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IVAN CRKVENČIĆ

Department of Geography, University of Zagreb, Zagreb

Žumberačka Gora – Transformation from a Refuge to an Exodus Zone

SUMMARY

This article provides an analysis of the problem of immigration from Žumberačka gora, a highland region that lies on the border between Croatia and Slovenia. Due consideration is given to its border-zone character, basic features and later colonization during the mid-sixteenth century. A dual social organization and even social relations emerged in the region, reflecting the contrast between the Military Frontier and the civilian portion. The consequences of long settlement and secondary colonization led to agrarian overpopulation and difficult living conditions. Social and overriding economic changes throughout the country by the mid-nineteenth century compelled the population of Žumberačka gora to begin departing from the region. Intense immigration gradually caused negative natural growth, i.e. a natural decline in the population. Natural decline (number of deaths exceeding the number of live births) and emigration were gradually reflected in the lower numbers and advanced age of the population. These processes were particularly marked in the military frontier portion of the region – in Žumberak – which accounts for almost three fourths of this highland region's territory. In this part of the region the population has been numerically declining since 1931, but particularly since 1971. Today only one fifth of the population recorded in 1953 (just after World War II) lives in Žumberak. This drop is a result of both natural decline and immigration. The age structure of the region's remaining population is dominated by the elderly, which is shown by demographic aging indicators. Such a population is not a sound prerequisite for the region's economic revival. The basic features of Žumberak's landscape are deserted or devastated villages with many abandoned tracts of once arable land. A formerly densely populated region that could not feed its own residents has become a zone marked by a population exodus, an area lacking a labor force to work even those small cultivable fields that Žumberačka gora still has. The region is becoming a nature park.

KEY WORDS: secondary colonization, rural overpopulation, refuge, natural growth, migration balance, emigration, population aging, exodus

The Croatian-Slovenian border accounts for 24.7% (501,3 km) of the total 2,028 km of the overland borders of the Republic of Croatia. Most of this section of the border, as much as 68.2%, passes through marked natural formations: 57.4% through waterways, and 10.8% through elevated relief zones (Bognar, 2001), i.e. through highlands. Among the border highland zones, the most notable is Žumberačka gora (highest peak Sveta Gera, 1,178 m).

Žumberačka gora (Žumberak highlands) is a well-proportioned highland region, about 40 km in length, and it extends from the southwest to the northeast between spa-

cious plains along the Krka river on the Slovenian side, and the expansive Kupa river valley on the Croatian side. Žumberačka gora is actually intersected by the border between Croatia and Slovenia at its highest point. This highland zone is asymmetric in terms of its relief, as its southeastern, Croatian side is a wide slope with a more spacious and gentler relief while the northwestern, Slovenian side is a narrower and steeper slope. The Croatian term for the zone is Žumberačka gora, while the Slovenian term is Gorjanci. The focus of this work is the population of the Croatian portion of this highland region, meaning Žumberačka gora.

The highland zone of Žumberačka gora is crudely demarcated from its neighboring, lower areas by a contour line of 300 meters, although lower valleys that encroach into the interior are incorporated in the highland zone. The peripheral areas below 300 meters on the southeastern side already belong to the neighboring Plešivica foothills, which have completely different natural features and even social characteristics. As will be seen below, the highland zone is not completely homogenous itself, neither in natural nor social terms.

Fig. 1: Žumberačka gora and its sections: Žumberak and Samoborsko gorje; the Prigorje region is adjacent to them



Natural Settlement Conditions

Žumberačka gora is the highest montane region of inland continental Croatia in which the population mostly inhabits its most elevated zones, primarily above eleva-

tions over 400 meters. This is an essential difference in the residence structure of this highland in relation to residence patterns in the remaining highland regions of inland Croatia, in which permanent habitation generally stops above elevations of 400 meters above sea level. This type of settlement structure in Žumberačka gora is a result of its natural features.

The core of Žumberačka gora is Paleozoic rock largely covered by younger Mesozoic sediments. The most widespread are Triassic limestone and dolomites, particularly in the eastern section of the Kupčina Valley. At the extreme western end of the highlands, west of the Kupčina Valley, the Paleozoic core is mostly covered by younger Cretaceous and Jurassic limestone and dolomites. A smaller amount of cover by these Cretaceous and Jurassic sediments can also be found in the central section of Žumberačka gora. The Paleozoic core emerges at the surface only at smaller and isolated areas on the extreme eastern periphery of the highland, in the Samobor hinterland. A Neogene swath is located at the edge of the highlands, which marks the transition of Žumberačka gora into neighboring foothills (Herak, 1971).

The region not only has a diverse composition, its relief is also quite variegated, so that four different types of relief features stand out: the Samobor hinterland, the central flatland, the Kupčina area and the Radatović zone. The differences are also reflected in differing settlement possibilities and even types of economic activity.

The Samobor hinterland drains a relatively dense network of waterways that generally come together into Bregana and Gradna rivers and then directly flow into the Sava river. In this area they are broken down into numerous relief spurs and narrow and deep valleys that are very unsuitable to human habitation. The majority of the settlements are located on the crests and slopes of the relief spurs. The central flatland generally lies at elevations above 500 meters and most of it has no surface drainage as its composition is dominated by Cretaceous period rock. This is a typical karst zone with numerous depressions (*uvala*) and sinkholes. Most of the settlements are in open karstic areas. The Kupčina area belongs to the Kupčina drainage basin, whose inclinations and watercourses orient it toward the southeast, meaning toward the Kupa. The northern section has a Cretaceous composition with karst features, while the southern section is composed of Triassic rock and has a well-developed network of watercourses with very narrow valleys (*doline*) and steep valley walls. The Radatović zone is the most typical karst area of Žumberačka gora, because it is generally composed of Cretaceous period rock. Karstic relief formations and subterranean water flows predominate.

