurisdiction over certain estates.» *Statut Koprškega komuna iz leta 1423 z dodatki do leta 1668 = Lo statuto del comune di Capodistria del 1423 con le aggiunte fino al 1668*, ed. Lujo MARGETIĆ *et al.*, Koper and Rovinj, Pokrajinski arhiv Koper and Centro di ricerche storiche Rovigno, 1993, p. 192-193 (book 5, No. 88).

16. «Senato Mare (1440-1797)», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč), No. 15 (1899), p. 339.

13. Ferdo GESTRIN, «Italijani v slovenskih deželah od 13. do 17. stoletja», *Zgodovinski časopis* (Ljubljana), vol. 35, No. 3 (1981), p. 223-241.

14. «Senato Misti (1332-1440)», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč), No. 5 (1889), p. 81.



Roman Empire in Istria after 1525 (Figure: Archaeological Museum of Pula and Servei Científicotècnic de Cartografia i Sistemes d'Informació Geogràfica de la Universitat de Lleida).

All coastal towns lacked grain, as they only produced a few months worth of it themselves. Furthermore, they lacked sufficient means for livestock farming, so meat or livestock had to be imported. They did not have enough forests and no mineral wealth and also lacked many other products that were available in the interior at the time. Hence, their geographic and traffic position made Istrian towns and Istria as a whole ever more important alone due to the connections between the Mediterranean and Danubian trade routes, including the routes over Slovene lands, and because North-Adriatic ports were doorways to expansive markets on the Adriatic and in Italy.¹⁷

After 1283, when they subdued Piran, the Venetians strengthened their presence in Istria and acquired the rest of the Aquileian possessions in Istria and Friuli, following the demise of the Patriarch's temporal power in 1420, gaining Muggia and arriving at the steps of Trieste (Trst) in Dolina. Already from the beginning of the thirteenth century they had tried to subdue Trieste as well, which was becoming a dangerous competitor to their Istrian towns and, with the political consolidation of the hinterlands, a growing

threat to Venice itself. Yet the city of Trieste, which had, in its conflict with the bishop of Trieste, gained autonomy by the end of the thirteenth century, successfully fought off any attempts of submitting to Venetian rule, save for a few brief periods (1202, 1370-1381). However, following the Peace of Turin (1381), when Venetians relinquished Trieste to the Patriarch of Aquileia, in 1382 Trieste, due to its distrust in the Patriarchate's already substantially weakened power and in fear of Venice, but also because of the expected benefits of trading with the hinterland, submitted for the second (first in 1369) and final time to the Habsburgs, who at the time were already de facto masters of the hinterland.

Already before the mid-fourteenth century, the Habsburgs had been interfering in the struggle between the forces in the Northern Adriatic, expanding their territory towards the sea, especially at the expense of Aquileia, and fortifying their rule up to the Karst passes in the hinterland. Rudolph of Habsburg gave greater emphasis on the dynasty's seaward expansion after he acquired the Duchy of Carniola (Kranjska in Slovenian) and prepared for the later acquisition of Inner Istria (1374) with the succession agreement (1364) with the Istrian line of the Counts of Gorizia; this made the Habsburgs direct neighbours of Venetian territories.¹⁸

Istrian towns under Venetian rule had better natural ports for the seamanship of the time than Trieste, Rijeka, Duino (Devin) and San Giovanni di Duino (Štivan) as well as a much easier access to the hinterland. Yet it was the political forces, which decisively directed both direct and transit trade, that decided on the maritime activity and role of these towns. In relation to the most powerful political force in the hinterlands, the Venetians always tried to assert the principles of *free* passage and trade, thereby raising the importance of the Istrian ports as centres of direct and transit commerce. By the second half of the fourteenth century, Koper had for a long time become the most important city for trading with the hinterland. It was with their trade policies that Venetians actually managed to break the resistance against their maritime monopoly in Koper and other cities and towns under their rule.

The Venetians made Koper their prime port in Istria with a series of measures and in 1361 made sure that commerce flowed into their favourite city with the construction of a new road in the Rižana (Risano) Valley towards Črni Kal and Klanec as well as with better road maintenance, by creating better conditions for merchants and commerce, for instance, by establi-

17. Ferdo GESTRIN, «Migracije Slovanov v Italijo. Rezultati jugoslovanske historiografije», *Zgodovinski časopis* (Ljubljana), vol. 32, No. 1-2 (1978), p. 7-21.

18. Peter ŠTIBIČ, *Goriški grofje ter njihovi ministeriali in militi v Istri in na Kranjskem*, Ljubljana, Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, 1994.



FIGURE 7. Rijeka (Fiume), by Johann Weikhard Freiherr von Valvasor (1689) (Figure: Wikimedia Commons).

shing a large inn in 1364¹⁹ and relaxing toll policies, which went as far as to exempt anyone who sold grain, flour and other foodstuffs to Koper in 1375 from paying tolls on oil, wine and salt.²⁰ Particularly favourable measures applied to the salt trade. Not only was salt production in Koper unhindered (which was not the case in Piran), salt was even brought in from elsewhere. The Venetians were well aware that salt particularly attracted traders from the hinterlands, who would then have no reason to go elsewhere. For this reason especially, Koper set lower salt prices for anyone carrying grain into town.²¹

The fruits of these policies were soon evident. There



FIGURE 8. Freighters from Carniola, by Johann Weikhard Freiherr von Valvasor (1689) (Figure: Wikimedia Commons).

is information on the increase of traffic into Koper on the newly built road by 1364, and later the way along the Rižana River was denoted as important for trade between Koper and the hinterlands. The Venetian Doge Francesco Foscari, for example, explicitly stated in 1430 that the road was used by *mussolati* or *Cranzi* (Carniolans, Kranjci in Slovenian)—as freighters arriving to coastal towns with horses, donkeys and also mules were recorded in Venetian sources—who created the city's wealth.²²

The establishment of a new toll station at Klanec was probably related to this traffic. First mentioned in the second half of the fourteenth century, it joined the few decades older toll station at Kačiče on the road to the Venetian Istrian towns.²³ During Sigismund's War (1409-1420), Capodistrians started to claim a monopoly on the grain trade, setting prices and demanding compulsory sale, so that it would not be sold in other towns. This was a time of a temporary decline in trade, following the complete halt of the traffic with the coastal, particularly Venetian, towns in 1411 and the five-year truce of 1413. Otherwise, the trade with Carniola had a favourable influence on the development and population of the Istrian countryside, also because many Carniolans decided to permanently settle in Istria, which finally allowed many to improve their standing on the social ladder. The scale of Carniolan trade with Koper was most likely at least the same as that with Piran and Trieste, which is attested by several sources since the 1320s. Already at the time, merchants from the interior had settled in all three ports, either as

19. «Senato Misti...», p. 19.

20. «Senato Misti...», p. 60.

21. «Senato Misti...», p. 309 (June 19, 1408).

22. *Codice Diplomatico Istriano...*, vol. 4, p. 1735 (July 6, 1430).

23. Ferdo GESTRIN, *Mitninske knjige 16. in 17. stoletja na Slovenskem*, Ljubljana, Slovenska Akademija Znanosti in Umetnosti, 1972.

inhabitants (*habitatores*, who, according to status, were also villagers) or even as citizens (*cives*), and bought land. In the first two thirds of the fourteenth century, individual immigrants from the Carniolan capital Ljubljana even became catchpoles (*baroerij, birro*), a sort of town police officer in the *podesta's* employ, tasked with collecting taxes from the population under his jurisdiction: for example, Nikolaj from Ljubljana in 1331-1349, Konrad the son of the master furrier Konrad from Ljubljana in 1353 or Matija the son of Matej from Ljubljana.²⁴ These people were also drawn to Istria by economic benefits, as, contrary to the hard feudal relations in Carniola and Carinthia (Koroška), leasehold prevailed on the outskirts of coastal towns, with various forms of sharecropping and partnership (*socida*), where tenants had personal freedom and were bound only by contracts.²⁵

Trade with the hinterland Inner Austrian Lands (Carniola, Styria and Carinthia) was particularly a feature of the northern Istrian towns of Muggia, Koper, Izola (Isola) and Piran, which had their heyday and demographic development between the thirteenth and the sixteenth century. This trade also continued to be emphasised in reports of their *podestas* as the essence of their economy until the dissolution of the Venetian Republic, despite the drop in their commercial activity since the end of the sixteenth centuries. These towns were also in the forefront of maritime trade, only Rovinj a fishing center has joined them by importance since the 18th century.

TABLE 1. Summary data from the statistical report of the Koper's *podestà* to the Venetian Trade Office from 1746 (ASV, CSM, 573)

	fishing boats	fishermen	cargo boats	carriers	merchant boats	sailors	total crew	total boats
Koper	35	122	18	36	26	72	230	79
Izola	33	99	—	—	13	44	143	46
Piran	34	114	60	122	15	47	283	109
Milje	11	33	—	—	4	11	44	15
Rovinj	112	577	10	40	40	185	802	162
All localities	300	1183	90	204	130	475	1862	520

Perhaps the differences were also due to the fact

24. Ferdo GESTRIN, *Trgovina slovenskega zaledja s primorskimi mesti od 13. do konca 16. Stoletja*, Ljubljana, Slovenska Akademija Znanosti in Umetnosti, 1965, p. 61.

