

Mujadžević / Koller / Rohdewald (eds.)

Interregional Mobilities in (Post)Ottoman Contexts

The Cases of Slavonia and Bosnia



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Mobilitätsdynamiken

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Stefan Rohdewald, Stephan Conermann und Albrecht Fuess

Dino Mujadžević / Markus Koller /
Stefan Rohdewald (eds.)

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Introduction

The volume *Interregional Mobilities in (Post)Ottoman Contexts: The Cases of Slavonia and Bosnia* results from research that brought together a team of scholars to examine the historical interconnectedness between two regions in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This was enabled by the institutional cooperation project *Regional Translocality in Historical Perspective: The Case of Slavonia and Bosnia*, funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation within its Group Linkage Program (*Institutspartnerschaften*) for the period from 2022 to 2025. This research project aimed to establish a partnership between the Department for the History of Slavonia, Srijem, and Baranja of the Croatian Institute of History in Slavonski Brod, the Center for Mediterranean Studies at Ruhr University Bochum, and the Chair for Eastern and Southeast European History at the University of Leipzig.

The project's particular emphasis has been on transboundary interaction, exchange, and communication between Slavonia and Bosnia, as well as between locations in these two regions, from the 15th to the 20th centuries. Although the focus of this project was regional and microregional, it is worth noting that the research on interactions between Slavonia and Bosnia – during much of the period under investigation here, which was also divided and united by Hungarian, Habsburg, and Ottoman state/imperial borders – also addressed broader historical issues. Notably, it dealt with the historical porosity of state/imperial borders¹ – some of which have, long after their official disappearance, continued to influence translocal phenomena in the area as *Phantomgrenzen*² – and more significant internal transregional dynamics within those states and empires situated in

1 This concept has been discussed from different perspectives; among many other publications, see Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, *Borderlands* (Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa Press, 2007) and Rozita Dimova, *Border Porosities. Movements of People, Objects, and Ideas in the Southern Balkans* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021).

2 For this concept, see Béatrice von Hirschhausen et al., ed., *Phantomgrenzen: Räume und Akteure in der Zeit neu denken* (Göttingen: Wallenstein Verlag, 2015).

Southeast Europe and the neighboring parts of Central Europe.³ As part of the project, a conference titled “Historical Interactions between Slavonia and Bosnia” was held from September 28 to 29, 2023, in Slavonski Brod, situated near the border between the two regions under analysis, Slavonia and Bosnia.⁴

The volume standing before you includes papers delivered at the Slavonski Brod conference by members of the Humboldt project and further colleagues working on this region. Contributions of several scholars who did not participate in this conference are also included. The volume aims to provide insights into current research on various mobility phenomena, including individual and population movements, as well as the exchange of goods and ideas/knowledge between neighboring regions, Slavonia and Bosnia, and other areas in the surrounding regions. The concept of translocality inspires the contributions to this volume, as we find it more fitting and analytically precise for our goal than, for example, the previously widely used notions of transnationality and transnational. The concept of translocality is frequently discussed within the framework of the global history approach and has become increasingly popular. According to Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen, there are two dimensions to the concept of translocality. In the descriptive sense, it refers to phenomena that result from a multitude of circulations and transfers. It designates outcomes of movements of people, goods, and knowledge across distances and boundaries. In the research sense, it emphasizes that interaction, exchange, and communication between places, actors, and concepts have far more diverse and often contradictory outcomes than previous research on transfers assumed. This conceptual framework addresses the circulation of people and goods, as well as the simultaneous transfer and convergence of culture and knowledge between local contexts. Translocality has garnered considerable attention, primarily within the fields of geography, anthropology, sociology, as well as cultural and area studies.⁵

The methodological and theoretical approaches associated with the concept of translocality have recently been discussed in detail, for example, in the context of the DFG Priority Program *Transottomanica – Eastern European-Ottoman-Persian*

3 For more on the project, see “Regional Translocality in Historical Perspective,” Croatian Institute of History, Department for the History of Slavonia, Srijem and Baranja, accessed on February 24, 2025, <https://hipsb.hr/en/ustroj/projekti/regional-translocality-in-historical-perspective-the-case-of-slavonia-and-bosnia/>.

4 About the conference, see “Historical interaction between Slavonia and Bosnia (15th–20th centuries). Conference Programme and Summaries of Accepted Papers,” accessed on February 24, 2025, <https://hipsb.hr/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/knjizica-sazetaka.pdf>.

5 Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen. “Introduction. ‘Translocality’: An Approach to Connection and Transfer in Area Studies,” in *The Study of Globalising Processes from a Southern Perspective*, eds. Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen (Brill: Boston – Leiden, 2010), 1–21; C. Greiner and P. Sakdapolrak, “Translocality: Concepts, applications and emerging research perspectives,” *Geography Compass* 7, no. 5 (2013): 373–84, with bibliography.

Mobility Dynamics.⁶ However, the individual studies not only examined different forms of mobility between individual spaces or empires,⁷ but also focused on factors that restricted or completely prevented translocality. In the context of Ottoman and Southeast European history, the translocality approach is increasingly employed in studies that examine urban history within a global framework, with a particular focus on the movement of people and ideas.⁸ Especially interesting is the convergence between the translocality approach and environmental history. Natural conditions significantly influence the development of cities, and rivers often play an essential role. The interaction between urban and river history is a significant field of research in environmental history, which has evolved into one of the most vibrant disciplines within the historical sciences.⁹ In this context, rivers are repeatedly discussed as spaces that are influenced by local/regional or global dynamics on the one hand. On the other hand, rivers can also be understood as actors with their own agency.¹⁰ In recent years, these aspects have increasingly been explored in the context of the history of Southeast Europe. This is particularly true when rivers flowed through imperial or state border areas or were defined as borders.¹¹ There are also examples of the deployment of the concept of translocality in the cultural and religious history of the Ottoman Balkans.¹²

6 Stefan Rohdewald, "Mobilität/Migration: Herstellung transosmanischer Gesellschaften durch räumliche Bewegungen," in *Transottomanica – Osteuropäisch-osmanisch-persische Mobilitäts-dynamiken*, eds. Stefan Rohdewald et al. (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2019), 59–82; <https://www.transottomanica.de/de>.

7 Daniel Hedinger and Nadin Heé, "Transimperial History – Connectivity, Cooperation and Competition," *Journal of Modern European History*, 16, no. 4 (2018): 429–52.

8 Ulrike Freitag et al., eds., *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2011); Ulrike Freitag and Nora Lafi, eds., *Urban Governance under the Ottomans* (London: Routledge, 2014); Grigor Boykov, *Ottoman Plovdiv. Space, Architecture, and Population (14th–17th Centuries)* (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2024); Janine Marie Calic, *The Great Cauldron. A History of Southeastern Europe* (Cambridge/Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 2019).

9 J.R. McNeill and Erin Stewart Mauldin, eds., *A Companion to Global Environmental History* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

10 For such an approach, see, for example, Robert Ivermee, *Hooghly. The Global History of a River* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2020).

11 Luminita Gatejel, *Engineering the Lower Danube. Technology and International Cooperation in an Imperial Borderland* (Budapest: Budapest University Press, 2022); Gábor Ágoston, "Where Environmental and Frontier Studies Meet. Rivers, Forests, Marshes and Forts along the Ottoman–Habsburg Frontier in Hungary," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 156 (2009): 57–79.

12 David Henig, "Tracing creative moments: The emergence of translocal dervish cults in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Focaal. European Journal of Anthropology* 69, no. 2 (2014): 97–110; Sara Kuehn, "Multiplication, Translocation and Adaptation: Şarī Şaltūq's Multiple Embodied Localities Throughout the Balkans," in *Constructing and Contesting Holy Places in Medieval Islam and Beyond*, eds. Andreas Görke and Mattia Guidetti (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2023), 221–56.

The Regions and Periods under Analysis

The volume assembles historical research on mobilities between Slavonia (comprising the northeastern parts of the Republic of Croatia) and Bosnia (consisting of the northern and central parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina) – two neighboring and historically heavily interconnected regions that are today delimited by the EU, and state and regional borders along the Sava River – and their consequences in the time timespan between 15th and 20th centuries.

The area today known as Slavonia – historically, this territory has undergone various name changes – is primarily a lowland region situated between the Ilova, Drava, and Sava rivers. It belongs to the natural geographical region of the Pannonian Basin, which encompasses a lowland area that includes all of Hungary and large parts of neighboring countries, such as Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Slovakia, and Austria. On the other hand, Bosnia, to its south, is a hilly and mountainous area that mainly belongs to the so-called natural geographical Dinaric region. That region is, of course, dominated by the Dinaric mountain range, also known as the Dinaric Alps. The Pannonian and Dinaric natural geographical regions are connected by a contact zone known as the Peripannonical zone, which is located in Bosnia. The Peripannonical zone comprises an 80 km deep belt located south of the Sava River. That is the geographical backdrop of our research.