The soil composition is thus not a decisive factor in the suitability of the region for settlement and cultivation, because considerable tracts of the surface have loose soil cover (largely formed by the crumbling of dolomites), which facilitates the development of deeper layers and thereby the growth of vegetation and even the growth of agriculture. The decisive factors for settlement are slopes of the terrain, i.e. flatlands, predominantly in the areas dominated by limestone.

Limestone plateaus are the basic feature of Žumberačka gora's relief. They are located at various elevations, and their relatively large surface area gives the region an appearance of openness. Z. Dugački (1949–50) cites six elevation levels for plateaus, the lowest between 350 and 380 meters and the highest at elevations of 920–950 meters.

Several plateaus are noted at each of these elevations. J. Roglić (1963) also mentions six, while L. Pavić (1986) cites four elevation levels of plateaus.

The plateaus have considerable surfaces covered by karst phenomena, sinkholes, depressions and even karstic *polje*. *Polje* are the largest karst formations, and among them the best known is Sošičko *polje* at an elevation of 550 to 580 meters. It is approximately 2 km long and 1.5 km wide. These karst formations have loose materials at places which serve as the basis for natural vegetation and agricultural exploitation. The plateaus are therefore the main areas of settlement.

Žumberačka gora has relatively favorable climatic conditions, suitable for settlement and agricultural activity. It lies in a moderate climatic zone, with average January temperatures of 0°C to 2°C and average July temperatures of 20°C to 22°C. Average annual precipitation is 1,000 to 1,500 mm, with maximums in November and October and minimums in March and April. The natural vegetation corresponds to beech and hornbeam zones.

Social Conditions for Different Settlement – Secondary Colonization

Until the middle of the sixteenth century, Žumberačka gora was wholly populated by autochthonous Croatian residents and was divided into feudal estates. At this time, however, the separate development of the eastern and western parts of this highland region began. The former remained under the ownership of feudal lords and until the abolishment of serfdom in 1845 it was a part of civil, feudal Croatia. In the latter part during the period from 1530 to 1550, new settlers came in, mainly to settle in the less inhabited feudal estates (they are designated by different names in different sources: Uskoks, Vlachs, Rašani, Serbs). Together with about a third of the remaining older autochthonous inhabitants, they formed the majority of the population in this part of the highland. Gradually this part of Žumberačka gora was organized as a part of the Military Frontier, which acquired its final extent in the second half of the eighteenth century when the remaining portions of some neighboring feudal estates were incorporated into it. This Military Frontier section of Žumberačka gora was dominated by a mobile, livestock-breeding population and a wartime economy up to the very end of the nineteenth century (Klemenčić, 1989).

This social influence connected with the secondary colonization of the western section of the region led to the gradual differentiation of two parts of Žumberačka gora characterized by different social organization and social relations: Žumberak, as a Military Frontier area and, conditionally speaking, Samoborska gora (Samobor hills) as a part of Civil Croatia. With the decommissioning of the Military Frontier in 1871, the territory of the former Military Frontier came under the authority of the County of Zagreb, in which a part of Žumberačka gora had already been incorporated earlier. Thus, administrative and territorial unity was re-established in Žumberačka gora, but specific social differences between these two former sections of the region remained.

The aforementioned development of settlement was also reflected in the religious composition of the inhabitants of Žumberačka gora. Croats are exclusively Roman Catholics who form the largest share of the region's population, while the descendents of

secondary colonizers are Greek Catholics (Uniates), also mostly Croats. Only a small number of the Greek Catholics consider themselves Serbs.

Population

According to the 2001 census, Žumberačka gora has a population of 6,675 in all zones above 200 meters up to elevations of up to 800 meters. The higher parts of this highland region toward the Slovenian border are steep and unpopulated, so the border between the two neighboring countries is divided by an unpopulated zone, most apparent in its highest elevations – the interethnic spatial contact is interrupted here. All zones up to 800 meters are relatively equally populated, but the largest number of people nonetheless live at elevations up to 400 meters, while less than 5% of the region's population lives at elevations from 700 to 800 meters (Crkvenčić, 1971).

This population lives in 117 settlements, which means the settlements are small with an average number of 57 inhabitants. The predominance of small settlements is a reflection of the types of individual categories of land use and the possibilities for covering living needs by using the land. Within the framework of 19 cadastral municipalities (surface area of 311 km²), less than 15% of Žumberačka gora's total surface area is under cultivation, and even these cultivated lands are scattered and intermingled with forests (over 55% of the total area), pastures and grassy fields. Scattered and small arable tracts limit the number of inhabitants in settlements, people who always made their primary living from agriculture, particularly in the areas under former civilian administration (Crkvenčić, 1959).

The area of the highlands within the 300-meter contour line has a surface of 404 km², so today (2001) only about 16 persons live on each square kilometer, which means that general population density is low. But only a little over 50 years ago, i.e. 1953, when Žumberačka gora had a larger number of inhabitants, the population density was 47 persons per square kilometer – three times greater than the present. If population density is measured by the number of inhabitants per unit of arable land, then it can be concluded that Žumberačka gora was overpopulated in 1953.

This considerable decline in population density is a reflection of more recent socio-economic change. Up to the beginning of the twentieth century, Žumberačka gora was densely populated, and served as a refuge for people from regions threatened by the Ottomans. Socio-economic changes since the end of the nineteenth century – which will be covered below – led to a population loss: the region's population began to decline and it became a zone marked by the exodus of its inhabitants.