25. Darja MIHELICH, «Socida v Piranu od 1280 do 1340», *Slovensko morje in zaledje: zbornik za humanistične, družboslovne in naravoslovne raziskave* (Koper), No. 2-3 (1979), p. 63-78.

that northern towns were considered healthier compared to those in southern Istria. Namely, for example, in the second half of the fourteenth century, Petrarch had invited Boccaccio to Koper and Trieste because of the fresh air and the diverse environment.²⁶

However, supporting the overland trade with the Habsburg lands led Istrians into new conflicts and uncertainties. Whereas the Venetians had claimed a monopoly on the Adriatic, since the second half of the fifteenth century the Habsburgs had tried to establish a monopoly on overland trade with the coastal towns, especially through Trieste and partially through Rijeka. Because of their aspirations there was incessant conflict between the two European powers, which led to the War of 1463, the War of the League of Cambrai (Austria, Spain, France, Papal States) in 1508-1516 and the War of Gradisca, or the Uskok War, as the fierce fighting in Istria and Friuli in 1616-1618 was called, all of which were in many aspects devastating for Istria, its economy and demographic situation.

While the conquest of the western Istrian towns provided the Venetian Republic with important bases for the expanse of its maritime trade to other Mediterranean and Levantine ports, and although it had complete control over imports from the East bound for European markets until the early 1500s, as well as over the international trade with Venetian and foreign manufactured goods, in the 1530s the Republic's economic might began to decline due to new geographic discoveries (the Americas) and the transfer of international trade to Western European shores, as its economy was unable to adapt to the new situation.²⁷

26. Bernardo SCHIAVUZZI, «La malaria in Istria...», p. 405.

27. See Miroslav BERTOŠA, *Istarsko vrijeme prošlo*, Pula, Glas Istre and Čakavski sabor, 1978, p. 11-19, for a vast bibliography.



FIGURE 9. The view from the northernmost part of the Adriatic (and so of the Mediterranean) Sea, by Johann Weikhard Freiherr von Valvasor (1689) (Figure: Wikimedia Commons).

Until then, Venetian ships, just like the fleets of some other Italian city states (Genoa, Pisa), were almost without competition in the Mediterranean; considering the navigation of the time, they sailed the safest maritime itinerary: first to the western Istrian ports, then, following the perilous crossing of the Gulf of Kvarner (Quarnaro), down the Venetian coast to Zadar (Zara), Split (Spalato) and further south to the Ionic, Aegean and Mediterranean Sea, often also to Black Sea ports in the east and to Spain, England, Flanders and Holland in the west. Ships and merchant convoys also returned on the same route. This was a time when Venetian galleys stopped in Pula, Rovinj, Poreč, Piran and Koper on their way from Beirut, Alexandria, Cyprus, Crete, Southampton etc., unloaded goods, repaired worn-out equipment and waited for favourable winds to cross the *Parenzana*, as the ca. one hundred Venetian-miles-long line from Istria to Venice was called in the maritime jargon, with experienced Rovignan and Parenzan ship guides (*pedotti*).

Along with the transfer of international trade to Europe's western shores and the usual famines and epidemics, which raged approximately every ten to twelve years until the last plague hit Istria in 1630-1632,²⁸ extremely unfavourable weather conditions, floods and spring frost, typical for the whole of Europe at the time and called the Little Ice Age by some,²⁹ and especially the growing Venetian economic crisis all added to the peninsula's troubles in the sixteenth century.

28. Bernardo SCHIAVUZZI, «Le epidemie di peste bubbonica in Istria. Notizie storiche», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč), No. 4 (1888), p. 423-447.

29. Emmanuel LE ROY LADURIE, *Histoire du climat depuis l'an mil*, Paris, Flammarion, 1967; Italian translation published in Emmanuel LE ROY LADURIE, *Tempo di festa, tempo di carestia: Storia del clima dall'anno mille*, Turin: Einaudi, 1982.

Although the Venetian Republic had already been leading very restrictive and monopolistic policies on maritime trade since its conquest of Istria, resulting in the severe economic stagnation of the coastal towns, which had established close commercial ties with the Adriatic prior to their subjugation, they did not experience a serious economic or demographic crisis before the 1520s. The towns and their environs had recovered relatively quickly from the occasional epidemics, population drops, traffic and production setbacks.

However, because of the aforementioned troubles, the transfer of international traffic routes to the Atlantic, the competition of the English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch fleets in the Mediterranean and ever deeper Ottoman incursions, the crisis worsened and affected not only the Venetian metropolis, but also the Istrian towns. Thus, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, at first especially in the south of Istria, there was first a notable stagnation of the population followed by its rapid decline, which could not even be stopped by the open colonisation policy, stimulating large immigration from the Balkans. Vast stretches of desolate land (for instance abandoned villages and agricultural land) were formed, which was typical for the entirety of Western Europe from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries. The territory of Pula provides an illustrative example: it once contained 72 populated villages, but their number had dropped to only twelve by 1583, as Marino Malipiero reported to the Venetian authorities upon his return from the duty as the Istrian supervisor of the Office for Untilled Land.³⁰

30. A thorough account of the situation is given by Miroslav BERTOŠA, *Istarsko vrijeme...*, p. 187-217.

TABLE 2. *Some data on larger natural disasters and epidemics (Source: Darko DAROVEC, Davki nam pijejo kri: gospodarstvo severozahodne Istre v novem veku v luči beneške davčne politike, Koper, Knjižnica Annales Majora, 2004, p. 34-36)*

year	drought	storms	spring frost	poor harvest	epidemic	rich harvest	costliness
1505-1577					14 plague epidemics		
1511		high tides					
1546	*						
1548	*						
1554					plague in Koper		
1557					plague in Piran		
1559	*						
1561-1562	*						
1571						salt	
1573		wine, oil, salt					
1578					plague		
1599		high tides					
1602					plague in Kozina		
1604		thunderstorms					
1621		*					
1630-1632					plague		
1635					Vipava		
1648-1650				salt, wine			
1652				salt			
1666				oil			
1676-1677				oil			
1680					plague in Ljubljana		
1703						salt	
1710			olives, vine				
1713			olives		rinderpest		
1716-1718						salt in Piran	
1724	*(grain)				closed borders		
1732	*	*			Dalmatia		
1738					rinderpest		
1740				grain			
1741				salt			
1744					Hungary, Transylvania		
1748					rinderpest		dearth
1761			olives, salt				
1763	vine	high tides			rinderpest		
1764							foodstuffs
1764-1766				salt			
1766				everything			
1771				salt			
1774							
1780				everything	rinderpest		
1781							
1784				oil			
1784	*				rinderpest		
1795		saltpans		oil			oil



FIGURE 10. *The return of the Bucintoro to the pier on Ascension Day*, by Canaletto (c. 1738) (Figure: Wikimedia Commons).

Hence, the desolations in the territory of Pula covered almost the 82 % of the previous agricultural land. From the first half of the sixteenth century, Venetian authorities declared these areas state property and be-



FIGURE 11. Brigand: *hajduk* Bajo Pivljanin, who entered in the service of the Republic of Venice in 1656, kills a Turk, by Serbian painter Aksentije Marodić (1838-1909) (Figure: Wikimedia Commons).

gan to settle sharecroppers from Dalmatia, Albania and Bosnia, tasking them to cultivate it in three to five years and exempting them from paying any fees for the period of twenty years. Even their transport to Istria was paid for by the state and the immigrants were given some cash, lent on favourable conditions.

In the second half of the fifteenth century, the existing troubles were joined by another grave danger, which set off migrations on a scale unseen in the Balkans since the Migration Period in Late Antiquity. Ottoman Turks had arrived on the borders of Europe, first encountered by the Venetians in their Greek and Albanian possessions at the beginning of the fifteenth century; their first incursion in Istria, on their way to Friuli, was recorded in 1469. These incursions, correlating to raiding and devastation, recurred until 1499 with greater or lesser severity, also returning several times in the sixteenth century. They caused most harm to the Istrian countryside, both on the Venetian and the Habsburg side, since coastal towns were relatively well fortified and the Turks did not even attempt to attack them. Nevertheless, they caused great insecurity and fear, so that many fled to safer places, especially to Italy, until the firmer establishment of the Military Frontier (1578).

MODERN MIGRATIONS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE ISTRIAN ECONOMY

Some groups of immigrants from Bosnia and Croatia were already settled in Contovello (Kontovel) and Prosecco (Prosek) near Trieste in 1413, while between 1432 and 1463 immigrants were settled in the Piran territory, especially in Lucija (Lucia). In 1449, colonists permanently settled in the village of Bibali near Buje, while in 1463 a larger group of Dalmatians took over the fields around Savudrija (Salvore). In the same year, the Frankopan Counts settled Croatians and Istro-Romanians in the north of the Istrian peninsula. Many other relocations are attested in archival sources by the end of the fifteenth century: in 1467 the Piran commune tried to find sharecroppers in Dalmatia who would be willing to relocate to its territory, in 1480 a group of Albanian immigrants from the vicinity of Shkodër (Scutari) arrived in the village of Dekani (Villa Decani) near Koper, ten years later Croatian refugees settled in the Karst near Trieste and in Podgrad.