Socio-culturally, Slavonia has been a crossroads of major influences throughout history, originating in Central Europe (Hungarian and Habsburg influences) and Southeast Europe (Byzantine and Ottoman influences, often via Bosnia). Bosnia itself is generally regarded as a quintessential Southeastern European Balkan historical region with significant influences from Byzantine tradition and Ottoman–Islamic culture. In addition to the research of historical interactions between Slavonia and Bosnia, the volume was open to the research of comparative cases of historical interaction between regions in other parts of Southeast Europe and adjacent areas (such as the between regions in the Pannonian Basin and those south of Sava and Danube rivers) as well as to theoretical contributions that are relevant for the research of translocal connections between regions.

During the medieval period, when the regions under investigation were periodically influenced by Hungarian rule, contemporary Slavonian space remained for the most part an integral part of Hungary. Only its smaller portion belonged to the Kingdom of Slavonia, which was also under the Hungarian Crown. In contrast, medieval Bosnia was claimed and sometimes controlled as a vassal of the Hungarian kingdom. However, the Ottomans became a decisive factor in relations between Bosnia and what is now Slavonia in the early 1400s. The volume's focus primarily lies on the historical timespan between the 15th and 20th centuries, during which Slavonia, as well as Southeast Europe and neighboring Danubian regions, in one way or another, dealt with the direct and indirect influence of

the Ottoman Empire. Thus, this volume will focus especially on the decisive factor of the Ottoman legacy in the context of the development and continuities (or discontinuities) of regional interconnectedness.

During this long period of investigation, both regions were, to varying degrees, directly influenced by the presence of the Ottoman Empire and its rivalry with the Hungarian Kingdom, as well as the Habsburg Monarchy, later known as Austria-Hungary. Even later, the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, particularly the delineation of regional borders and socio-cultural differences between Slavonia and Bosnia, continued to influence their interactions. In Slavonia, one of the most critical outcomes of Ottoman rule and the Ottoman–Habsburg wars during the 16th and 17th centuries was a series of migratory waves that drastically changed its population through the immigration of Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic populations from Bosnia and other parts of Southeast Europe. At the end of the 17th century, the retreat of Ottoman rule led to the complete departure of the Muslim population. This also enabled Habsburg authorities to resettle the area with Catholic South Slavic, German, and other populations. These developments also had a profound impact on Bosnia. Especially during the period from the mid-15th to the end of the 17th century, the Bosnian population, comprising Muslims, Orthodox, and Catholics, as well as exiles, soldiers, and settlers, migrated to neighboring areas, including Slavonia. After the Ottoman defeat at Vienna in 1683, Bosnia also became the center of Muslim re-migration under duress from Slavonia.

The Bosnian–Slavonian relations in the period under analysis can be divided into the following periods:

- a) the era of Ottoman incursions and conquests in the 15th and the first half of the 16th century. The Ottomans gradually took both regions – the main part of the medieval kingdom of Bosnia came under Ottoman rule by 1463, but some regions remained under Christian rule until the 1520s; Slavonia was also annexed to the Ottoman realm in several waves between 1525 and 1552.
- b) the era of Ottoman rule over both regions from the mid-16th century to the end of the 17th century. The Ottomans united the two regions of our interest more firmly within their realm during most of the 16th and 17th centuries, even administratively integrating them within the boundaries of the Bosnian province (*eyālet*) for a long while. This situation broadened the scope of interactions, exchange, and communication across the Sava River.
- c) the era of the Habsburg (Slavonian side)–Ottoman (Bosnian side) border in the valley of the Sava River from 1699 to 1878. After the Habsburg reconquest of what is now Slavonia and incursions into the Balkans in the late 17th century, as well as during the period of Habsburg control of large parts of northern Bosnia in the first half of the 18th century, relations between the two regions often persisted through migration. During the period between the stabilization of the Habsburg–Ottoman border on the Sava in 1739 and the Austro-Hungarian occupation of

Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878, interactions between the two regions decreased but continued, often through trade.

- d) the post-Ottoman era after both regions were reunited under the Austro-Hungarian administration, from 1878 onwards (with Ottoman nominal rule in Bosnia until 1908). Between 1918 and 1991, both Bosnia and Slavonia were united within two South Slavic states, as well as within the WWII Independent State of Croatia.

Various aspects of the interactions between the spaces known today as Slavonia and Bosnia have been studied by Croatian and Bosnian historians and other authors. The medieval period particularly attracted the attention of scholars. Major studies of Bosnian medieval history, in general and especially in the context of its relationship with Hungary, often discuss various aspects of mobilities and other connections between Slavonia and Bosnia.¹³ Historical works focusing on northern Bosnian regions during that era have also shed light on this.¹⁴ Additionally, the topic of mobilities between the two regions under analysis has been particularly investigated in studies on nobility family relations,¹⁵ as well as church relations and religious interactions during the medieval period.¹⁶

13 For example, see Sima Ćirković, *Istorija srednjovekovne bosanske države* (Beograd: SKZ, 1964); Pavao Anđelić, *Studije o teritorijalno-političkoj organizaciji srednjovekovne Bosne* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1982); Nada Klaić, *Srednjovekovna Bosna: politički položaj bosanskih vladara do Tvrtkove krunidbe (1377. g.)* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1989); Želimir Puljić and Franjo Topić, eds., *Kršćanstvo srednjovekovne Bosne. Radovi Simpozija povodom 9 stoljeća spominjanja bosanske biskupije, 1089.–1989* (Sarajevo: Vrhbosanska visoka teološka škola, 1991); Ančić, Mladen. *Putanja klatna. Ugarsko-hrvatsko kraljevstvo i Bosna u XIV. Stoljeću* (Zadar-Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Zadru; Mostar: Stećak/ ZIRAL, 1997); Lovrenović, Dubravko. *Na klizištu povijesti. Sveta kruna ugarska i sveta kruna bosanska, 1387–1463.* (Zagreb; Sarajevo: Synopsis, 2006).

14 For example, see Pavo Živković, *Studije iz povijesti Bosanske Posavine, Usore i Soli* (Osijek: HKD Napredak – Podružnica Osijek, 2000); Pejo Ćošković, *Susret sa zagubljenom poviješću: područje Bosanske Gradiške u razvijenom srednjem vijeku* (Zagreb: Vikarijat Banjalučke biskupije – Zagreb, 2001); Jelena Mrgić, *Severna Bosna: 13–16. vek* (Beograd: Istorijski institut, 2008).

15 For example, see Ludwig von Thallóczy, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens und Serbiens im Mittelalter*, trans. Franz Eckhart (München; Leipzig; Duncker & Humblot, 1914); Stanko Andrić, “O obitelji bosanskoga protukralja Radivoja Ostojića.” In *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.–1463.): slom srednjovekovnoga Bosanskog Kraljevstva*, ed. Ante Birin (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2013), 109–32.; *idem*, “Sablasti u samostanu: jedna epizoda iz ugarsko-bosanske franjevačke povijesti,” *Gordogan* 43–44 (1997): 3–27; *idem*, “Mjesto svadbe bana Tvrtka I i franjevački samostan ‘sveti Ilija’,” *Scrinia Slavonica* 4 (2004): 107–16; Karbić, Marija. *Plemički rod Borića bana* (Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica u Slavonskom Brodu, 2013).

16 For example, see Krunoslav Draganović, “Katolička crkva u sredovječnoj Bosni,” in *Poviest hrvatskih zemalja Bosne i Hercegovine od najstarijih vremena do godine 1463.*, vol. 1 (Sarajevo: Napredak, 1942), 740–63; Miroslav Brandt, “Susret viklifizma s bogomilstvom u Srijemu.”

The movements of people, ideas, and things between the two regions in the 16th and 17th centuries, with a heavy emphasis on the Ottoman rule or presence, have been addressed in major studies or anthologies on Bosnian, Croatian, or Slavonian history,¹⁷ but also in contributions investigating the role of the Ottoman military commanders and elite in Bosnian–Slavonian interactions,¹⁸ migrations to Slavonia from Bosnia and other regions south of the Sava,¹⁹ and the Catholic Church.²⁰

With respect to the history of the 18th and 19th centuries, a few new topics emerged, including the border regime and military operations along the Sava River, as well as the links between Bosnian Franciscans and church educational institutions north of the Sava River.²¹ Bosnian–Slavonian ties in the period from 1878 until the 1990s, during which both regions were part of the same state, have been researched in the framework of the studies that analyzed daily temporary and permanent migrations, state-sanctioned colonization, and refugee move-

Starohrvatska prosvjeta 3, no. 5 (1956): 33–64; Ive Mažuran, “Đakovo i bosansko-đakovačka biskupija od 1239. do 1536. godine,” *Diacovensia*, 3, no. 1 (1995): 107–56.