Population Changes 1880–2001

Comprehensive population data for the entire Žumberačka gora region only exists from 1880 (see Table 1), when its population was 17,355. From this year, the population grew even more in the next ten years, only to stagnate. After 1931, when the population reached its maximum number (18,990), it began to decline quickly. The decline was particularly rapid after 1953, during the period after the Second World War.

In 2001, Žumberačka gora had less than two fifths of the population it had in 1880. Since 1953, the decline in the number of inhabitants has been drastic.

The population fell in all four sections of the highlands, but not during the same periods and not with equal intensity. There were essential changes in the share of inhabitants in individual parts of the highlands and in its total population. In 1880, only 24.2% of the population lived in the Samobor hinterland, while today 60.5% of the total population lives there. The three other sections, which were largely part of the Military Frontier area (Žumberak), were home to 75.7% of the population in 1880, while today they account for only 39.5%. The sections of the highlands with the highest rates of decline experienced this drop the earliest, in 1890 in the Kupčina area and the Radatović zone, and 1910 in the plateau.

Table 1: Population trends in Žumberačka gora and changes in the share of inhabitants in its individual sections

Year	1880		1890		1900		1910	
	Ttl. pop.	%						
Žumberačka gora	17,355	100.0	18,961	100.0	18,492	100.0	18,693	100.0
Samobor hinterland	4,194	24.2	4,641	24.5	4,482	24.2	5,130	27.4
Plateau	3,720	21.4	4,178	22.0	4,120	22.3	4,215	22.3
Kupčina area	5,628	32.4	6,128	32.3	6,057	32.7	5,704	30.5
Radatović zone	3,813	21.9	4,014	21.2	3,833	20.7	3,644	19.5

Year	1931		1948		1953		1961	
	Ttl. pop.	%						
Žumberačka gora	18,990	100.0	17,721	100.0	17,387	100.0	15,671	100.0
Samobor hinterland	5,485	28.9	5,770	32.6	5,891	33.9	5,671	36.2
Plateau	4,134	21.8	3,677	20.7	3,549	20.4	3,275	20.9
Kupčina area	5,700	30.0	5,185	29.2	5,045	29.0	4,388	28.0
Radatović zone	3,671	19.3	3,089	17.4	2,902	16.7	2,337	14.9

Year	1971		1981		1991		2001	
	Ttl. pop.	%						
Žumberačka gora	13,296	100.0	10,186	100.0	8,578	100.0	6,675	100.0
Samobor hinterland	5,385	40.1	4,814	47.3	4,397	51.2	4,035	60.5
Plateau	2,725	20.5	1,915	18.8	1,385	16.1	752	11.3
Kupčina area	3,433	25.8	2,388	23.4	1,828	21.3	1,205	18.0
Radatović zone	1,749	13.1	1,069	10.5	968	11.3	683	10.2

Sources: data up to 1948 – the bibliographical sources from Crkvenčić (1971); from 1948 up to 1991 – *Narodnosni i vjerski sastav stanovništva Hrvatske 1880–1991. po naseljima*, Zagreb, 1998; for 2001 – *Popis stanovništva 2001. Statističko izvješće 1137*, Zagreb, 2001

The decline in the share of inhabitants in the total population in individual parts of the highlands is the result of the drop in their populations. In all three parts of Žumberak, the current (2001) population is only approximately 20% of the population they had 120 years ago in 1880. In these parts of the highlands, the decline in population has truly been drastic. However, the population of the Samobor hinterland has not greatly changed throughout this entire 120-year period. Its increased share in the total population of Žumberačka gora is primarily the result of the decline in population in other parts of the highlands rather than a result of its own growth. In fact, the number of inhabitants has declined even in this part of Žumberačka gora since 1953, but much less so than in its other parts..

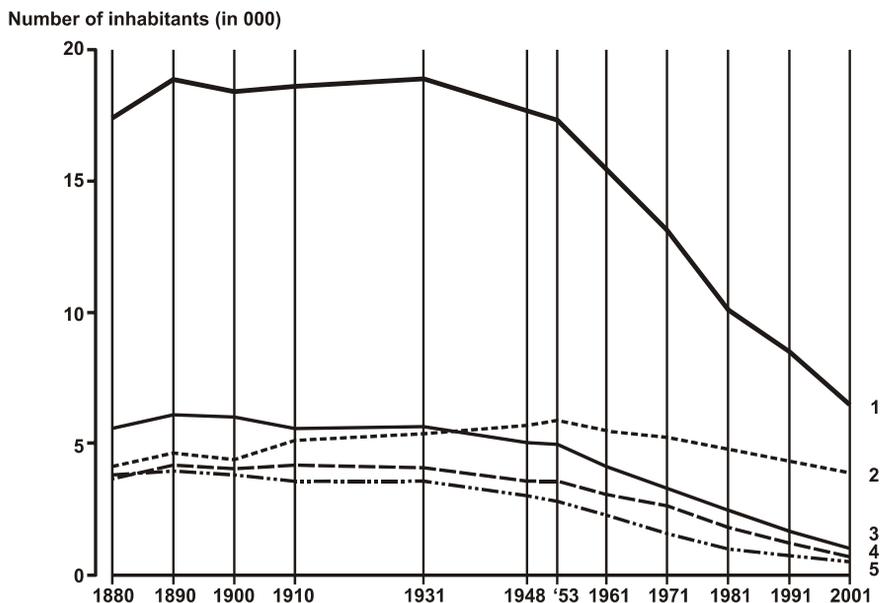
Table 2: Žumberačka gora population trends and indexes of change in relation to 1880