Immigrants were not just invited by state authorities, but also by private landlords, who were left without a workforce because of wars, epidemics and dearth. In 1463, Marquardo Appolonio, a member of an old family, made a contract with ten farmers from the Šibenik (Sebenico) area to move to his estates in Piran.³¹

31. Miroslav BERTOŠA, *Mletačka Istra u 16. i 17. stoljeću, I-II*, Pula, Istarska naklada, 1986, p. 59.

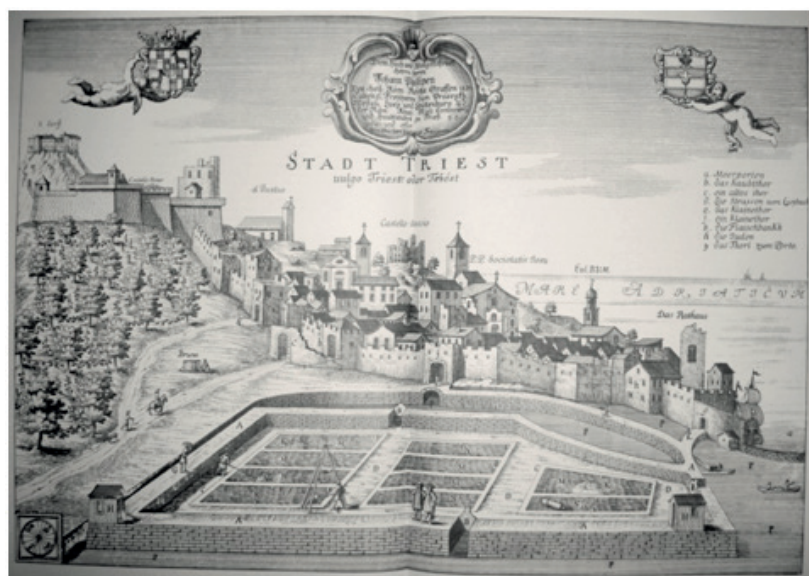


FIGURE 12. Trieste (Trst), by Johann Weikhard Freiherr von Valvasor (1689) (Figure: Wikimedia Commons).

Later, individuals were also entrusted with the recruitment of settlers and awarded for it. In 1603, Vinčenc Kukić from Šibenik promised to bring thirty families to the territory of Umag, for which he was paid six ducats per month and granted a loan of 30 ducats (1 ducat equated to 6.2 *liras*) for each family that he brought in. Simon Chiurco, an Albanian from the vicinity of Shkodër, acquired a house in Poreč in 1612 with what he had earned from the twelve Albanian families he had brought to the city's territory. Nine years later he pledged to bring in another twelve families.

However, the Venetians did not always have luck with their choice of recruiters of immigrants. In 1634, for instance, Milineo Lukanović brought 120 people from Dalmatia to the territory of Pula, yet already following year fled to the Habsburg territories together with the 120 settlers, their cattle and 2,264 *liras*, which the Venetians had lent them in order to facilitate their settlement; they were granted refuge and the right to settlement in the Empire.³²

In the sixteenth century, organised colonisation also gained momentum in the Habsburg part of Istria, where the basic demographic and ethnic characteristics were barely different from those in the Venetian part of the peninsula.³³ Between 1510 and 1525, Krsto Frankopan settled immigrants in Mune and Žejane (Seiane) and in 1511 settlers from Bosnia

came to Lupoglav (Lupogliano). The demographic situation in the County of Pazin improved greatly when the fief became property of the Moscon family (1532), who encouraged the immigration of Slavs from western Bosnia. According to statistical information from 1508 in the so-called *Libri commemoriali della Repubblica di Venezia*,³⁴ the County of Pazin counted only 1,103 «hearths or family units» and 1,283 men, fit for work and military service, in the one-year Venetian occupation during the Republic's war with Emperor Maximilian I. By 1571, the list made by the committee appointed by Archduke Charles II, there had been an increase of 815 hearths and of another 172 by 1578. The numbers would have been higher if peasants had not left for the Venetian part of Istria. In this way the population of Kršikla (Chersicla) fell by thirteen families, in Cerovlje (Cerreto) and Grdosel (Castelverde de Pisino or Gherdosella) by three, in Pićan (Pedena) by two, etc. These migrations did not substantially affect the local ethnic composition. Family names in the urbariums of the Lordship of Lupoglav (1560-1571) clearly show the Croatian and Slovene origins of its peasants, despite the fact, emphasised by the editor,³⁵ that over 55 % of the population had changed in those eleven years.

32. Bernardo SCHIAVUZZI, «Cenni storici sull'etnografia dell'Istria», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč), No. 19 (193), p. 228.

33. Egidio IVETIĆ, *La popolazione dell'Istria nell'età moderna. Lineamenti evolutivi*, Rovigno, Centro di ricerche storiche, 1997, p. 106-110.

34. Camillo DE FRANCESCHI, «Storia documentata della Contea di Pisino», *Atti e Memoria della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Trieste), vol. 62 (1963), p. 1 57.

35. Danilo KLEN, «Urbari i popisi Lupoglava (1560-1571)», *Vjesnik Historijskog arhiva u Rijeci i Pazinu* (Rijeka and Pazin), No. 18 (1973), p. 13.



FIGURE 13. Costumes from different Morlaque countries (Figure: Wikimedia Commons).

With immigration from Friuli, Carnia and Veneto—especially by artisans and small merchants—a stratum of Italian and Friulian-Carnian origin had established itself in the small towns and other settlements of Austrian or Inner Istria, particularly in Pazin, Pićan, Gradišće (Gradischie), Žminj (Gimino) and Tinjan (Antignano). In the seventeenth century, it was replenished by the sporadic immigration of Italians from the areas of Udine and Bergamo, from where the Moscon family had originated. Hence, conditions for assimilation in the small towns and the countryside of the County of Pazin also existed; the immigrant Friulians and Carnians were eventually Slavified or Croatised (for example, Callegarich, Furlanich) in the countryside and the Slavs Italianised (for example, Ivich, Bellasich, Slocovich) in the towns,³⁶ which was also the case with the German and few Hungarian immigrants. Ranieri Mario Cossar also established that Friulians (among whom he certainly counted Carnians as well) assimilated surprisingly swiftly among the autochthonous population.³⁷

At that time, the edges of Učka (Monte Maggiore) and Čičarija were self-initiatively settled by a new group of Aromanian Vlachs or Čiči, Istro-Romanians, who could not establish ethnic contact with their predecessors from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The descendants of the colonisation by these extensive (stock) farmers were actively using their own language in the nineteenth century, yet most of them were by then already submerged in the prevailing Slavic ethnoses.

Likewise, people from the Italian lands, especially Friuli, Carnia and Veneto, settled in the Venetian Istrian towns in the sixteenth and seventeenth centu-

ries on their own initiative. In the 1560s, there was also a well organised and planned colonisation of ca. 120 families from Bologna to the countryside of Pula. This was a time of an exceptional population rise in Romagna, predicated on new agrarian techniques for land improvement, so that the Bolognese immigrants to Istria were generally meant to carry out the same improvements in cultivation. The Bolognese set to work meticulously, composed a sort of cadastre, which was the only one in Istria during the Venetian period, aside from the forest cadastre,³⁸ and managed to negotiate that they would receive 4% share of crops grown on all ameliorated lands. Yet, although the nobles and city council of Pula agreed to this demand at first, the immigrants soon faced trouble. The Polesi named the 4% share of crops as the main reason for their aversion towards the Bolognese to the Venetian authorities. However, the real reason lay in the fact that during winter the Polan families rented most of the untilled state land, which they now had to give to the Bolognese, to shepherds from Austrian Istria, so the Polesi were sure that they had lost certain income. Quarrels arose, in which one of the Bolognese was killed, whereupon many returned home, while those that stayed assimilated, but the land had largely remained unameliorated.³⁹

Individuals who were banished for certain offences (*banditi*) by the courts, a measure stipulated by criminal legislation in many early modern European lands, were forcibly and temporarily settled in the Istrian peninsula as well. In this way, many Venetians who had broken the law in some way, acquired a residence in Istria; this was regarded as one of the most lenient punishments. In 1686, the authorities were even considering solving the question of populating Istria with the banished.⁴⁰ A similar case of immigration were the

38. Vjekoslav BRATULIĆ, *Vincenzo Morosini IV. Catastico generale dei boschi della Provincia dell'Istria (1775-1776), Terminazione de C.E. sopra boschi. Naredjenje P. K. varh dubravah (1777)*, Trieste and Rovinj, Lint and Centro di ricerche storiche Rovigno, 1980.