- 17 For example, see Tade Smičiklas, *Dvjestogodišnjica oslobođenja Slavonije*, 2 vols (Zagreb: JAZU, 1891); Hazim Šabanović, *Bosanski pašaluk* (Sarajevo: Oslobođenje, 1959); Gunther Erich Rothenberg, *The Austrian Military Border in Croatia, 1522–1747* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1960); Ešref Kovačević, *Granice Bosanskog pašaluka prema Austriji i Mletačkoj Republici po odredbama Karlovačkog mira* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1973); Dragutin Pavličević, ed., *Vojna krajina: povijesni pregled – historiografija – rasprave* (Zagreb: SNL; Odjel za hrvatsku povijest, 1984); Mirko Valentić, *Vojna Krajina* (Zagreb: SN Liber, 1984); Enes Pelidija, *Bosanski ejalet od Karlovačkog do Požarevačkog mira 1699–1718*. (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1989); Ive Mažuran, *Hrvati i Osmansko Carstvo* (Zagreb: Golden marketing, 1998); Nenad Močanin, *Slavonija i Srijem u razdoblju osmanske vladavine* (Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica u Slavanskom Brodu, 2001); Fazileta Hafizović, *Požeški sandžak i osmanska Slavonija. Sabrane rasprave* (Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica u Slavanskom Brodu, 2016); Galib Šljivo, *Historija Bosne i Hercegovine 1788–1878*, 12 vols. (Tešanj: Planjax, 2016).
- 18 Nedim Zahirović, “Die Familie Memibegović in Ungarn, Slawonien und Kroatien in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts,” in *Ein Raum im Wandel: Die osmanisch-habsburgische Grenzregion vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, eds. Norbert Spannberger and Szabolcs Varga (Franz Steiner: Stuttgart 2014), 75–86; Dino Mujadžević, “Osmanska osvajanja u Slavoniji 1552. u svjetlu osmanskih arhivskih izvora,” *Povijesni prilozi* 28 (2009): 89–107; *idem*, “Požeški i bosanski sandžakbeg Ulama-beg,” *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 60 (2011): 251–58.
- 19 For example, see Aleksa Ivić, *Migracije Srba u Slavoniju* (Subotica: Srpska kraljevska akademija, 1926); Stjepan Pavičić, *Podrijetlo hrvatskih i srpskih naselja i govora u Slavoniji* (Zagreb: JAZU, 1953); Mirko Marković, *Slavonija: povijest naselja i podrijetlo stanovništva* (Zagreb: Golden marketing – Tehnička knjiga, 2002); Skenderović, Robert. *Najstarija matična knjiga brodske župe Presvetog Trojstva: (1701.–1735)* (Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica u Slavanskom Brodu, Slavonski Brod, 2012); Vojin Dabić, *Mala Vlaška: Prilog istoriji srpskog naroda u Slavoniji od XVI do XVIII veka* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2020).
- 20 For example, see Josip Buturac, *Katolička crkva u Slavoniji za turskoga vladanja* (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1970).
- 21 For example, see Rudolf Barišić, *Bosanski Ugri: institucionalna povijest franjevačkog školovanja: 1785.–1849.* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2021).

ments to Croatia in general and Slavonia in particular, which often included population from Bosnia.²² It is also clear that there is a growing body of research on historical mobilities and associated phenomena across other regions of Southeast Europe.²³

Contributions to the Volume

As previously stressed, the contributions in this volume examine different forms of historical mobilities between Slavonia and Bosnia across the period under analysis, but also include similar cases of historical interconnectedness in neighboring regions of Southeast Europe and adjacent areas.

In the 15th century, the Hungarian kingdom and the Ottoman Empire sought to expand their spheres of influence in this region, and the Kingdom of Bosnia had to establish its political position between the two empires, particularly in the 1450s and the early 1460s. Recent research has increasingly focused on local elites involved in transregional or transimperial networks and playing a significant role in the political and military activities of both empires.²⁴

The contribution *To Salvage a Kingdom: Bosnia in the Political Strategies of Bishop John Vitez* by Tomislav Matić sheds light on a high-ranking Catholic clergyman who wielded strong influence at the court of the Hungarian king, Matthias Corvinus. His article describes several attempts by Bishop John Vitez to preserve the kingdom of Bosnia in the Hungarian sphere of influence. After its fall (1463), Vitez sought Venetian support for the Hungarian king's military campaigns against the Ottomans. However, Matthias Corvinus did not rely solely on military measures.

22 For example, see Viktor Horvat, *Nutarnje seobe i kretanje Hrvata: posljedice dinamike društvenih procesa* (Zagreb: Hrvatska državna tiskara, 1942); Ivo Nejašmić, "Osnovne značajke unutarnje migracije stanovništva Hrvatske 1880–1981," *Migracijske teme*, 8., no. 2 (1992): 141–66; Ivan Lajić and Mario Bara, *Ratovi, kolonizacije i nacionalna struktura Slavonije u dvadesetom stoljeću* (Zagreb: Institut za migracije i narodnosti, 2009); Dragutin Babić and Filip Škiljan, "Socijalna integracija useljenika iz Bosne i Hercegovine (Bošnjaci, Hrvati) u Hrvatskoj," in *Migracije iz Bosne i Hercegovine*, eds. Mirza Emirhafizović et al. (Sarajevo: Univerzitet u Sarajevu, Fakultet političkih nauka; Institut za društvena istraživanja; Ministarstvo za ljudska prava i izbjeglice, 2013), 5–103; Vladimir Geiger, "Skica za povijest Nijemaca i Austrijanaca u BiH s posebnim osvrtom na njihovu sudbinu tijekom II svjetskog rata i u poraću." *Hercegovina: Časopis za kulturno i povijesno nasljeđe*, 26, no. 1 (2015): 265–97.

23 For example, see Nenad Stefanov, *Die Erfindung der Grenzen auf dem Balkan. Von einer spätosmanischen Region zu nationalstaatlichen Peripherien: Piroć and Caribrod 1856–1989* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017); Rozita Dimova, *Border Porosities: Movements of People, Objects, and Ideas in the Southern Balkans* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021).

24 Oliver Jens Schmitt, ed., *The Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans. Interpretations and Research Debates* (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2016).

The article by Davor Salihović, titled *The Kingdom of Bosnia of Nicholas of Ilok, 1471–1477*, describes the installation of the baron Nicholas of Ilok as king of Bosnia by the Hungarian ruler in late 1471. This nobleman was very familiar with the political situation in this area because his offices and estates were concentrated in large part in Slavonia and the contiguous areas along the Sava. The Hungarian king sought to maintain his influence in the fallen kingdom.

The transition to Ottoman rule also affected ecclesiastical structures and trans-local contacts, as illustrated by the history of the Franciscan Order in this region. Rudolf Barišić describes in his article *From a Part of the Province to a Haven for Students – Slavonia from the Perspective of the Bosnian Franciscans* the administrative development of the order, which was able to extend its jurisdiction to the area between Buda and the Adriatic Sea during Ottoman rule. However, the geopolitical changes in the 17th and 18th centuries brought significant changes to the administrative organization of the Franciscan province, which, after the Peace Treaty of Sremski Karlovci, fell under the jurisdiction of three different political empires. The author argues that this might have been the main reason why, in 1735, the monasteries in Dalmatia were organized as the Province of Holy Redeemer, and in 1757, the area north of the Sava River became the Province of St. John of Capistrano.

The territorial expansion of the Bosnian Franciscan province into the regions of Slavonia, Syrmia, Baranya, and Bačka in the first half of the 17th century is discussed in Robert Skenderović's contribution, *Spreading of Pastoral Activities of Franciscans of Bosnia and Argentina in Slavonia and Hungary in the first half of the 17th century*. The author focuses not only on the mechanisms of this expansion, as exemplified by the Franciscan friars' takeover of parishes previously held by priests. Rather, he argues, that this process also had an ecclesiastical–political dimension when a “bishop of Bosna Argentina” was appointed. The article outlines several translocal and transregional dynamics, including instances where the Ragusan church hierarchy supported priests against the Franciscan monks, as well as the increasing involvement of the Habsburg, Croatian, and Hungarian estates in these developments.

Those administrative changes were a tool to create new spaces. Such a perspective is taken by Mario Šain's article *Spatiality of Religion and Rule: Exploring Bosnia and Slavonia in the 18th Century* which analyzes the relationships between religious spaces and spaces of rule, primarily referring to the Franciscan province of Bosna Argentina (*Bosna Srebrena*) and the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Karlovci. He focuses mainly on the period after the peace treaty of Karlovci (1699), when religious spaces spanned across spaces of rule throughout the 18th century and created different forms of translocal mobility.