Year	1880	1890	1900	1910	1931	1948
Indexes	100	109.25	106.55	107.7	109.42	102.1
Žumberačka gora	17,355	18,961	18,492	18,693	18,990	17,721
Indexes	-	110.65	106.86	122.31	130.78	137.57
Samobor hinterland	4,194	4,641	4,482	5,130	5,485	5,770
Indexes	-	112.31	110.75	113.3	111.12	98.84
Plateau	3,720	4,178	4,120	4,215	4,134	3,677
Indexes	-	108.88	107.62	101.35	101.27	92.12
Kupčina area	5,628	6,128	6,057	5,704	5,700	5,185
Indexes	-	105.27	100.52	95.56	96.27	81.01
Radatović zone	3,813	4,014	3,833	3,644	3,671	3,089

Year	1953	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Indexes	100.18	90.29	76.61	58.69	49.42	38.5
Žumberačka gora	17,387	15,671	13,296	10,186	8,578	6,675
Indexes	145.46	135.21	128.49	112.39	104.84	96.2
Samobor hinterland	5,891	5,671	5,389	4,814	4,397	4,035
Indexes	95.4	88.03	73.25	51.47	37.23	20.2
Plateau	3,549	3,275	2,725	1,915	1,385	752
Indexes	89.64	77.96	60.99	42.43	32.48	21.4
Kupčina area	5,045	4,388	3,433	2,388	1,828	1,205
Indexes	76.1	61.29	45.86	28.03	25.38	17.9
Radatović zone	2,902	2,337	1,749	1,069	968	683

Sources: the same as for Table 1.

Fig. 2: Population trends in Žumberačka gora and its four sections (1. – total, 2 – Samobor hinterland, 3 – Kupčina area, 4 – Central plateau, 5 – Radatović zone)



Elements of Population Trends

The question emerges of whether this decline in the population of Žumberačka gora is a reflection of reduced natural growth or excessive emigration. The related differences between the region's individual parts are a corollary to this question. These data can only be obtained by comparing natural growth with the actual population during individual censuses. A comparison of these values provides the figures for the migration balance which, in the example of Žumberačka gora, actually indicates the amount of emigration (because the amount of immigration was negligibly small).

An analysis of population trends, natural growth and the migration balance in 9 of 14 church parishes from all parts of Žumberačka gora in the 1880–1948 period show that the number of their inhabitants from 1880 should have grown to 21,605 in 1948, or by 86.4%. In fact, it grew only to 11,624 inhabitants, meaning only an additional 31 people. Out of the total natural growth of 10,012 inhabitants, 9,981 inhabitants, or 99.7%, emigrated. However, in these trends, significant differences emerged between the parishes of Žumberak and those in the Samobor hinterland.

The parishes in both parts of Žumberačka gora experienced positive natural growth until 1948. Even so, the negative migration balance in parishes in Žumberak already after 1910 was considerably greater than natural growth, which means that during this period not only did the entire natural growth population emigrate but also a part of the population from earlier censuses. These parishes became characterized by

depopulation, and the region's population gradually dwindled. Simultaneously, natural growth in all periods in the parishes of the Samobor hinterland was greater than the migration balance, which means that only a part those persons who accounted for natural growth emigrated. These parishes became marked by emigration, because their overall populations slowly grew but at a lower rate than the natural growth population that emigrated.

If the amount of positive natural growth (86.4%) of the nine church parishes is applied to the total population of Žumberačka gora's entire population – which was 17,355 in 1880 – then over the 1880–1948 period it should have grown by approximately 15,000. According to this computation, Žumberačka gora should have had a population of approximately 32,000 in 1948 instead of the actual 17,721, or only 366 more inhabitants than 68 years previously. The deficit of approximately 15,000 inhabitants, or rather than entire natural growth, emigrated.

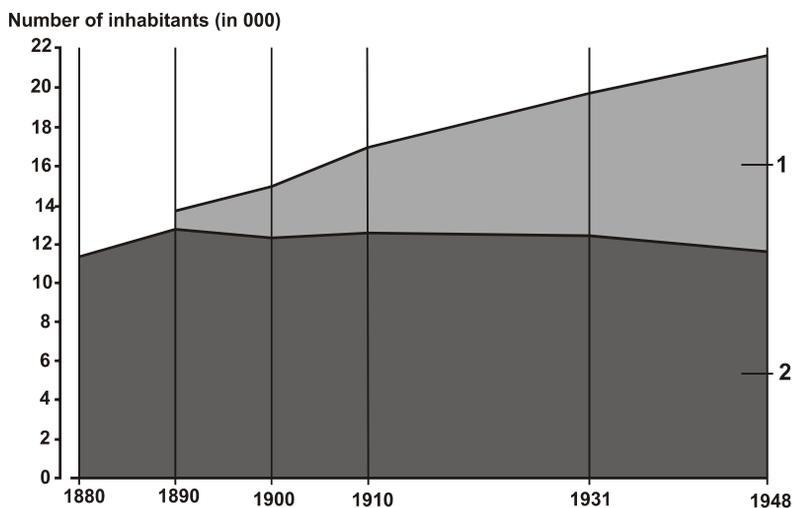
Table 3: Trends in population, natural growth and the migration balance of certain church parishes¹ in Žumberačka gora