39. Miroslav BERTOŠA, *Mletačka Istra...*, p. 81-125.

40. «Senato Rettori (1630-1797)», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria*, No. 20 (1904), p. 275. About policy of banishment in medieval and early modern Europe recently published some notable studies with appropriate bibliography of the argument. See Claudio POVOLO, «Feud and Vendetta: Customs and Trial Rites in Medieval and Modern Europe: A Legal-Anthropological Approach», *Acta Histriae* (Koper), vol. 23 (2015), p. 195-244; Claudio POVOLO, «La pietra del bando: vendetta e banditismo in Europa tra Cinque e Seicento», *Acta Histriae* (Koper), vol. 25 (2017), p. 1 and 21-56; Àngel CASALS, «Legal and Illegal Forms of Vendetta in the Legal Framework of Catalonia, 15th to 17th Century», *Acta Histriae* (Koper), vol. 25 (2017), p. 219-234; Àngel CASALS, «Banditry Under the Crown of Aragon: A Historiography in the European Context», *Acta Histriae* (Koper), vol. 27 (2019), p. 581-602; Andrew VIDALI, «Interrelazioni tra pena del bando, faida e aspetti costituzionali: Venezia e la Terraferma, secoli xv-xvi», *Acta Histriae* (Koper), vol. 25 (2017), p. 261-284, among others.

36. Miroslav BERTOŠA, *Istarsko vrijeme...*, p. 119-123.

37. Ranieri Mario COSSAR, «Una vecchia circolare riguardante i friulani dell'Istria», *Ce fastu?* (Udine), No. 3-4 (1930), p. 5-6.

mercenaries paid for the defence of Istria, who came from Italian, German, North African, Spanish and, of course, Balkan lands and even from the Netherlands and France. In November 1600, for instance, the captain of Rašpor, Francesco Correr, made a list of his troops by nationality (*da particular conto del numero di quelle militie à nation per nation*), as he had written, and counted 330 Italians, 48 Frenchmen, 106 Croats and 90 Corsicans.⁴¹

The most intensive immigration to Istria, either organised or self-initiated, was from the Balkan peninsula, which was unstable particularly due to Ottoman conquest. Venetian captains from Dalmatia and Kotor (Cattaro) reported several times on the origins of this exodus. In his 1578 report to the Senate, for instance, Alvise Dolfin, the Duke of Zadar, emphasised that although the territory of Zadar was inhabited, there was great fear of the invading Turks, stealing movables and kidnapping children, so that many families fled to Apulia or Istria. Eight years later, Zuane Battista Michiel, the Duke of Zadar, reported that many villages in city's territory were abandoned, although there were «Christians, Turkish subjects» living in the Ottoman-held hinterland, who were raided by the Uskoks from across the Venetian border. Therefore, Michiel argued that this population should be quietly enticed to settle in the abandoned villages in Zadar's territory or should be sent to Istria. Although these Christian Ottoman subjects were promised an exemption from all fees from tilled land in the city's territory for the next eight years, they decided to move to the distant and well-known Istria, where conditions for settlement were more favourable.⁴²

At first, the settlement of new inhabitants in the name of state administration was managed by *podestas* of individual Dalmatian and Istrian towns, by temporary syndics and overseers (*provveditori*; in the 1570s the Istrian *Provveditore sopra i Legni* also managed the settlement), elected by the Venetian Major Council, the Senate or the Council of Ten, as well as by officers of regular Venetian offices, such as the Captain of the Gulf (*Capitano in Golfo*) and the General Captain of (Istria,) Dalmatia and Albania (*Capitano generale in Dalmazia et Albania*). In 1556, the Venetians also established a special office for the settlement and cultivation of abandoned land (*Magistrato sopra i Beni inculti*). The office was supposed to cover the whole of the Republic, but since its operation in Istria was ineffective, a special overseer (*Provveditore nell'Istria*) was appointed and stationed in Pula. He managed the

settlement of new inhabitants, who answered only to him in both administrative and judicial matters. The overseers were appointed for two-year terms until 1592, when their duties were taken over by the territorial Captain in Rašpor (Buzet).

There are rather substantial archival records from the period of the special overseer of Istria, which sheds light on the complex problem of settlement in the peninsula in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Particularly that the organised settlement of ca. 4,000 Greeks from Nafplio (Nauplio), Monemvasia (Malvasia), Crete, Cyprus and elsewhere was ineffective in all twelve attempts made between 1530 to 1669. Due to the harsh conditions in a new land and conflicts with the local population, many moved elsewhere or returned home, while those that remained integrated into the predominant Italian population, since they were mostly settled in urban areas. Immigrants from Albania, many of whom were of Slavic origin, since most of the Montenegrin Littoral was then part of Albania, integrated into the predominantly Slavic population in the countryside. The numerous immigrants of Slavic origin fared the best in the new land and many reports from *podestas* and overseers described them as hardy, used to hardship and suitable to deal with the almost unbearable conditions in Istria.

In the spirit of the Council of Trent, the Venetian authorities put particular attention to the conversion of the recruited non-Catholic immigrants. Before leaving home, they had to swear that they would convert to Catholicism. Although most immigrants to Istria were Catholics from western Bosnia, Herzegovina, Dalmatia, Adriatic islands and the neighbouring Austrian lands, often even under the leadership of their Franciscan priests, many also settled from Orthodox lands, such as Greeks and immigrants of Montenegrin and Serbian origin. Of these, only the Montenegrin group from Crmnica, which had settled in Peroj (Peroi) in the mid-seventeenth century, kept their Orthodox faith. Their success was possible not only because they brought their own priest with them, but also due to the already existing Orthodox church of St Nicholas in Pula, established by Greek refugees in 1588, which was the only Orthodox parish in Istria acknowledged by the authorities.

Although the Venetian authorities allowed the Greek families in Pula and the Montenegrins in Peroj the right to Orthodox services in the Polan church of St Nicholas, they were not welcomed at the local level. «The village of Peroj belongs to the Greek schismatic rite», complained the Polan bishop Bernardino Corniani to the local overseer in 1669. «People from Montenegro came here with the endorsement of state authorities, promising that they will accept the confession of the Holy Roman Church, but when they settled, they failed to keep their promise». Even worse, as the

41. ASV, PTM, 341.

42. *Commissiones et Relationes Venetae. Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum Meridionalium*, vol. 4, Zagreb, Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1964, p. 224 and 374.

Polan bishop warned, their Orthodox priest Onofrio Sagredo supposedly tried to proselytise the Catholic families in Peroj, since «the new Morlachs only rarely visit the church and carry out their Christian duties», so that these Catholics, who «know no God but their stomachs», could easily come under the influence of the pushy Sagredo.⁴³



FIGURE 14. The Montenegrinian community in Peroj, near Pula, according to August Anton Tischbein (1842) (Figure: Wikimedia Commons).

With time, most Orthodox settlers were catholicised, since bishop Gasparo Negri was pleased to note in 1748 that the «sectarian delusions» have gone by and that even «the mothers among former Greek immigrants raise their children in the Catholic faith».⁴⁴

Yet many Orthodox immigrants refused to bow to the pressure and also due to unfavourable economic conditions and other problems preferred to return home or leave for other Balkan lands or to Italy, some even to Ottoman territories. This was the case with an attempted settlement of ca. 700 *hajduks* from Bokelj (including a few Catholic families), which was a complete failure after only a few years.

The chronology of organised immigration from the Balkans to Istria from the beginning of the fifteenth to the end of the seventeenth century, for instance, for a period of 300 years, when groups as large as 120 families arrived together, was given by V. Bratulić in his monograph on Greek, Albanian and Slavic immigrants to Rovinjsko Selo (Villa di Rovigno).⁴⁵ M. Bertoša added more data taken from P. Kandler, namely that a

43. ASV, DRI, f. 55r.

44. Ivan GRAH, «Izveštaji porečkih biskupa Svetoj stolici (1588-1775)», *Croatia christiana periodica* (Zagreb), vol. 7, No. 12 (1983), p. 45.

45. Vjekoslav BRATULIĆ, *Rovinjsko selo: monografija jednog istarskog sela*, Zagreb, Jadranski Institut Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti, 1959.

group of Morlachs (as the Venetians called Slavs and Vlachs from the Balkans) settled in Nova vas (Villanova) near Poreč in 1556, a Dalmatian group in Rašpor in 1606 and Croatian families from Dalmatia and Croatia in the area stretching from Koper to Pula in 1540-1630.⁴⁶ Predicated on archival sources, Bratulić listed 117 cases of group-settlements of Balkan Slavs from 1401 to 1699,⁴⁷ while the Montenegrin historian Stanojević calculated, based on yet unpublished sources from the Venetian State Archives, that ca. 11,000 people immigrated to Istria from 1600 to 1670, namely 8,300 from Dalmatia and Bosnia, 2,000 from the Montenegrin Littoral and 306 Greeks and 362 Albanians from the area between Bar (Antivari) and the Bojana River.⁴⁸



FIGURE 15. Morlach of the canton of Segna (Figure: Wikimedia Commons).

46. Miroslav BERTOŠA, «Istarski fragment itinerara mletačkih sindika iz 1554. godine», *Vjesnik Historijskog arhiva u Rijeci i Pazinu* (Rijeka and Pazin), No. 17 (1972), p. 37-44; Pietro KANDLER, *L'Istria*, vol. 4, Trieste, Papsch & C., 1849, p. 42-43 (No. 11); Pietro KANDLER, *L'Istria*, vol. 6, Trieste, Papsch & C., 1851, p. 73-85 (No. 18-20).