Many publications on the medieval and early modern history of spaces of rule address the function of political borders and the extent to which they truly desig-

nate the territorial limits of those spaces. In his article *Perpetual Peace, Borders, and Statehood: Temporal and Spatial Limits of Imperial Regional Securitization in Transottoman Competition*, Stefan Rohdewald addresses central issues in relevant historiographical discussions: the idea of perpetual peace treaties and the concept of fixed borders. Both aspects are closely related to each other, especially when it comes to transformations of early modern concepts of statehood. Stefan Rohdewald argues that the discussions so far have taken a very Eurocentric perspective, which has excluded relevant developments in the empires of Eastern Europe and the “Near and Middle East,” such as the Ottoman Empire, Persia, or the Muscovy Empire. Therefore, Stefan Rohdewald follows a transottoman approach in order to obtain new insights into the consolidation of modern statehood during the early modern period and the 19th century.

In the 1520s, the Ottomans conquered the Sava region, and this area remained under their control until the 1680s. Dino Mujadžević analyzes, in his contribution, *The 16th Century Immigration of Bosnian Muslims to the Eastern Sava-Drava-Danube Interfluve*, the migration of Muslim population groups from Bosnia into the eastern part of the Sava-Drava-Danube Interfluve, which corresponds to the territory of Slavonia and Syrmia in modern terms. Based on Ottoman registers and other sources, the author demonstrates that the Ottoman administration implemented a policy of repopulation by encouraging settlement by Christians and Muslims from areas south of the Sava River and the lower reaches of the Danube in the Pannonian Basin. In this process, the fertile Požega valley became the center of the Muslim rural population. Repopulation was part of a set of mechanisms designed to strengthen control over a newly conquered territory. Another mechanism was to integrate local elites into the Ottoman administration.

Elma Korić refers in her article *Translocal “Kinship” Relations and Mobility in Ottoman Borderland: Members of the Sokolović Family on the Ottoman Serhat from the Danube to the Adriatic Sea* to the famous Sokolović family that built up strong networks throughout the Ottoman Empire. She concentrates on the activities and translocal structures of the Sokolovići in Ottoman Hungary and Bosnia, where members of this family held influential positions. The article by Elma Korić highlights the significance of households within Ottoman administrative structures.

The contribution *Militarized Reâya: Instrumentalization of the Military Violence in the Ottoman–Habsburg Frontiers, 1664–1699* by Barbaros Köksal emphasizes the key role of patronage-based *ümerâ kapuları* (military households) – which integrated the compulsory mobilization of the population under the state-declared policy of *nefir-i âmm* (general mobilization) – the *reaya* into the Ottoman military structures. Barbaros Köksal also describes various forms of violence in the Ottoman-Habsburg border area carried out by members of *ümerâ kapuları*.

During Ottoman rule, numerous settlements along the Sava River were equipped with docks (*iskele*), which facilitated trade, transportation, and military logistics. The contribution *The Sava River Crossings in the 16th and 17th Centuries* by Okan Büyüktapu and Anđelko Vlašić describes the economic activities in the river docks, which generated a significant amount of tax revenues. Besides, the article gives a detailed overview of the trade routes that crossed the Sava River during Ottoman rule. During the Great Turkish War (1683–1699), the Ottomans were forced to withdraw from the northern shores of the Sava River, and, de facto, from 1691 onwards (de jure after the Peace Treaty of Sremski Karlovci in 1699), the Sava became a de facto border river.

Milan Vrbanus' article *Bosnian Merchants in the Slavonian "Thirtieth" Customs Offices in the First Three Decades of the 18th Century* focuses on the trading activities of merchants from Bosnia after the peace treaty of Sremski Karlovci, when the Habsburg Monarchy began to reorganize the financial institutions in the newly conquered territories of Slavonia. Their officials had to inspect goods delivered to the "thirtieth" customs offices and to maintain records of the 'thirtieth' customs. Milan Vrbanus analyzes the records of the "thirtieth" customs offices in Požega, Pakrac, Brod, Rača, Mitrovica, and Petrovaradin to obtain valuable information about the merchants and the goods traded between the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires.

Both empires established a new mobility regime along the border, which is discussed by Florian Riedler and Nenad Stefanov. Their article *Belgrade and Zemun in the Eighteenth-Century Habsburg–Ottoman Mobility Regime* picks up the question of how this regime affected the border city of Belgrade and Zemun situated on the Habsburg side of the border. Ottoman Belgrade again became a mobility hub and a center of local and international trade. The authors shed light not only on merchants or diplomats crossing the border. They are also interested in mobile subaltern groups, such as criminals or fishermen, who crossed the border informally. Those examples make clear that the border area was also a trans-local contact zone where people on both sides established or maintained various channels of communication.

The article *Frontier Letters: An Insight into Cross-Border Contacts on the Military Frontier* by Filip Šimunjak is based on letters written by Habsburg and Ottoman subjects in the 16th and 17th centuries. They give deep insights into personal relationships, commercial activities, or discussions about the situation of captives.

Cross-border communication also played an important role, for example, when rumors spread about a possible outbreak of war. This was the case before the outbreak of the "Dubica War," which is the focus of the article *A War Penetrates Society: Fear of War in Bosnia in the Run-up to the "Dubica War" (1787–1791)* by Markus Koller. In the 1780s, tensions and military skirmishes in the Sava-Una region and Montenegro escalated, sparking growing fears among the

population that war was imminent. The contribution aims to describe the growing fear of war across various milieus of Bosnian society leading up to the outbreak of the “Dubica War” in 1787.

Cross-border communication remained an essential channel for the transfer of ideas, as the article *Spreading the Socialist Seed*: *Transfers of Socialist Ideas Between Croatian and Bosnian Workers from the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century to the Aftermath of the First World War* by Ana Rajković Pejić shows. She focuses on migrant workers who were indispensable to the development of socialism in the South Slavic territories of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. They brought subversive workers’ press from Budapest, Zürich, and other cities into Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina.

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Tomislav Matić

To Salvage a Kingdom: Bosnia in the Political Strategies of Bishop John Vitez¹

The Kingdom of Bosnia was facing pressure from its two powerful neighbors, the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary, in the late 1450s and the early 1460s. This period covered the last years of the reign of King Stephen Tomaš and the entire reign of King Stephen Tomašević. During that time, Bishop John Vitez was one of the key decision makers at the court of King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary. He was involved in several schemes whose goal was to retain Bosnia in the Hungarian sphere of influence. He was privy to the plan of uniting Bosnia with what was left of the Despotate of Serbia in 1459, which ended in the disastrous loss of Smederevo to the Ottomans. Later, he participated in the reconciliation of King Stephen Tomašević with King Matthias, in the years after Stephen's scandalous coronation. Judging by his actions, Vitez's goal was to direct the Kingdom of Hungary towards peace with its Christian neighbors and confront the Ottoman expansion in the Balkans. This involved keeping the limitrophe states, which included Bosnia, allied to Hungary. After the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia in 1463, this strategy was replaced with one of outright conquest of the parts of Bosnia required for the successful defense from Ottoman incursions. Vitez was the contact person between the Hungarian court and the Republic of Venice and was an important factor in the alliance that these two powers entered into in September 1463. This enabled Venetian funds to finance Hungarian expansion in Bosnia. This expansion mostly ended with the campaign of 1464, and Vitez's attention shifted to other areas of interest.

Introduction

The last years of the medieval Kingdom of Bosnia were a turbulent era marked by many influential persons with different plans regarding the kingdom's survival or demise. The goal of this paper will be to present the actions of one of these per-

¹ This research was carried out as part of the project "Communities, Communication, and Social Networks in the Croatian Middle Ages and Early Modern Times," funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU program (380-01-02-23-40).

sons, Bishop John Vitez of Oradea (d. 1472), an influential politician of the Kingdom of Hungary and one of the leading men of the early reign of King Matthias Corvinus (r. 1458–1490). As we will see, understanding his actions will be crucial for explaining the Kingdom of Hungary's strategies regarding Bosnia in the 1450s and 1460s. This distinguished politician was known by his contemporaries to have been of Slavonian descent.² Enea Silvio Piccolomini, who became Pope Pius II in 1458, wrote that both Vitez and his nephew, the acclaimed poet, Janus Pannonius, were native Slavonians, i.e., natives of contemporary Slavonia.³ The contemporary writer, Vespasiano da Bisticci, called them both *Ischiavi*.⁴

The timescale of the events which we will focus on will be the final years of the medieval Kingdom of Bosnia, more precisely, the years 1458–1464. We will consider how Vitez's actions helped shape them and how they fit into general strategies that might be assumed to have underpinned his decisions. The developments in question are the attempts to preserve the Kotromanić rule in Bosnia, which involved a dynastic union with Serbia, and a reconciliation between Hungarian rulers and the kings of Bosnia after the falling out in the last years of Stephen Tomaš's and the first year of Stephen Tomašević's reign. This period was marked by attempts to find a place for Bosnia in the turbulent political configuration of the era. All of these were significant events that shaped the local political landscape.