Parish	Population		Natural growth	Migration balance ²	Population	Natural growth	Migration balance	Natural growth	Migration balance	
	1880	1910	1880–1910		1948	1910–1948		1880–1948	Total	% natural growth ³
Year	1880	1910	1880–1910		1948	1910–1948		1880–1948		
Kalje	1,212	1,422	620	-410	1,182	507	-747	1,127	-1,157	102.7
Kast	975	919	398	-454	852	474	-541	872	-995	114.1
Kotari	615	725	462	-352	751	292	-266	754	-618	82.0
Mrzlo Polje	1,187	1,095	487	-579	953	394	-536	881	-1,115	126.6
Noršić Selo	1,112	1,468	651	-295	1,723	601	-346	1,252	-641	51.2
Oštrc	1,463	1,487	805	-781	1,507	894	-874	1,699	-1,655	97.4
Rude	2,128	2,384	857	-601	2,389	799	-794	1,656	-1,395	84.2
Sošice	1,843	1,685	474	-632	1,337	471	-819	945	-1,451	153.5
Žumberak	1,058	1,139	460	-379	930	366	-575	826	-954	115.5
Total	11,593	12,324	5,214	-4,483	11,624	4,798	-5,498	10,012	-9,981	99.7

Notes:

- 1) The entire region has 14 parishes, but data for 5 are incomplete and therefore unusable
- 2) The migration balance is the difference between the number of immigrants and emigrants; since immigration into Žumberačka gora has been insignificant, the migration balance presented here corresponds to the number of emigrants
- 3) The percentage of emigrants in relation to the amount of natural growth; values above 100% represent emigrant inhabitants registered in the preceding census

Fig. 3: Population trends in analyzed church parishes in Žumberačka gora: 1 – negative migration balance (number of emigrants), 2 – population as established by census data



Causes of Emigration

Some of the works cited in the reference list to this paper have considerably detailed data on emigration and its causes and the destinations of emigrants. Therefore, this work will limit itself to the assertion that emigration was caused by general social changes during the second half of the nineteenth century as well as arduous local economic circumstances.

After the decommissioning of the Military Frontier in 1873, the population of the Žumberak section of the highlands lost its earlier privileges, which were exercised on the basis of military service obligations. No compensation was provided for lost sources for securing a living, while local economic circumstances were difficult. Since opportunities to earn a living in other places and even abroad emerged at the same time, these industrious border people began to leave the region of their birth. The causes of emigration were somewhat different in the “civilian” section of Žumberačka gora, in the Samobor hinterland. The population of this part of the region experienced relatively more peaceful and continuous development, even though earlier this same population was tied to the land under various feudal obligations. The abolishment of serfdom and general social and economic changes secured freedom for peasants and gave them the opportunity to leave their native region.

The principal causes of emigration from both parts of Žumberačka gora were the difficult economic circumstances which are indicated by the high rural population density (number of agrarian inhabitants per square kilometer of plough-field, garden, orchard and vineyard). Within the boundaries of the 19 cadastral municipalities of Žumberačka gora in 1948 (when emigration was especially intense), such population density was very high (from 185 inhabitants in the Radatović zone to 439 in the Samo-

bor hinterland) (Crkvenčić, 1971). Such a small surface area of quite infertile karst land could only feed the local population for several months out of the year. At the same time, no jobs were created in Žumberačka gora for those people who could not earn a living working in agriculture. For most inhabitants, emigration was the only way out of a severe economic situation.

As shown earlier, emigration was particularly intense from the former Military Frontier zone, i.e. from Žumberak. Here emigration gradually had a negative impact on natural growth, or rather on the natural decline that threatened the further survival of the region's population. Therefore the remainder of this analysis will be dedicated to changes in only this part of Žumberačka gora.

I would like to emphasize that the territory of Žumberak makes up three out of the four natural sections of Žumberačka gora, i.e. the Radatović zone, the Kupčina area and the Central Plateau, but not their entire surface area. Some settlements on the eastern and southern peripheries of the Central Plateau are in the Samobor hinterland. Therefore the sum of the inhabitants of the three natural sections of Žumberačka gora, shown in Tables 1 and 3, is greater than the population of Žumberak, which will be discussed in the subsequent part of the article and shown in Tables 4 and 5.

Changes in the Population of Žumberak 1835–2001

Thanks to the censuses conducted by the authorities of the Military Frontier, population data for this part of Žumberačka gora from the first half of the nineteenth century exists. The earliest statistics date back to 1835, when this region had a population of 6,859. The population grew quite intensely since then, but only up to 1890. In this relatively short period of only 55 years, the number of inhabitants increased by approximately 75%! After this period, up to 1931, the population generally stagnated, only to begin declining after this. This decline became very intense over the last thirty years. Today the population of Žumberak is one fifth of what it was less than fifty years ago in 1953.

Table 4: Population trends in Žumberak and changes in the trend index in relation to 1835

Year	1835	1857	1869	1880	1890	1900	1910	1921
Žumberak – pop.	6,859	8,099	9,921	11,013	11,971	11,655	11,277	10,708
Index	100	117.64	144.64	160.56	174.52	169.92	164.41	156.11

Year	1931	1948	1953	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Žumberak – pop.	11,185	9,625	9,462	8,131	6,292	4,251	2,999	2,041
Index	163.07	140.32	137.59	118.54	91.73	61.97	43.72	29.75

Sources: data up to 1981 – the bibliographical sources from Herak (1971); for the last two years *Statistički ljetopis hrvatskih županija 1993.*, Zagreb, 1994 and *Popis stanovništva 2001.*, *Statističko izvješće 1137*, Zagreb, 2001

A comparison of the population established by the census with values for natural growth and the migration balance facilitates an overview of the elements that led to the aforementioned population trends, particularly the decline in Žumberak's population.