47. Vjekoslav BRATULIĆ, *Rovinjsko selo...*

48. Gligor STANOJEVIĆ, «Naseljavanje Istre u XVII. vijeku s osvrtom na iseljavanje iz Crne Gore i Crnogorskog primorja», *Istorijski zapisi* (Titograd), vol. 12, No. 3 (1965), p. 429-467.

Whereas Stanojević claims that the aforementioned period (without taking all the literature at his disposal into account) was a time of «one of the most massive migrations in the history of our [Yugoslav] nations, which did not happen at once, but gradually»,⁴⁹ we can establish, predicated on a source published seven years later,⁵⁰ that a similar number of people from the later Yugoslav territory had already immigrated to Istria in the sixteenth century and within a much shorter time span, for instance, twenty years.

dics Bragadin, Lando and Morosini.⁵¹ The table 2 shows that syndics not only counted the old families, but also new immigrants, which were collectively named *Morlachi*. Beginning in the first half of the sixteenth century, in order to increase and encourage immigration to Istria, Venetians extended the exemption from paying taxes to newcomers from five to twenty or even twenty-five years; their status as new inhabitants was prolonged for the same time period. Thus, we can establish that the 1,945 Morlach families listed in the census immigrated from 1534 to 1554, which repre-

TABLE 3. *List of the old and new inhabitants of Venetian Istria in 1554*

place	town/terra	territory	together	Morlach families
Piran	3100	—	3100	45
Buje	967	647	1614	50
Grožnjan (Grisignana)	928	—	928	50
Oprtalj (Portole)	1166	—	1166	—
Sv. Lovrenc	1200	—	1200	120
Bale	904	—	904	30
Barbana	1600	—	1600	130
Labin and Plomin (Fianona)	2854	—	2854	200
Svetvinčenat (Sanvincenti)	2000	—	2000	—
Motovun	1793	2470	4263	300
Buzet	4844	—	4844	—
Umag	700	—	700	25
Novigrad	1008	—	1008	40
Poreč	780	340	1120	100
Rovinj	1789	130	1919	40
Vodnjan	1845	—	1845	60
Pula	594	2654	3251	60
Izola	1600	100	1700	—
Muggia	1411	137	1548	—
Koper	5706	5588	11294	180
Dvigrad (Duecastelli)				55
Vižinada (Visinada) and Tar (Torre)				170
Završje (Piemonte d'Istria)				50

The extent of immigration in the sixteenth century is explicitly stated in the first known census for Venetian Istria from 1554, carried out by the Venetian syn-

sents about one-fifth of the population of Venetian Istria at the time (52,785), if each family had five family members on average.⁵²

49. Miroslav BERTOŠA, «Jedan prilog naseljavanju Istre u XVII. stoljeću», *Historijski zbornik* (Zagreb), No. 19-20 (1967-1968), p. 467-483

50. Miroslav BERTOŠA, «Istarski fragment itinerara...», p. 37-44.

51. Biblioteca del Museo Correr di Venezia, Miscellanea Cicogna, No. 2855, f. 161r-167r; see Miroslav BERTOŠA, «Istarski fragment itinerara...», p. 37-44.

52. Ivan ERCEG, «Broj i veličina porodica u Istri (2. polovica 18. stoljeća)», *Acta historico-oeconomica Iugoslaviae* (Zagreb), No. 9 (1981), p. 116.

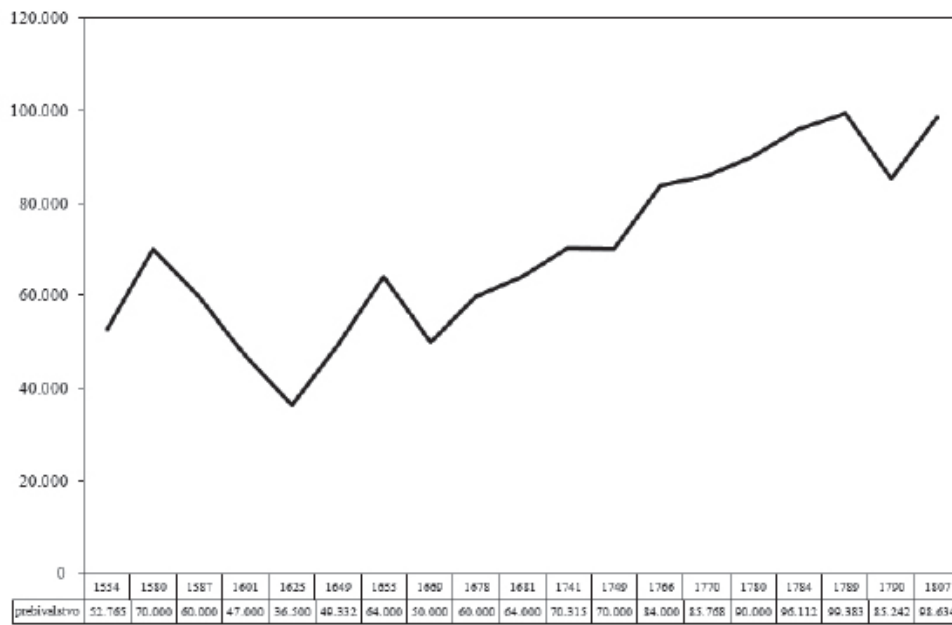


Figure 16. The population fluctuation in Venetian Istria (area 2,586.92 km²) according to the censuses from 1554 to 1807 (Source: Egidio IVETIĆ, *Oltremare. L'Istria nell'ultimo dominio veneto*, Venice, Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 2000, p. 102).

Hence, the hundreds of years of continuous migrations can be divided into the self-initiated and the organised, individual and collective, external (from outside of Istria) and internal (from within Istria), those from the County of Pazin and other, smaller fiefs and estates to Venetian Istria and vice versa, or simply from one commune to another. As there were no cadastres to control the plots provided to the immigrants, many solved their precarious economic situation simply by moving to another commune and registering as new arrivals to Istria, when, after twenty years had passed

since their initial settlement, they should have started paying taxes.

In early modernity, the Venetian Republic was unable to continue to favourably solve the complex economic and political situation of the once relatively thriving Istrian towns. This is best shown in the drop of urban populations following the epidemics and wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as they did not recover to the numbers from before the mid-sixteenth century until the end of the Republic, with the exception of Rovinj. Koper, for instance, lost

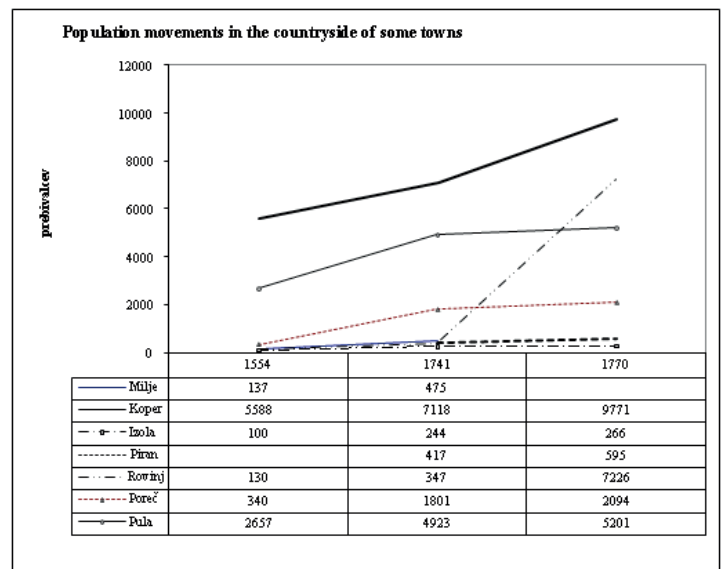
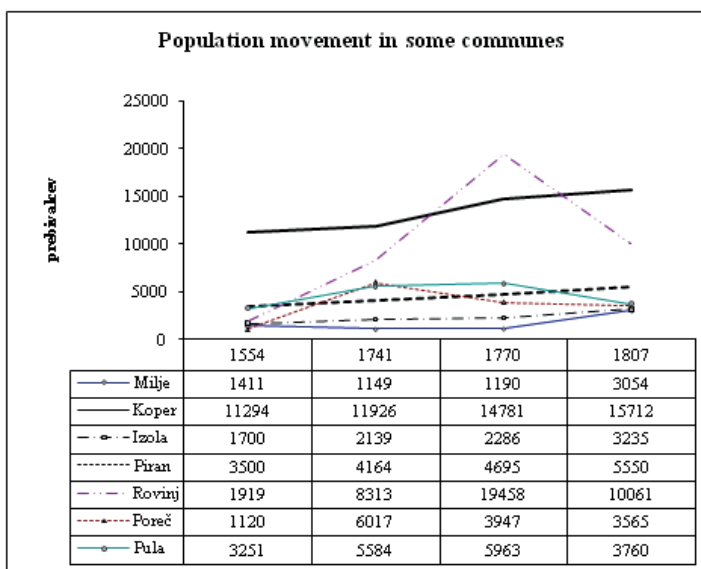


Figure 17. Population movements in some communes and in their countrysides (Source: Darko DAROVEC, *Davki nam pijejo kri...*, p. 48-49).

more than half of its population following the plague of 1553-1554 and was hit even harder by the plague of 1630-1632, which devastated the entire peninsula in a similar fashion.