The last part of our analysis will study the period after the first Ottoman conquest of the Kingdom of Bosnia in 1463. We will follow Vitez's participation in diplomatic and military endeavors in 1463 and 1464, which differed considerably from the previous wrangling with the political status of Bosnia. We will finish with the Hungarian military campaign of 1464 because, after that, no significant data can be found that would indicate Vitez's further participation in Bosnian affairs. While tracing Vitez's actions, we will present the events chronologically, with the context necessary for understanding the situation in which they occurred. The expansion of the Ottoman Empire, the crusading ambitions of the papacy, and the varying fortunes of the Kingdom of Hungary provided for a difficult political

2 Regarding John Vitez's family, see Tomislav Matić, *Bishop John Vitez and Early Renaissance Central Europe. A Humanist Kingmaker* (Leeds: ARC Humanities Press, 2022), 5–16.

3 Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Opera quae extant omnia* (Basel, 1571), 392.

4 Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Le Vite*, vol. 1, ed. Aulo Greco (Florence: Istituto nazionale di studi sul rinascimento, 1970), 319, 327. See also Tanja Trška, "Ivan Vitez od Sredne i Jan Panonije iz perspektive talijanskog humanizma: Vespasiano da Bisticci i Ischiavi" [Janos Vitez and Janus Pannonius Through the Eyes of Italian Humanism: Vespasiano da Bisticci and Ischiavi], in *800 godina slobodnog kraljevskog grada Varaždina 1209.–2009: Zbornik radova s međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa održanog 3. i 4. prosinca 2009. godine u Varaždinu*, eds. Miroslav Šicel and Slobodan Kaštela (Zagreb / Varaždin: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Zavod za znanstveni rad u Varaždinu / Grad Varaždin, Varaždinska županija, 2009), 609–18.

landscape in which an individual had to carefully consider their options and possibilities.

An Attempted Bosnian–Serbian Union

To explain the place that Bosnia occupied in contemporary strategies, it is necessary to understand the role which it played in the massive conflict between the Kingdom of Hungary (including the Kingdoms of Croatia and Slavonia) and the Ottoman Empire. According to the well-aged analysis of Ferenc Szakályi, this conflict had, for the first two-thirds of the 15th century, mostly consisted of vying for control of the smaller, limitrophe states in the Balkans.⁵ These states, primarily Wallachia, Serbia, and Bosnia, would serve either as defensive buffers or as staging areas for offensive campaigns, and it was important for the main combatants to secure their allegiance or submission. Generally speaking, although control of them swung back and forth, the Kingdom of Hungary was successful in either maintaining or reestablishing it until after the Siege of Belgrade in 1456. This was when the Ottomans concentrated much effort on systematically dismantling these states and the Hungarian strategy that relied on them. With the 1463 conquest of the Kingdom of Bosnia, this process was completed, and Hungarian rulers were forced to develop new defensive strategies. These became increasingly onerous and were compounded by the fact that the kingdom was forced to wage war on its own soil.⁶

The relations between Bosnian and Hungarian rulers were marked by distrust, and Bosnia itself was fragmented and fraught with infighting. Nevertheless, as its position was strategically important, it was necessary for Hungarian rulers to impose their control over it, either by treaty or by force.⁷ For decades, it was standard procedure for them to periodically reassert their overlordship by waging military campaigns and placing pliable members of the local elite on the throne. Incidentally, Bosnia became especially relevant to the Hungarian anti-Ottoman war effort precisely at the time when John Vitez was in a position to influence state policy.⁸ The accession of King Matthias Corvinus in 1458 brought Vitez inside the

5 Ferenc Szakályi, "Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare before the Battle of Mohács (1365–1526)," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 33 (1979): 76–98.

6 Tamas Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 39–43.

7 Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 15.

8 Pálosfalvi went as far as identifying him as the author of the Hungarian state policy during the early years of King Matthias's reign; see Tamas Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background in Hungary of the Campaign of Jajce in 1463," in Ante Birin, ed., *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.–1463.): slom srednjovjekovnoga Bosanskog Kraljevstva. Zbornik radova sa Znanstvenog skupa održanog 11. i 12. studenog 2011. godine u Jajcu* [Stephen Tomašević (1461–1463): Fall of the Medieval King-

young king's inner circle. Thanks to his uncle's intercession, Vitez's nephew, Janus Pannonius, then bishop of Pécs, was also elevated to a high place in court.⁹ This was a dangerous time to be at the helm of the kingdom. The new king was inexperienced and his authority precarious, and the Ottomans, led by the famed Sultan Mehmed II, were aware of that. They maintained severe pressure on the kingdom's borders, simultaneously conquering what was left of the Balkan states.¹⁰ Decisive steps had to be taken to stabilize the situation, but new obstacles arose at every one of them.

Above all, action had to be taken to halt the Ottoman incursions into the southern reaches of Hungary. These were happening in parallel with the final conquest of the Despotate of Serbia – final in the sense that, unlike the previous ones, this one was not successfully reversed by the Hungarian side. In the summer of 1458, the grand vizier, Mahmud Pasha Angelović, conquered virtually all of Serbia except the capital of Smederevo and, taking advantage of the turbulent state of the Kingdom of Hungary, led his army across the Sava and conquered much of the Hungarian border region of Syrmia.¹¹ The Hungarian lords, nominally led by King Matthias, managed to liberate Syrmia, but did not attempt a crossing into Serbia.¹² Even the modest goal of protecting Hungary proper was not achieved easily, as Syrmian forts had to be taken back by force.¹³ This was cause for alarm, especially since the fall of Serbia left the entire southern flank of Hungary exposed.

John Vitez understood the severity of the situation. It is possible, and perhaps even likely, that he supported a plan that might have significantly strengthened the Hungarian buffer zone and kept Ottoman incursions at bay. This plan was proposed by King Stephen Tomaš of Bosnia (r. 1443–1461) in the autumn of 1458, and it was finalized at a diet held in Szeged in December of the same year with King Stephen's personal attendance. It proposed what was to essentially be a union of Bosnia and Serbia, as Stephen's son and heir, also named Stephen,¹⁴

dom of Bosnia. Proceedings of the Scientific Conference Held on November 11–12, 2011 in [Jajce] (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest; Sarajevo: Katolički bogoslovni fakultet u Sarajevu, 2013), 80–81.

9 Matic, *Bishop John Vitez*, 125–31.

10 Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 188.

11 Theoharis Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelovic (1453–1474)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 125.

12 Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 196–97.

13 A contemporary charter issued by the bishop of Zagreb attests that the castle of Slankamen had to be besieged by the royal army. That means that the Ottomans did not intend their incursion to be merely a raid and attempted to hold Syrmia. See Andrija Lukinović, ed, *Monumenta historica episcopatus Zagradiensis*, vol. 7: 1441–1465 (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost – Hrvatski državni arhiv, 2004), 362, doc. 339.

14 Interestingly, Pope Pius II thought that the title of Bosnian kings was “Stephen”; see Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae temporibus suis contigerunt*, eds. Gio-

was to marry a Serbian princess – Maria, daughter of the late Despot Lazarus (r. 1456–1458) – and take over the reins of the country. This course of action would have simultaneously solved the succession crisis that erupted in Serbia following the death of Despot Lazarus and created a regional force that would, hopefully, stave off Ottoman incursions.¹⁵ This was a continuation of the Bosnian king's attempts to marry his son to a Serbian princess, which had been in progress since at least the spring of 1458.¹⁶

To the Bosnian king, an opportunity to expand his domain seemed too tempting to forgo,¹⁷ and it should never be disregarded that historical figures did not possess the hindsight that we do. From Stephen's perspective, his prospects likely seemed optimistic. The Hungarian regime had proved to be stable enough to mobilize an impressive force and repel the Ottomans. Besides, Stephen had entered into negotiations with the papacy the year before (through the legate, Cardinal Juan Carvajal) and was promised assistance in the eventuality of an Ottoman attack on his country.¹⁸ His proposition to King Matthias came soon after the election of Pope Pius II on August 19, 1458, who had for years been calling for a great crusade against the Ottomans and started preparations for it immediately after he was elected.¹⁹ While King Stephen was proposing his plan to Matthias, columns of crusaders were still pouring into southern Hungary.²⁰ It seemed plausible that the Ottoman conquest of Serbia would once again be reversed.