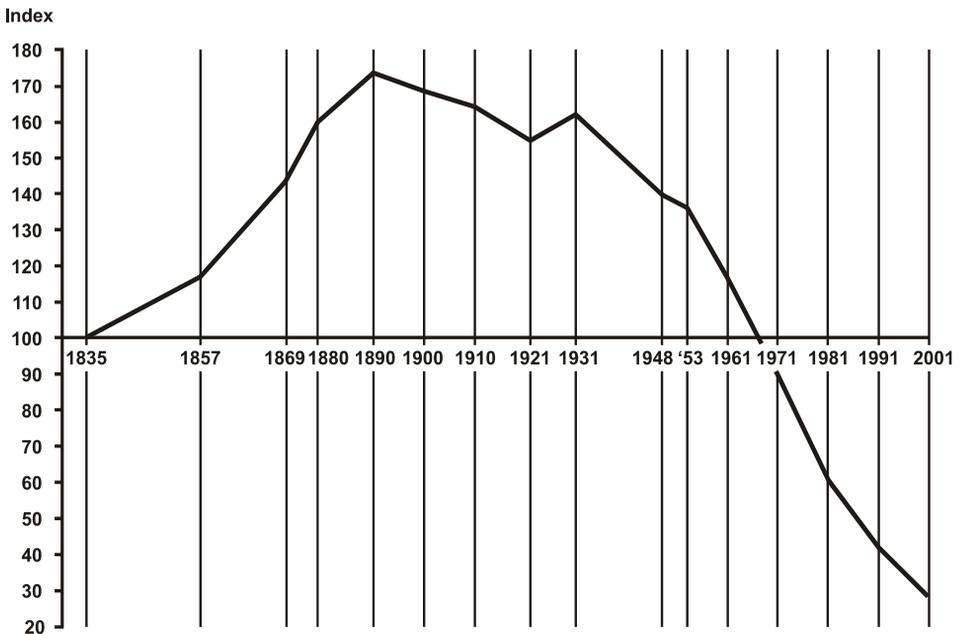
Table 5: Trends in the population, natural growth and migration balance of Žumberak

Population of Žumberak		Natural growth	Migration balance	Population		Natural growth	Migration balance
1874	1879	1874–1879		1971	1981	1971–1981	
10,580	11,050	1,001	-531	6,292	4,251	-290	-1,751

Population	Natural growth	Migration balance	Population	Natural growth	Migration balance	Natural growth	Migration balance
1991	1981–1991		2001	1991–2001		1971–2001	
2,999	-496	-756	2,041	-469	-489	-1,255	-2,996

Source: data up to 1987 – the bibliographical sources from Herak (1971); data up to 1988 from the unpublished tables, Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Croatia

Fig. 4: Indexes of change in Žumberak's population



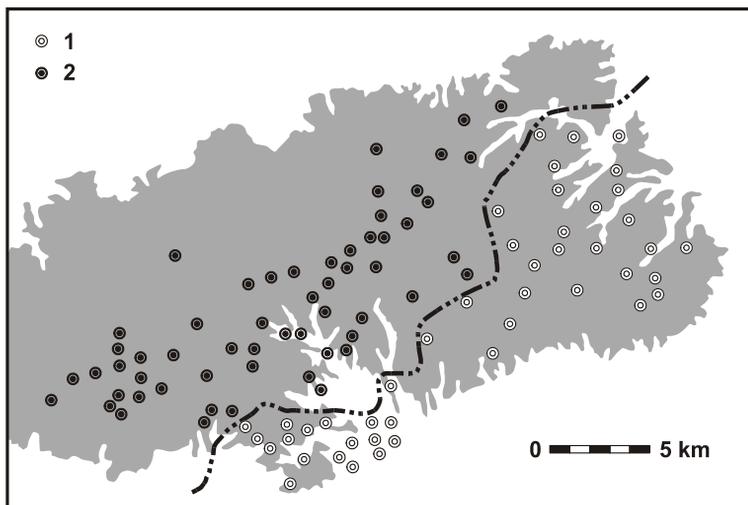
In the 1874–1879 period, the region still experienced positive natural growth, but the majority of these people emigrated. But the region retained the character of an emigration region, meaning a region in which the population grew at a lesser rate than

natural growth. There is no data on the amount of later natural growth up to 1971, so we do not know what led to a population drop of 4,758 people from 1879 to 1971. This was obviously the result of natural decline (more deaths than live births) and a negative migration balance. It is certain, however, that since 1971 the region's population continually decreased due to a natural decline and a negative migration balance, i.e. intense emigration. In the entire period from 1971 to 2001, the natural decline accounted for 1,255 inhabitants, while the negative migration balance was over twice that figure, 2,926 inhabitants. The number of inhabitants in this period fell from 6,292 to 2,041, i.e. by a number of 4,251 inhabitants. The largest share (approximately two thirds) of this decline was caused by emigration, while the remaining one third was caused by a larger number of deaths than live births. It is apparent that Žumberak is not only being depopulated, its population is also dying off.

Extent of Žumberak – Area of Depopulation

When speaking of Žumberak, it should be noted that it encompasses the territory of 14 cadastral municipalities (231 km²) out of the 19 cadastral municipalities (231 km²) of Žumberačka gora, or 74% of its total area. This means that depopulation, or the dying off of the population, has beset the majority of this highland region. The general population density from 1890, when Žumberak had its highest population, to 2001, declined from 52 to only 9 inhabitants per square kilometer. The number of settlements simultaneously fell from 80 to 73, while the average number of their inhabitants fell from approximately 150 to only 28 per settlement. According to the 2001 census, a fifth of these settlements already have less than 10 inhabitants, which means that they will soon be left without inhabitants – they will disappear as well. A large share of inhabitants of Žumberak settlements are populated by the elderly, and many households have no heirs, which is the most apparent indicator of the further dying off of the region.