Coastal towns were hit the worst by these disasters, yet despite the aforementioned two severe epidemics in Koper, the northwestern towns of Muggia, Koper, Izola and Piran did not lose as many inhabitants as other Istrian towns under Venetian administration. While Pula had ca. 4,500 inhabitants in the mid-fifteenth century, a century later there were only 594 left; at the time there were 17 nobles on its city council, while the city had only three noble families left in the 1630s. Poreč had suffered a similar fate: in the mid-fourteenth century it had a population of ca. 3,000, in the second half of the sixteenth century less than 700 and in 1630 only thirty people were living in the city.⁵³ This was likely the result of the much more favourable position of the northwestern Istrian towns regarding health and especially due to the possibility of a faster renewal of the population because of the busy trade with the hinterland.

When a town was devastated by disease or ran out of available labour, salaries went up and usually attracted the neighbouring population, which resulted in the abandonment of the countryside. However, the Istrian countryside was plagued by malaria rather than by the towns, and at the time experienced a relatively favourable population growth, since most immigrants were (stock) farmers and the Venetian authorities strove to repopulate abandoned land.

Although immigration had a foremost economic character, in which the ethnic affiliation played no crucial role, it was also strategically important to the Republic. While organised migration to northern Istria, across the Dragonja River, stopped in the mid-sixteenth century, particularly due to the decline of the Ottoman threat, on the other hand the Uskok threat encouraged immigration to southern Istria. This was particularly advised by the Venetian overseer in Istria, Giacomo Renier, in his report in 1585, who wrote:

Li Morlachi Zaratini et Sebenzani già sudditi del Signor Turco, gente non solo di molta robustezza, et avezza alla fatica, ma industriosissima et molto atta alla propria manual agricultura, i quali senza dubbio promettono profitto considerabilissimo. Sono persone utili per diversi rispetti, così perché Vostra Serenità potrebbe in ogni tempo servirsi di loro per soldati, galeotti, guastadori et ogni altro servitio, come anco perché in qual si voglia occorrenza, mentre in loro sia continuo zelo di fedeltà, saranno atti a difender quelle punte et estremità

53. Danilo KLEN, «Uvjeti i razvitak odnosa između pučana i građana u mletačkoj Istri», *Radovi Instituta za hrvatsku povijest* (Zagreb), vol. 10, No. 1 (1977), p. 308.

da ogni depredatione, et incursione che volesse esser fatta da Corsari, over altra simil gente di mal affare.⁵⁴

Both Austrian and Venetian authorities conscripted many immigrants, who were fit for military service, into *cernide* or *černide*, a sort of peasant army,⁵⁵ and stationed them at their borders for the defence of their respective states. However, immigrants had other troubles awaiting them in their new homeland, in addition to those at sea on their way to Istria.

A group of Dalmatian immigrants was described by the Captain of Rašpor in his letter to the Senate from February 7, 1611:

Among them are 47 men aged 18 to 60. Only 23 are fit for work and military service, the rest are old men and children. The other 41 persons are women and girls [...] I have established that they are all healthy. It could be only by the grace of God that the 88 souls aboard a frigate as small as this one have remained alive and healthy on such a long voyage, in rainy and windy weather, poorly dressed, without food and, as can be said, without anything.⁵⁶

Many faced destitution even after they had settled on allocated land. «These people are filled with misery and poverty», wrote the public surveyor on March 27, 1611. «As I was measuring the plots of their allocated land, I was surrounded by heads of families, who constantly kept asking the same question: “How and from what are we to live by, until this stony and brushy land is transformed into arable fields?!».⁵⁷ Reports and letters of Istrian overseers contain many descriptions of groups of hungry and freezing colonists, eating raw olives from the trees, stealing crops from fields and gardens or sleeping outside, covered with branches.⁵⁸

The situation of the new inhabitants was further exacerbated by the opposition of the natives, whose land was taken away and given to the immigrants, while they had to pay all the taxes. The problems with fresh water also deepened with the new arrivals. Giovanni Battista Basadona, the Captain of Rašpor, pictu-

54. «Morlachs from Zadar and Šibenik, former Turkish subjects, are not only dauntless and hardy, but also very resourceful and skilful in farm work, capable of making nice profits. These people are very useful for various work, so that Your Serenity could use them at any time as soldiers, oarsmen, for building fortifications or any other task and, considering their modesty and loyalty, they are also capable and willing to defend exposed places [i.e. southern Istrian villages] from pillaging and raiding by corsairs and similar evildoing rabble». Pietro KANDLER, *Notizie storiche di Pola*, Parenzo, Tipografia di Gaetano Coana, 1876, p. 358.

55. Darko DAROVEC, «Obrambna organizacija komuna Koper pod Benečani», *Kronika: časopis za slovensko krajevno zgodovino* (Ljubljana), vol. 37, No. 1-2 (1989), p. 27-37.

56. ASV, DRI, f. 6r.

57. ASV, DRI, f. 6r.

58. ASV, DRI, f. 19r (December 15, 1625).

resquely described the troubles of the new inhabitants in 1638:

Dove non c'è abbastanza acqua, la bevono dal lago, che è inquinata e provoca malattie e la peste. È stato fatto un esperimento riempiendo un bicchiere di acqua e, dopo alcune ore, si è visto che per metà c'era fango e sabbia; così la gente si infetta. Ho osservato che soprattutto nei dintorni di Pola costruiscono un tipo di cisterne [acquedotti] che sono ancora in uso nel levante. Sarebbe bene mandare da loro dei mastri esperti a costruire acquedotti decenti, d'altra parte si potrebbe anche guadagnare qualcosa, impiegare della gente, produrre calce, pietrame [...].⁵⁹

He wrote that there is hunger and poverty among them, so they also flee to Imperial lands and steal for a living.⁶⁰ In 1761, after visiting the land, the *podesta* of Koper also established that the main problem was the lack of water and thought of ways of how to accelerate the population's progress.⁶¹

Conflict did not arise only because of a clash of *mentalities*, but also due to the use of pastures, sinkhole ponds (*kal* in Slovenian) and forests where woodcutting was permitted. Many reports state that the colonists are «generally very much hated» in all of Istria. In the territories of Pula, Poreč, Rovinj and Umag armed clashes had even occurred. Leading the natives were not only their mayors, but also the urban nobility, lower communal officials as well as rectors, who had lost the right to collect royalties, fines and other fees from the new inhabitants.

Often, the newcomers defended their rights against Venetian rectors as well. After a knight (*cavaliere*) of the rector of Poreč took away some immigrants' livestock, found in someone else's fields, and then the rector prohibited them from coming to town, a group of colonists, armed with sabres, crossbows, pistols and pikes, broke through the town gates and came in front of the praetorian palace, so the *podesta* had to return their cattle.⁶²

59. «Where there is not enough water, they drink from pools with contaminated water, which causes disease and the plague. An experiment was conducted by pouring this water into a glass and after a few hours [we] saw that half the glass was mud and sand; this is how people get infected. I have noticed that, particularly in the vicinity of Pula, they build wells that are still common in the Levant. It would be well advised to send them good masters to build them decent wells, since they would also make some money, hire people, acquire lime, stones [...].»

60. «Relazioni dei Capitani di Raspo», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč), No. 4 (1889), p. 308.

61. «Senato Mare (1440-1797)», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč), No. 17 (1901), p. 212.

62. MIROSLAV BERTOŠA, «Pusta zemlja. Kolonizacija mletačkog dijela Istre», *Istra* (Pula), vol. 17, No. 3 (1979), p. 75.

In such uncertain conditions many colonists broke the law. The Captain of Rašpor, Contarini, wrote:

Molti nuovi abitanti sono diventati briganti, circolano per la regione, rubano, attaccano e uccidono. Ne ho condannati una decina a vogare sulle galee, uno l'ho impiccato sulla forca, a uno ho fatto tagliare la testa, avrei punito però anche altri delinquenti se solo avessi avuto la forza di catturarli. Ripulirei questo posto da tutti questi pericolosi trasgressori che sono rei di svariate attività criminali.⁶³

However, some Venetian rectors had begun to realise that the judiciary had a hand in causing this situation, since it stipulated banishment for even the slightest offences. Thus, one of them, Angelo Morosini, the *podesta* and captain of Koper, suggested in 1678 that it would be better to banish only those who committed serious offences and that the court of appeal should either revoke the banishment or banish them to underpopulated places like Novigrad, which was almost unpopulated.⁶⁴ Only seven families had been recorded there three years earlier.⁶⁵ In 1725, Giustinian Cocco nevertheless admitted that, although the new settlers from Albania caused him the most trouble by far, he was too afraid to banish them, «as this will only lead to more crime in the land», and proposed that only those charged with murder or some other grave offence should be banished.⁶⁶

Still, many positive judgements of the new inhabitants have survived as well, especially findings that the colonisation's influence on the economic progress in sixteenth —and seventeenth-century Istria was obvious and undisputed. In the eyes of many rectors, «the new inhabitants were the foundation of the cultivation of Istrian lands; they cleared, meliorated and cultivated large areas and saved plots from erosion and deterioration». In his studies on birth and death registers for Pula from 1626 to 1700, Bertoša argued that the city would have been abandoned long ago without the influx of new inhabitants.⁶⁷

63. «Many new inhabitants have become bandits, cruising the Province, stealing, assaulting and killing. I have sentenced ten that were caught to galley service, one to be hung from the *forke* and one to be decapitated, and would have punished other evildoers, if only I had the power to catch them. I would cleanse this place from these evil transgressors, who have committed many criminal misdeeds». MIROSLAV BERTOŠA, «Pusta zemlja...», p. 75.