It is likely that John Vitez was King Stephen's contact at Matthias's court. It is even possible that he endorsed Stephen's proposition. This assumption is based on the letter which Stephen sent to Vitez on February 10, 1459. In this letter, Stephen described his journey from Szeged to his seat in Jajce. He remarked that he rode without rest and made the journey in thirteen days, which means that he tarried in Hungary until the end of January.²¹ This was probably meant to reas-

vanni Gobellini and Francesco Bandini Piccolomini (Frankfurt: Officina Aubriana, 1614), 63–64.

15 Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 197–98.

16 Dubravko Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti. Sveta kruna ugarska i Sveta kruna bosanska 1387–1463* [*The Landslide of History: The Holy Crown of Hungary and the Holy Crown of Bosnia 1387–1463*] (Zagreb; Sarajevo: Synopsis, 2006), 329.

17 It should be noted that King Stephen seized a number of Serbian holdings immediately after Despot Lazarus's death. See Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 328.

18 Domingo Lopez de Barrera, *De Rebus Gestis Joannis S.R.E. Cardinalis Carvajalis Commentarius* (Rome 1752), 76–77; Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 192.

19 Gioacchino Paparelli, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini. L'Umanesimo sul soglio di Pietro* (Ravenna: Longo, 1978) 146–47; Nancy Bisaha, "Pope Pius II and the Crusade," in *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century. Message and Impact*, ed. Norman Housley (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 39–40.

20 Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453–1505* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 115–16.

21 Cf. Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 330.

sure Vitez of his willingness and ability to carry out the plan. The rest of the letter, however, was meant to emphasize the danger of the scheme and the necessity of Hungarian aid. That was the probable intention of the somewhat confusing claims that the Ottomans were trying to ambush the king on his return, that Bosnia was rife with their patrols, and that their invasion would certainly come as soon as the spring thaw.²²

Stephen was probably convinced that Vitez's support could secure him Hungarian resources and troops. If Vitez was sincere in his dealings with the Bosnian king, he must have thought that the plan which the latter proposed was viable. Bosnia indeed might have been an important block in the political scheme which Vitez was building at that time. We will never know whether it would have been successful because an unexpected turn of events prevented Hungary from putting its weight behind King Stephen's plans and ambitions.

In February 1459, several of the most powerful lords of the Kingdom of Hungary, led by the future king of Bosnia, Nicholas of Ilok (d. 1477), gathered in Nicholas's castle in Güssing and elected Emperor Frederick III as king of Hungary.²³ Discontents disenchanted by King Matthias's rule had been conspiring for some time by then. They had previously offered the throne to the Bohemian king, George of Poděbrady (r. 1458–1471), who declined it, as he and Matthias were then still allies, and Matthias was due to marry George's daughter.²⁴ More importantly for our subject, the Bosnian king's plans were shattered by this turn of events. What seemed an optimistic perspective in the autumn of 1458 lost all its luster by the spring of 1459. The stability of Matthias's reign turned out to leave much to be desired and, what was worse, the kingdom was now entangled in internal struggles that rendered interventions abroad impossible.

We do not know why King Stephen proceeded with the plan to send his heir to Smederevo in such adverse circumstances. It is very likely that Vitez informed him of the state of Hungary. Perhaps he hoped that the crisis would be resolved swiftly because, after all, most of the lords still stood with Matthias,²⁵ or he counted on the Pope for aid. In any case, he dispatched his son to Hungary,

22 František Palacký, ed., *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte Böhmens und seiner Nachbarländer im Zeitalter Georg's von Podiebrad (1450–1471)* (Vienna, 1860), 171–72, doc. 176; see also Aleksije Akimovič Olesnicki, "Mihajlo Szilágyi i srbska despotija" [Michael Szilágyi and the Despotate of Serbia], *Rad Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 276 (1943): 34–35.

23 András Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex* (Budapest: Balassi, 2008), 63–64.

24 Frederick Gotthold Heymann, *George of Bohemia: King of Heretics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 206.

25 These had, in a tense atmosphere preceding the rebellion, declared their support for Matthias on February 10; see Martin Juraj Kovačić, ed., *Vestigia comitorum apud Hungaros ab exordio regni eorum in Pannonia, usque ad hodiernum diem celebratorum* (Budapest, 1790), 352–55.

from where he made his way to Smederevo, and on April 1, the marriage to the Serbian princess proceeded as planned.²⁶

However, perhaps the circumstances which we know to have been adverse did not seem so to the contemporaries. The Council of Mantua (June 1459–January 1460, but the preliminaries began much earlier), convened by Pope Pius II with the express purpose of launching a crusade, was about to commence. Representatives of the Bosnian king indeed appeared at the council and encouraged the Pope to wage war on the Ottomans.²⁷ The Bosnian king and his son could have hoped that help would be forthcoming. Still, the crucial link for the crusade effort, the Kingdom of Hungary, was paralyzed by infighting and could not be counted on. In fact, it was viewed with suspicion. When the Pope sent a crusade banner to the legate, Carvajal, who was in Hungary at the time, he stressed that he was sending it to him, and not to King Matthias, so that the latter would not use it for his war against the emperor.²⁸

In any case, an Ottoman attack on Smederevo did proceed in June 1459, doubtlessly taking advantage of the situation in Hungary. King Stephen's son Stephen decided that he could not hold out against the siege and surrendered the fortress in exchange for safe conduct for himself, his family, and his belongings.²⁹ This was received very poorly by the Pope, who considered Stephen Tomašević's surrender treasonous and accused him of receiving gold from the Ottomans in exchange for Smederevo. He also claimed that the Hungarians were utterly shocked by this act.³⁰ The Hungarians indeed considered it worthy of punishment.³¹ Nevertheless, Hungary was unable to do anything to prevent it.³² Talks about a truce between King Matthias and the emperor began in earnest only after this event. In

26 Olesnicki, "Mihajlo Szilágyi," 34–35; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 330.

27 Piccolomini, *Commentarii*, 63–64.

28 Lino Gómez Canedo, *Un español al servicio de la Santa Sede: Don Juan de Carvajal, cardenal de Sant'Angelo, legado en Alemania y Hungría (1399?–1469)* (Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, Instituto Jeronimo Zurita, 1947), 209.

29 Olesnicki, "Mihajlo Szilágyi," 34–35.

30 Piccolomini, *Commentarii*, 64. See also Emir O. Filipović, "Exurge igitur, miles Christi, et in barbaros viriliter pugna': The Anti-Ottoman Activities of Bosnian King Stjepan Tomas (1443–1461)," in *Holy War in Late Medieval and Early Modern East-Central Europe*, eds. Janusz Smolucha, John Jefferson, and Andrzej Wadas (Cracow: Akademia Ignatianum w Krakowie – Wydawnictwo WAM, 2017), 238–39.

31 Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 333–34.

32 A summons to war was issued, but apparently to no effect. See Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 83. We might assume that many of the kingdom's nobles did not believe that the king would direct his actions against the Ottomans.

July 1459, King George of Bohemia had proposed to mediate the peace negotiations, and Matthias granted full powers to John Vitez and the master of the horse, Oswald Rozgonyi, to negotiate a solution to the conflict.³³ A one-year truce was concluded, but the Hungarian rebels were not included in it, and fighting continued.³⁴ Of course, by then it was too late to do anything about the fall of Smederevo.

The Bosnian king had much explaining to do. Under the Pope's suspicious gaze, he had to make a great religious concession by stamping out the heterodox Bosnian Church, which the previous rulers of Bosnia had protected. This took place in mid-1459, immediately after the surrender of Smederevo.³⁵ Stephen's son's dealings with the Ottomans brought difficulties to Hungary as well. The fall of Smederevo additionally exposed a wide section of the Hungarian borderlands to the Ottomans. Although, for the time being, they did not attempt further conquests in Hungary proper, they did establish a permanent raiding force, centered in Golubac and commanded by Ali Bey Mihaloğlu.³⁶

Instead of a solid bulwark to the south, the Hungarian king now had just one unreliable vassal who could only be expected to remain inconstant. King Stephen exacerbated his offenses by requesting the protection of the Republic of Venice in 1460, including a place in the Republic's territory in which his family could reside, and which could serve as a refuge for himself. The poor relations between the Bosnian king and Hungary are illustrated by the fact that Stephen tried to foment dissent between the Republic and the Hungarian authorities by claiming that the Croatian Ban, Paul Špirančić, was ill-disposed toward Venice.³⁷ The aforementioned request was denied and apparently did not attract much attention, but more serious actions would follow soon afterwards.

33 Vilmos Fraknói, ed., *Mátyás király levelei. Külügyi osztály*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Magyar tudományos akadémia, 1893), 9–10, doc. 7.

34 Iván Nagy and Albert Nyáry, eds., *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Magyar tudományos akadémia, 1875), 64–66, doc. 42.