Fig. 5: Settlements of Žumberačka gora: 1 – in the Samobor hills, 2 – in Žumberak



Age Structure of Žumberak's Population

The most recent data on the age structure of Žumberak's population as a spatial unit were published in 1991, within the framework of the Sošice municipality. The territory of this municipality almost completely corresponds to Žumberak's territory; only several neighboring settlements were incorporated into it that have 90 inhabitants. According to the *Statistical Yearbook 1994* (Table 33-2), in 1991 the Sošice municipality had a population of 3,060 and out of this the elderly (60 years and over) accounted for as much as one third (33.3%). On the other hand, the young population (up to 19 years of age) was only 17.4% of the municipality's total population. The elderly population thus predominated. The increasingly marked aging of the population is shown by all demographic age structure indicators. From them it can be seen that already in 1971 (when the intense population decline began) a general aging process was well under way in Žumberak's population. The most explicit indicators of population aging are the aging coefficient and index, and in Žumberak since 1971 they grew the most, the former almost doubled while the latter more than tripled.

Table 6: Age structure indicators in Žumberak's population¹

Year	Average age (years) ²	Age coefficient (%) ³	Aging index (%) ⁴
1953	27.8	7.7	18.3
1971	35.3	18.9	56.5
1981	41.8	23.7	105.0
1991	46.0	33.3	188.6

1) Sources: data up to 1981– the bibliographical sources from Klemenčić (1989); for 1991 – *Statistički ljetopis 1994.*, Zagreb, 1994, Table 33-2.

2) The average age or average life span is the duration of the life of all inhabitants divided by the number of inhabitants; the aging process of a population commences when the average age of the population reaches 30 years.

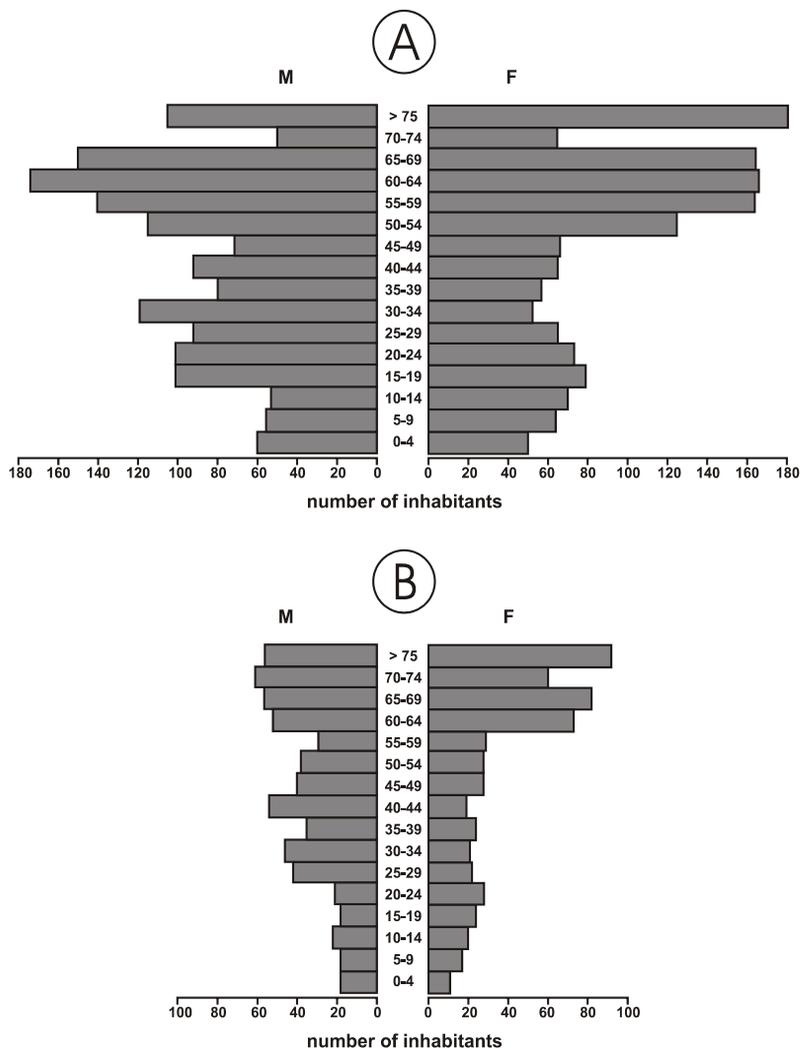
3) The age coefficient shows the percentage of persons over 60 years of age and older in the total population; the aging of the population commences when this share reaches a level of 12%.

4) The aging index or index of aging shows the number of persons over 60 years of age in relation to the number of inhabitants up to 19 years of age; the critical value of the aging index is 40% or 0.40; when the aging index surpasses this value, the population has entered an aging process.

The territory of Žumberak or the Sošice municipality was subsequently administratively divided into smaller municipalities, of which the Žumberak municipality encompassed 35 settlements of the former Sošice municipality. In 2001 this municipality had 1,185 inhabitants, out of which the 60 and over population accounted for 45%, while the under 19 population accounted for only 12.5%. It is apparent that the aging process in Žumberak since 1991 has advanced considerably: in just 10 years the age coefficient has increased from 33.3% to 45%, while the aging index increased from 188.6% to 360.1%. In this ten-year inter-census period, the number of persons over 60 years of age grew considerably at the expense of the younger population. Almost every other inhabitant of Žumberak is elderly. Many households already lack heirs.