64. «Relazioni dei Podestà e Capitani di Capodistria», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč), No. 8 (1892), p. 134.

65. «Senato Rettori...», p. 34.

66. «Relazioni dei Podestà e Capitani di Capodistria», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč), No. 10 (1894), p. 159.

67. BERTOŠA, MIROSLAV. *Istarsko vrijeme...*, p. 209; SLAVEN BERTOŠA, *Život i smrt u Puli. Starosjeditelji i doseljenici od XVII. do početka XIX. stoljeća*, Pazin, Matica Hrvatska, 2002.

However, the same sources for Koper from 1632 to 1708 do not allow for the same conclusion. After Benussi confirmed the characteristic finding that the number of births and matrimonies rose following plague epidemics (unlike after malaria), he realised that, predicated on the relation between births and deaths in Koper in this period, the city should have had 6,658 inhabitants in 1709, while according to the reliable Venetian census it only had 4,638 due to emigration.⁶⁸

Benussi attributed the population drop of 2,020 to the unfavourable economic situation, which, despite the growing capital of some economic institutions in the city (the *Fontico* granary, the *Monte di Pietà* pawnbroker's), the development of educational institutions and other gains, forced many Capodistrians into emigration and the search for better conditions for survival. This proves that not only the malcontent immigrated to or emigrated from Istria, but that emigration was very much present among the *native* population as well. Istrians moved to other Istrian and Italian places as well as to other neighbouring and distant lands.

TABLE 4. *Births and deaths in the city of Koper from 1632 to 1708* (Source: Bernardo BENUSSI, «Frammento demografico...», p. 1003)

period	births	deaths	mortality per 100 births	marriages per 1,000 inh. per year
1632-1635	529	269	50.8	21.9
1636-1640	645	225	34.9	10.04
1641-1645	638	354	55.4	6.74
1646-1650	553	468	84.6	6.88
1651-1655	468	366	78.2	7.32
1656-1660	492	302	61.4	7.56
1661-1665	573	511	89.2	8.52
1666-1670	725	352	48.5	9.34
1671-1675	755	278	36.8	6.58
1676-1680	712	248	34.9	7.46
1681-1685	796	171	25.5	8.18
1686-1690	811	442	54.5	7.96
1691-1695	806	717	88.9	8.86
1696-1700	804	581	72.3	7.12
1701-1705	914	695	76.1	9.24
1706-1708	634	397	62.6	8.16

68. Bernardo BENUSSI, «Frammento demografico (Capodistria)», *Miscellanea di studi in onore di Atillio Hortis 2*, Trieste, Stab. art. tip. G. Caprin, 1910, p. 985-1021.

A further reason for this was the traditional economic and production relations, which persevered despite the constant mobility of the population or even because of it in the Middle Ages and particularly in early modernity. A specific social and ethnic contrast between towns and the countryside had developed in Istria and even in the eighteenth century the social-economic structure remained connected to ethnicity, although ethnic conflict had not yet been attested at the time, unlike confessional conflict. In general, the coastal towns represented a market for agricultural surplus, whereas the countryside could acquire products for home use in the towns, while the surplus from both areas was reallocated either across the sea to Venice and Friuli or to the Austrian lands in the hinterland. Perhaps it was this very continuity and the lack of adaptability to new situations, even more severe in Venice itself, which led to even greater decline after the Istrian population managed to ward off mortal epidemics and the Republic managed to establish a *lasting* peace on its borders with Austria in the eighteenth century.

Embarrassed by Austrian victories over their common Ottoman enemy on the one hand and on the other infatuated by the strength of their own merchant navy, the Venetians were at first untroubled by the success of Trieste, since, especially due to inept Austrian policies, it took quite a while for it to acquire the status of a free port. This success is best shown by the city's population growth: from ca. 5,000 in 1719 to only ca. 6,500 in 1758, but already to 10,000 in 1775 and to 17,000 in 1785. Proportional to population growth was the mercantile and, of course, economic success, which was soon evident in various economic institutions like the Imperial Privileged Oriental Company (*L'Imperiale privilegiata compagnia orientale*), although unsuccessful at first, the stock market, insurance companies and banks.

For comparison, the city of Koper only had ca. 5,000 inhabitants in the eighteenth century, while the population in its countryside rose from ca. 7,000 at the beginning of the century to ca. 11,000 by its end. However, this was essentially a consequence of the development of the port of Trieste and its need for agrarian produce. Undoubtedly, Rovinj was the largest town in Venetian Istria in the eighteenth century, with a population of ca. 12,000. As late as the first half of the eighteenth century, some town rectors still envisioned a chance to establish a free flow of goods through Rovinj, just like through Trieste or Rijeka, but such initiatives fell on deaf ears with the Venetian authorities.⁶⁹

Although agriculture and stock farming remained the main economic sectors of the Istrian rural popula-

69. Bernardo BENUSSI, *L'Istria nei suoi due millenni di storia*, Trieste, G. Caprin, 1924, p. 386-387.



FIGURE 18. Rovinj (Rovigno), by Giuseppe Rosaccio (Venezia, 1598) (Figure: Wikimedia Commons).

tion, there was little change there as well. In the mid-eighteenth century maize began to be cultivated, but it did not fare very well due to recurrent droughts, so that many stopped growing it and returned to the traditional sorghum.⁷⁰ The bias of the rural and even urban population against the cultivation of potatoes was also substantial, since as late as 1794 the Capodistriean Academy had discussed the usefulness and necessity of convincing the peasants to grow them.⁷¹

There was quite a bit of private initiative in the field of mercantilism and the beginning of industrialisation. Among them was the spinning mill of Gian Rinaldo Carli, built in Cere or Carlisburg near Koper in 1761. He employed fifty workers and modernised the mill with a dye-works, but was ignored by the Venetian authorities when he applied for tax relief.⁷²

In addition to the unsupportive Venetian authorities, Carli also faced substantial rejection in his local environment. This and certain accidents that accompanied his project, but particularly the general economic immaturity of the province, brought his commendable and enlightened attempts in Istria to a miserable end.⁷³

In the same century, a wax-making plant opened in Koper, in 1748 a tannery, liquor and pasta plants in Rovinj, a cloth factory in Poreč,⁷⁴ in 1764 a manufacturer

of *Morlach* hats in Piran,⁷⁵ coal had begun to be extracted in Labin and alum (a chemical compound used for tanning) in Sovinjak near Buzet. In 1784, the captain of Rašpor, Gasparo Moro, mentioned that although the territory of Buzet had enough grain and wine and even produced some oil, the rest had to be acquired from elsewhere and the crafts and trade were not well developed, so that the land was destitute. However, he added with pride that they could expect development from the discovery of alum and copper sulphate mines and a processing plant constructed by lieutenant Pietro Turini.⁷⁶ At the end of the seventeenth century, attempts were made to grow mulberry trees in the territory of Koper, which resulted in some profit by the mid-eighteenth century. In 1741, Capodistriean were permitted to farm oysters.⁷⁷

All efforts for the industrialisation of Venetian Istria were in vain compared with the strong industrial development in the Austrian lands, especially in Trieste. The competition from Austrian products and the complete disregard of Venetian authorities for the general and cultural development of the province, with constant excuses about the stubborn and lazy Istrian peasants, could not lead anywhere else but to chronic recession, smuggling and banditry.⁷⁸ This is attested by many surviving reports from town rectors, officers of the grain office (*Magistrato alle biave*) and health overseers (*Provveditori alla sanità*).

70. «Relazioni dei Podestà e Capitani di Capodistria», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč), No. 10 (1894), p. 334.

71. Elio APIH, «Contributo alla storia dell'agricoltura istriana (1750-1830)», *Atti* (Rovinj), No. 4 (1973), p. 126.

72. Elio APIH, *Rinnovamento e illuminismo nel '700 italiano. La formazione culturale di Gian Rinaldo Carli*, Trieste, Deputazione di Storia Patria per la Venezia Giulia, 1973, p. 172-206.

73. Darko DAROVEC, «Merkantilistični poskus Gian Rinalda Carlja: predilnica v Cereju pri Koprju», *Acta Histriae* (Koper), vol. 5 (1997), p. 91-102.

74. «Relazioni dei Podestà e Capitani di Capodistria», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč), No. 10 (1894), p. 71.

75. «Relazioni dei Podestà e Capitani di Capodistria», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč), No. 13 (1897), p. 120.

76. «Relazioni dei Capitani...», p. 346.