35 Luka Špoljarić, "The Renaissance Papacy and Catholicization of the 'Manichean Heretics' Rethinking the 1459 Purge of the Bosnian Kingdom," in *Global Reformations: Transforming Early Modern Religions, Societies, and Cultures*, ed. Nicholas Terpstra (London: Routledge, 2019), 157–58. The previous wave of conversions to Catholicism in Bosnia in the late 1440s was not accompanied by persecution. See Filipović, "Exurge igitur," 219–23.

36 Olesnicki, "Mihajlo Szilágyi," 67–69.

37 Nagy and Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek*, vol. 1, 80–81, doc. 52. See also Emir O. Filipović, "Ardet ante oculos opulentissimum regnum ... Venetian Reports about the Ottoman Conquest of the Bosnian Kingdom, A.D. 1463," in *Italy and Europe's Eastern Border (1204–1669)*, eds. Iulian Mihai Damian et al. (Frankfurt am Main – Berlin – Bern – Bruxelles – New York – Oxford – Wien: Peter Lang, 2012), 140.

King Stephen Tomašević at the Crossroads

The inconstancy of Bosnian rulers came to light at another moment when the Kingdom of Hungary was distracted by fighting in the west. King Matthias made an alliance with the emperor's estranged brother, the archduke Albert VI of Austria, and renewed the war with the emperor in the summer of 1461.³⁸ Immediately afterwards, representatives of King Stephen Tomašević (the elder Stephen had died earlier in the same year) appeared before the Pope, asking him to dispatch a crown for the new king and establish dioceses in his kingdom. Pius II assented and agreed to demand that the Republic of Venice send shipments of arms to Bosnia from its forts in Dalmatia. Regarding Stephen's coronation, the Pope claimed that he would first make sure that the king of Hungary agreed with it, but that it was up to Stephen to smooth things out with the latter.³⁹

This was another act that the Hungarian side could interpret as treason, as Bosnia was seen as a vassal of Hungary, and there already was a Diocese of Bosnia, centered in Đakovo and subject to the Hungarian church. Moreover, seeking a crown from the Pope without one's liege's permission was tantamount to claiming independence.⁴⁰ Still, it must be said that in the short term, relying on the Pope yielded more benefits for Stephen Tomašević than persisting in his feudal obligations. Pius II dispatched Natale Zorzi, bishop of Nin (in Croatia), as his legate in Bosnia, with the authority to recruit crusaders for the defense of King Stephen's realm.⁴¹ King Matthias, on the other hand, was mired in his war in Austria, and in September 1461, was forced into an uneasy nine-month truce by King George of Bohemia, who had intervened on the emperor's behalf.⁴² That is why, once again, no action was taken to prevent the erosion of Hungary's influence in the south.

While Stephen Tomaš was an unreliable vassal, his son, the younger Stephen (r. 1461–1463), could have been considered an outright renegade. It is likely that his intentions were not malicious and that he was counting on the Pope aiding him against the Ottomans while the Hungarian king was occupied elsewhere. Nevertheless, Bosnia had become a problem for the Kingdom of Hungary, and

38 Konstantin Moritz A. Langmaier, *Erzherzog Albrecht VI. von Österreich (1418–1463). Ein Fürst im Spannungsfeld von Dynastie, Regionen und Reich* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015), 525, 535, 540.

39 Piccolomini, *Commentarii*, 297–98. See also Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 342–45.

40 Mladen Ančić, *Na rubu Zapada: Tri stoljeća srednjovjekovne Bosne [On the Fringe of the West. Three Centuries of the Medieval Bosnia]* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest; Dom i svijet, 2001), 112.

41 Augustin Theiner, ed., *Vetera monumenta historica Hungariorum sacram illustrantia*. vol. 2 (Rome, 1860), 366–69, doc. 551. A similar concession was granted to Stephen's father in 1457. See Filipović, "Exurge igitur," 233–34.

42 Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 253–54.

not the only one at that. Fruitless wars with the Empire in the west had enabled the sultan to act with impunity in the east. Something had to be done to halt this degenerative process. Bishop John Vitez was the one who took action and piloted a new strategy for Hungary.

In the winter of 1461–1462, Vitez hosted at his palace in Oradea Bishop Nicholas of Modruš,⁴³ an accomplished diplomat experienced in dealing with the papal Curia,⁴⁴ and very likely other influential men as well. In the meantime, Janus Pannonius contacted his old classmate Protase Černohorský of Boskovice, the bishop of Olomouc.⁴⁵ The latter represented King George of Bohemia in the peace talks between King Matthias and the emperor mediated by George.⁴⁶ It is very likely that the events that followed were planned by these powerful men during their winter talks. If we take into account all the actions spearheaded by Vitez in the following years, it appears that they had a common goal: making sure that the Kingdom of Hungary remained at peace with its western neighbors. This enabled it to finally take decisive action against Ottoman encroachment.

The first steps towards achieving this were taken as early as February 1462. Vitez was present at the archbishop's palace in Esztergom when peace was made between King Matthias and some of the most powerful of the rebels in the west, the counts of Szentgyörgy and Pezinok and their allies.⁴⁷ But this was just a prelude to the diplomatic offensive that took place in the following months. Most likely against King Matthias's wishes, and in accord with the papal nuncio, Girolamo Lando, Vitez concluded a preliminary peace treaty with the emperor in Graz on April 3, 1462. After much deliberation, the Hungarian Estates General ratified it on May 26. This treaty included the cession of the Holy Crown of Hungary, which had been in Frederick III's keeping for two decades. Its possession increased Matthias's authority immensely, as it was a holy relic on which the king's political power relied. More importantly for our subject, the treaty also

43 Luka Špoljarić, "Politika, patronat i intelektualna kultura na ugarskom dvoru u prvim godinama vladavine Matije Korvina: Nikola Modruški i Petrova ladica (Studija, kritičko izdanje i prijevod)" [Politics, Patronage, and Intellectual Culture at the Hungarian Court during the First Years of Matthias Corvinus's Reign: Nicholas of Modruš and Peter's Barge], *Grada za povijest književnosti hrvatske* 38 (2015): 5–6, 9–10.

44 Luka Špoljarić, "Nikola Modruški *avant la lettre*: Društveno podrijetlo, akademski put i počeci crkvene karijere (uz prilog o slučaju živog mrtvaca u Senju)" [Nicholas of Modruš avant la lettre: His Social Background, Academic Path, and Early Ecclesiastical Career (With an Appendix on the Case of a Revenant in Senj)], *Povijesni prilozi* 33, no. 46 (2014): 69–94.

45 László Juhász, ed., *Galeottus Martius Narniensis – Epistolae* (Rome: Királyi Magyar egyetemi nyomda – Messaggerie Italiane, 1930), 4, doc. II.

46 Heymann, *George of Bohemia*, 209–11; Antonín Kalous, "Boskovice urai Mátyás király diplomáciai és politikai szolgálatában" [The Lords of Boskovice in the Diplomatic and Political Service of King Matthias], *Századok* 141 (2007): 376–79.

47 Hungary – Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, Budapest – Diplomatikai Levéltár – Mohács Előtti Gyűjtemény (in further text: HU – MNL – DL) 24 767 and 15 698.

secured the Hungarian western border and ended the rebellion, as the remaining rebels were forced to come to terms with Matthias when the emperor withheld his support. However, it also removed the possibility that the Hungarian king would use the funds meant for the defense from the Ottomans to wage war on the emperor.⁴⁸

Vitez's intentions become clear if we consider the actions taken after this strategic change of tack. He steered the Kingdom of Hungary towards facing the Ottomans and reasserting Hungarian control of the limitrophe states. Although Serbia turned out to be permanently lost, there was a chance of winning Wallachia over. The notorious Voivode Vlad III Dracula had denied the sultan the usual tribute and turned to Hungary for support. Even while the Hungarian estates were still deliberating whether to accept the peace treaty with the emperor, Vitez was forwarding information to the Venetian senate about the movement of Ottoman troops by personally communicating with the Republic's ambassador to Hungary, Pietro Tomasi. He was requesting aid, primarily monetary, which would enable Hungary to mount a successful defense.⁴⁹ As Venice was at peace with the sultan, this was not a trifling matter. Nevertheless, money was dispatched immediately after the peace treaty was ratified.⁵⁰ Vitez simultaneously requested aid from the Pope by writing to the former legate, Carvajal, who had in the meantime returned to Rome.⁵¹ Venice supported his efforts through its ambassador at the Curia.⁵²

These were not *ad hoc* decisions. Extensive diplomatic preparations very likely took place in the preceding months. The Pope and Venice needed to be persuaded that King Matthias would indeed take steps to counter the Ottomans and not squander their aid on other matters. This was most likely the task of George Polycarp Kosztoláni, who was dispatched to Venice and Rome in the spring of 1462.⁵³ This person was Vitez's protégé in the 1450s and would go on to become his secretary.⁵⁴ Janus Pannonius's letter to the doge, Cristoforo Moro, dispatched in September 1462, mentions a letter sent to him and his uncle, John Vitez, by the doge, which had been brought by Polycarp upon his return from Italy. Although the contents of Pannonius's letter are trite and – probably deliberately – do not reveal anything about the doge's letter's recipients' dealings with Venice, they do state that both of them, but primarily Vitez, were delighted with the doge's atti-

48 Matić, *Bishop John Vitez*, 136–41.

49 Nagy and Nyáry, *Magyar diplomaciai emlékek* 1, 143, doc. 89 and 147, doc. 92.

50 Nagy and Nyáry, *Magyar diplomaciai emlékek* 1, 148–49, doc. 93.

51 Iohannes Vitéz de Zredna. *Opera quae supersunt*, ed. Iván Boronkai (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1980), 210, doc. 34.