This elderly population obviously cannot be the driver of the region's economic growth. If the appropriate measures for faster economic growth are not undertaken, the region will continue to depopulate. The question is how much? In a region in which the active agricultural population accounted for 64.3% of the total active population, many villages have been deserted or devastated, surrounded by overgrown fields with intermittent cultivated plots. Underbrush and wild grassy fields are expanding. A region that was overpopulated not long ago is not being abandoned. There is no longer a labor force to cultivate the soil. The region is slowly being transformed into a nature park.

Fig. 6: The age and sex structure of the population in the Sošice municipality in 1991 (A) and the Žumberak municipality in 2001 (B)



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Ivan Crkvenčić

ŽUMBERAČKA GORA – PREOBRAZBA IZ IZBJEGLIČKOGA U EGZODUSNO PODRUČJE

SAŽETAK

U članku se analizira problem iseljavanja stanovništva Žumberačke gore, graničnoga gorskog područja Hrvatske i Slovenije. Ukazuje se na njezin granični karakter i osnovna obilježja te na mladu kolonizaciju sredinom 16. stoljeća. U kraju dolazi do dvojne društvene organizacije pa i dvojnih društvenih odnosa – podjele na prostor Vojne krajine (krajiški dio) i građanski dio. Posljedice duge naseljenosti i sekundarne kolonizacije su agrarna prenaseljenost i teški životni uvjeti. Zbog društvenih i općih gospodarskih promjena u zemlji sredinom 19. stoljeća stanovništvo Žumberačke gore počinje iseljavati. Intenzivno iseljavanje postupno se negativno odrazilo na prirodni prirast, odnosno prirodni pad stanovništva. Prirodni pad (višak broja umrlih nad brojem živorođenih), ali i iseljavanje, postupno su se odrazili na pad broja stanovnika i starenje stanovništva. Ti su procesi osobito izraženi u krajškom dijelu kraja – Žumberku – koji zaprema gotovo tri četvrtine tog gorskog područja. Ondje se bilježi pad broja stanovnika od 1931., a pogotovo od 1971. Danas u Žumberku živi tek petina stanovništva zabilježenoga 1953. odnosno neposredno nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata. Smanjenje je posljedica prirodnog pada i iseljavanja. Preostalo stanovništvo ima staru dobnu strukturu, na što ukazuju svi demografski pokazatelji starenja. Takvo stanovništvo nije dobar preduvjet gospodarskog oživljavanja kraja. Žumberačkom krajoliku osnovni pečat daju napuštena ili narušena sela s mnogobrojnim napuštenim parcelama nekoć obradiva zemljišta. Ranije gusto naseljen kraj koji nije mogao prehraniti vlastito stanovništvo postao je egzodusnim prostorom u kojem nedostaje radne snage za obradu čak i malih preostalih površina obradivog zemljišta te se pretvara u prirodni park.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: sekundarna kolonizacija, agrarna prenaseljenost, izbjeglištvo, prirodni prirast, migracijski saldo, iseljavanje, starenje stanovništva, egzodus

Ivan Crkvenčić

ŽUMBERAČKA GORA: UNE ANCIENNE RÉGION D'IMMIGRATION DEVENUE ZONE D'ÉMIGRATION

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article analyse le problème de l'émigration dans la région de Žumberačka gora, zone au relief accidenté, située à la frontière entre la Croatie et la Slovénie. L'auteur met en lumière son caractère de zone frontalière, ses caractéristiques essentielles et sa colonisation au milieu du 16^{ème} siècle. La région voit alors s'établir une double organisation sociale et des rapports sociaux à deux niveaux, avec d'un côté les Confins Militaires et, de l'autre, la partie civile. La longue présence humaine et la colonisation secondaire conduisirent à une surpopulation agraire avec des conditions de vie difficiles. A la suite des transformations sociales et économiques générales dans le pays au milieu du 19^{ème} siècle, la région de Žumberačka gora connaît une émigration intense, qui fait sentir ses conséquences négatives sur la croissance, ou plutôt la décroissance naturelle de la population. La décroissance naturelle (nombre de décès supérieur à celui des naissances) mais aussi l'émigration ont suscité une chute du nombre d'habitants et le vieillissement de la population. Ces processus sont particulièrement sensibles dans la partie où s'étendaient jadis les Confins Militaires (Žumberak), qui représente presque les trois quarts de cette région accidentée. Cette partie a vu sa population chuter à partir de 1931 et surtout depuis 1971. Aujourd'hui, Žumberak ne compte qu'un cinquième de la population qu'elle possédait en 1953, soit au lendemain de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, accusant une

dépopulation qui est la conséquence de la décroissance naturelle de sa population et de l'émigration. La structure des âges trahit une population vieillissante, ce que confirment tous les indicateurs démographiques de vieillissement. Une telle population n'est pas un atout pour le redémarrage économique de la région. Le paysage de Žumberak est marqué par ses villages abandonnés ou en ruines, avec de nombreuses friches. Jadis densément peuplée, cette région qui ne pouvait pas nourrir ses habitants est devenue une zone d'émigration, qui manque de main-d'oeuvre pour travailler les petites parcelles jadis cultivables, et tend à se transformer en parc naturel.

MOTS CLES : colonisation secondaire, surpopulation agraire, réfugiés, décroissance naturelle, solde migratoire, émigration, vieillissement de la population, exode