77. Bernardo BENUSI, *L'Istria nei suoi due millenni...*, p. 365.

78. Furio BIANCO, «Ribellismi, rivolte antifiscali e repressione della criminalità nell'Istria del '700», *Acta Histriae* (Koper), vol. 3 (1994), p. 149-164; Egidio IVETIĆ, *L'Istria moderna. Un'introduzione ai secoli XVI-XVIII*, Rovinj, Centro di ricerche storiche Rovigno, 1999.

Perhaps it was precisely smuggling, more characteristic of northwestern than southwestern Istrian towns, that pointed to the Istrians' tendency for self-preservation at the end of the *Ancien Régime* and to their ability to adapt to new situations, when Trieste was established as one of the most important Mediterranean ports for the needs of Central Europe. The relentlessness of the Venetian authorities was manifested particularly in the rising taxes on products that were of vital importance to the Istrians, especially salt, oil, fish, both fresh and salted, wine and, to a degree, timber, Istrian stone and marble. Most products had to be shipped to Venice first, where taxes had to be paid, while the sale of Istrian wine at one of the richest world markets at the time was prohibited. Hence, the medieval tradition of smuggling flourished particularly in the eighteenth century. The complaint of the Capodistrian *podesta* and captain Pietro Basadonne from 1650 perhaps best illustrates the scale of the problem: although he expected the yearly taxes from oil sales to reach 30,000 ducats, only 5,000 or 6,000 ducats had actually been paid.⁷⁹

Can we then agree with Luciano Pezzolo that the reasons for the economic recession in the final centuries of the Venetian Republic are not to be sought only in the incorrect and counterproductive fiscal politics?⁸⁰

One cannot help but ask, if Venetian Istria actually suffered a serious economic standstill at all or is this image just the result of the rapid rise of the always competitive Trieste, which was unreachable in its development from the eighteenth century? Also, were there any other economic factors operating in the background, which cannot be discerned from the fiscal books, yet substantially impacted the people's living conditions?

Ivan Erceg's study of the 1803 census from archival sources⁸¹ can lead to such questions. The census is undoubtedly an extreme rarity for the time in its structural classification of the population, sorted into nobles, priests and officials, artisans and peasants. It can be deduced from the census that, according to its social and the resulting economic and demographic structure, Venetian Istria did not fall behind any of its neighbouring lands, apart from Trieste and its environs. Furthermore, in some towns, like in Koper, Poreč and Piran, the numbers of artisans were substantial (60 %

of the population in Koper and Poreč, 25 % in Piran) and the non-agrarian segment of the urban population was even larger, while the agrarian population accounted for 77 % of the population in the entire territory of Koper (57 % in Poreč, 70 % in Piran). It is unlikely that such a high number of artisans (for instance, 2,989 in Koper) would have produced only for the needs of the city's vicinity, and even more unlikely that this population structure had not been inherited from the Venetian period. However, as will become apparent below, this rather large segment of the non-agrarian population should be attributed mostly to fishermen, sailors and salt pan workers, all of whom also worked the land, rather than to merchants and artisans.

Hence, the statistical data for Rovinj, the largest Istrian town at time, is not so surprising: 10,195 people supposedly lived in the town in 1803 and only 314 in its countryside, but as many as 9,307 of them were peasants. It is well-known that Rovinj was one of the largest Istrian fishing and maritime towns of the time. This case in particular directs us to study the local administrative and financial order when investigating the economy. This order changed through the years and in relation to individual obligations. The substantial rise of Rovinj's countryside population in the 1770s, when the so-called *podestas of Rovinj* annexed some other territories to the town, particularly the settlements in the fief of Petrapilosa, and the following decline in population numbers in the early nineteenth century, can especially be attributed to changes in the local administrative system.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, we can conclude that Istria is one of the typical Mediterranean regions, which experienced a great population fluctuation from near and far. Despite the unfavourable living conditions, its proximity to the sea, developed towns and favourable possibilities for trading with them, just as specific social relations made Istria attractive for immigrants from the wider hinterland, while characteristic social and political events in the Mediterranean also dictated internal migrations.

Migrations were especially intensive in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when there was a change in the geographical origin of almost half of the population of Istria, and further strengthened the already existing cultural, social and ethnic division between towns and the countryside. But the effects of migrations only became apparent within decades, first as an end of the decline of the Istrian population from the mid-sixteenth century, then as a doubling of the population from the second half of the seventeenth to the second half of the eighteenth century, most intensely in its second and third quarters. Rovinj and Poreč stood out the most in the increase of the urban popu-

79. «Relazioni dei Podestà e Capitani di Capodistria», *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* (Poreč), No. 7 (1891), p. 335.

80. Luciano PEZZOLO, «Problemi fiscali in Istria (secoli XVI-XVIII)», *Acta Histriae* (Koper), vol. 3 (1994), p. 165-172; Egidio IVETIĆ, *L'Istria moderna...*

81. Ivan ERCEG, «Struktura stanovništva i njegova socijalno-ekonomska osnova u bivšoj Mletačkoj Istri (1803)», *Acta historico-oekonomica Jugoslaviae* (Zagreb), No. 10 (1982), p. 29-52; Ivan ERCEG, «Kretanje stanovništva u bivšoj Mletačkoj Istri za vrijeme austrijskog i francuskog vladanja (1803-1811)», *Zbornik Zavoda za povijesne znanosti Istraživačkog centra Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* (Zagreb), No. 13 (1983), p. 1-50.

lation, whereas in the hinterland the agrarian population most notably rose in the territory of Koper. Undoubtedly, in the eighteenth century, one of the most important economic breakthroughs in the region was in Rovinj and its surroundings, which soon spread in the area of the strongest colonization, between Novigrad and Rovinj. Namely, in the mid-eighteenth century, when the new inhabitants consolidated their position and integrated with the prevailing Istrian economic and other social relations as well as customs, especially in the traditional economy, such as the production of salt, wine, oil and salted fish, the Istrian economy recovered and began to produce surpluses for the wider market. These were mainly products from the north of Venetian Istria, with the exception of the Rovinj, where, in addition to successful agriculture, especially olive growing and viticulture, an enviable fishing activity had developed.



FIGURE 19. Ethnographic map of the Austrian Empire-Istria, by Karl von Czoernig-Czernhausen (Wien, 1855) (Figure: Wikimedia Commons).

The towns were still on the forefront of social, administrative, legal and economic life, at a higher cultural and economic level, which not only enabled individuals from the non-Romance environment linguistic and ethnic integration and assimilation, but also the possibility to rise on the social ladder. At the same time, long-lasting cultural patterns in the spirit of a centuries-long Slavic presence were established in the countryside, which were only fortified with new migrations. The economic codependence of urban and rural areas resulted in a symbiosis, since the towns were in need of agricultural products, while providing the

countryside with a connection to the wider world; this enabled their survival, their *modus vivendi*.

The aforementioned factors of depopulation—along with restrictive Venetian economic policies, the decline of Venetian economic power and Austrian economic penetration via Trieste and Rijeka—have certainly contributed to the fact that Istrian towns did not develop into modern capitalist centres as those in the West, especially in Italy between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. Despite the *interiorisation* of antagonisms between town quarters in some towns, which indirectly represented the social segregation at town level, the fundamental conflict was between towns and the countryside. Thus, the social status was only transformed into this fundamental dichotomy in connection with one's environment and the reception of the cultural patterns of a specific ethnic element. However, at first, this contrast was without any ethnic traits, but characterised socioeconomic rather than political conflicts. The latter did not take place between economically distinctly opposite strata, but rather between the urban nobility and affluent citizens or townspeople (*popolari*), dissatisfied with the privileged position of the nobles.

The nobility did not only enjoy many tax exemptions and other obligations, but almost exclusively held all positions in the towns' administrative-political and financial institutions with comparatively high income. Although this income alone did not enable them to get rich, it did provide considerable social and economic security and prestige. At least as long as financial and political misappropriation, fraud and theft of municipal and church assets and various financial funds, especially from fonticos, pawnbrokers (*Monte di Pietà*) and confraternities, was not committed;⁸² however, none of this was rare in the Venetian Republic at the time.⁸³ It was particularly such situations that were most often the cause of conflict and tumult, as both the town and countryside population felt cheated in their guarantees of social security, such as it was, for which these institutions were actually intended and wherein the people put their hopes. Thus, representatives of the people demanded that the legal order in these institutions be maintained as well as their inclusion in the management of town structures, which they gained to greater or lesser degree, depending on the town.

With the exception of a few scuffles in Piran and Rovinj, these conflicts were generally settled in regular judicial processes and in long-running procedures in front of various Venetian offices, but with negligible results and potential punishment only for the worst wrongdoers.

82. Darko DAROVEC, *Davki nam pijejo kri...*, p. 91-174.

83. Angelo VENTURA, *Nobiltà e popolo nella società veneta del '400 e '500*, Bari, Editori Laterza, 1964, p. 375-473.

In the spirit of liberty and socioeconomic equality and particularly of the *awakening* of European nations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the situation in Istria presented itself as the foundation for new

conflicts. Not anymore between *master and servant*, but between the various national communities and cultures in towns and the countryside.