52 Nagy and Nyáry, *Magyar diplomaciai emlékek* 1, 150–51.

53 Matić, *Bishop John Vitez*, 138, 202.

54 Matić, *Bishop John Vitez*, 108–109, 191.

tude towards them.⁵⁵ This indicates that Vitez might have maintained contacts with the Venetian government parallel to his diplomatic effort of making peace with the emperor, with the same aim: to make Hungary capable of turning its forces eastwards.

These efforts bore fruit, and during the second half of 1462, the Kingdom of Hungary mobilized its forces. At the time when Vitez was delivering information to the Venetian ambassador in May and June, he was not sure of the direction in which the sultan's army would strike. It seems that a deliberate disinformation campaign took place before the hostilities began in earnest, as Duke Stephen Vukčić Kosača of Herzegovina was convinced by his contact at the Sublime Porte that the sultan's objectives would be Bosnia and Albania,⁵⁶ while Vitez received reports according to which the Ottomans would march on Belgrade.⁵⁷ The target of the invasion turned out to have been Wallachia. The Hungarian army took enough time to assemble to allow the sultan to conquer this principality, expel Dracula, and install his brother Radu III as voivode to rule under the supervision of Ali-bey Mihaloğlu. Nevertheless, the Hungarian force ultimately assembled and arrived at the Wallachian border in the autumn of 1462, which was impressive enough for Radu to sue for peace and acknowledge Matthias as his sovereign.⁵⁸ Dracula, who had thus become an inconvenience, was interned and carried off to Hungary.

With these accomplishments, the campaign could be declared a success. Janus Pannonius had indeed done so and composed a poem celebrating King Matthias's victory.⁵⁹ According to a letter patent which he was issued later, Vitez contributed troops for the Wallachian campaign.⁶⁰ There is an indication that he personally took part in it, as a note in one of his books states that he was in Sibiu, which was close to the Wallachian border, at the end of September 1462.⁶¹ This could mean that the campaign was at least partly his project as well. It was certainly an important step in the reorientation of the Kingdom of Hungary towards countering the Ottoman Empire.

55 Janus Pannonius, *Opusculorum pars altera*, ed. Samuel Teleki (Utrecht: Bartholomaeus Wild, 1784), 85, doc. 10.

56 Filipović, "Arde ante oculos," 141.

57 Nagy and Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek* 1, 147, doc. 92.

58 Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 204–205; Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs*, 140–43; Szakály, Ferenc. "Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare," 95–96.

59 Janus Pannonius, *Epigrammata / The Epigrams*, ed. Anthony Barrett (Budapest: Corvina, 1985), 88–89.

60 Antonius de Bonfinis, *Rerum ungaricarum decades*, vol. 4, part 1, eds. József Fögel, Béla Iványi, and László Juhász (Budapest: K. M. Egyetemi nyomda, 1941), 2.

61 Klára Csapodiné Gárdonyi, *Die Bibliothek des Johannes Vitéz* (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1984), 145–46.

In this context, King Stephen Tomašević of Bosnia must be credited with being a prudent ruler, able to recognize the power shift that was taking place in the region. Playing at independence in the face of a resurgent Hungary was something that he could not allow himself. The actions which he took to return to King Matthias's good graces show that Bosnia had a place in Vitez's grand strategy as well. Stephen took a roundabout route and, contrary to what Pope Pius claimed in his *Commentaries*, employed the Pope to intervene with Matthias on his behalf. The Pope, on his part, contacted Vitez and tasked him with reconciling the two rulers as early as January 1462. This means that the Bosnian ruler had had a change of heart roughly at the same time as Voivode Vlad III. Vitez reassured the Pope that he had labored in Stephen's favor and that the Pope's letter and the Bosnian king's envoys, which had arrived at about the same time, prompted Matthias to accept Stephen as his vassal.⁶²

Although this letter is undated, it can be surmised that it was sent while the Hungarian estates were deliberating about accepting the peace treaty with the emperor. This can be surmised from the letter which Vitez had sent to Cardinal Carvajal at that time, which also refers to the subject of the Bosnian king's reconciliation with Matthias.⁶³ Carvajal had apparently also intervened on Stephen's behalf by writing to Vitez. This is not surprising, as Carvajal had visited Bosnia and conversed with Stephen's father in 1457, in his capacity as a papal legate.⁶⁴ Another important piece of information that can be obtained from these letters is that Stephen had accelerated his efforts to ingratiate himself with the Hungarian ruler after the preliminary peace treaty between the emperor and Hungary had been made. As this treaty was a result of Vitez's work, it is logical that the Pope and Cardinal Carvajal, and probably King Stephen himself, turned to Vitez to help those efforts. In short, Vitez was required to find a place for the Bosnian king in the grand strategy that had been forming at that time.

So far, we have seen that Stephen Tomašević could have been considered untrustworthy, rebellious, and willing to compromise his honor to save his own life. It did not bode well for him when the Kingdom of Hungary turned its attention from the west to the east. King Matthias's letter to the Pope, dispatched at the time of his reconciliation with Stephen in May 1462, clearly stated that the latter's former transgressions were not forgotten and that, in fact, the king still considered him treasonous and potentially dangerous. A thinly veiled warning was issued to

62 Vitez, *Opera*, 209, doc. 33. Although there is not much information about when and how King Stephen Tomašević received the crown from the Pope, Lovrenović speculates that the coronation took place in November 1461. See Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 346–47.

63 Vitez, *Opera*, 210, doc. 34. See also Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 350.

64 Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 192.

the Pope not to meddle in Bosnian internal affairs any further.⁶⁵ The appointment of Bishop Nicholas of Modruš as the papal legate in Bosnia in late 1462 was likely both a concession to the Hungarian king and a nod to John Vitez, as Nicholas could be trusted to keep the latter informed about the happenings at the Bosnian court.⁶⁶

Considering this, it seems that King Stephen was given a reprieve and a chance to prove himself an ally. A price was to be paid for his previous transgressions in the form of money and some strategic fortresses. Also, much more importantly, Stephen denied the sultan his tribute and signaled his willingness to wage war on the latter. Later in the year, however, he changed his mind and reapproached the sultan.⁶⁷ Perhaps this was caused by the Ottoman invasion of Wallachia and the ousting of Voivode Vlad III (r. 1456–1462 and 1475–1476), which was mentioned earlier. After some further vacillation, he again attempted to secure peace with Mehmed II in the spring of 1463.⁶⁸ Whatever the reason, a ruler of a relatively small limitrophe country had to carefully gauge which of his neighbors presented the larger threat at a particular moment. The erratic behavior of King Stephen in late 1462 and the first half of 1463 signals that both neighboring powers were on the ascent and applying strong pressure on him, and that it was becoming increasingly difficult to tread the line between them.⁶⁹ The result was that neither of them was pleased, and the danger from both increased.

The most important effect of the Hungarian campaign in Wallachia was that it, by itself, represented an important statement: further Ottoman advances would not go unchecked. It was both a challenge and a warning. If Vitez was required to find a place for Stephen in the network of Hungarian allies, we can assume that this would be to guard the southern approaches to the Kingdom of Hungary, namely to Slavonia and Croatia. It might have been expected of him to join the Hungarian king's offensive actions against the Ottomans as well,⁷⁰ but these did not materialize before the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia. A defensive role was something that the Bosnian ruler was thought capable of performing.⁷¹ Perhaps this opinion was correct, as the unsuccessful Ottoman siege of Jajce in the summer

65 Fraknói, *Mátyás király levelei* 1, 32–34, doc. 26. See also Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 348–49.

66 Špoljarić, “The Renaissance papacy,” 163; Špoljarić, “Politika, patronat,” 6–7.

67 Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 112; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 349.

68 Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 354.

69 Regarding this line of thinking, see also Srećko M. Džaja, “Ideološki i politološki aspekti propasti bosanskog kraljevstva 1463. godine” [Ideological and political aspects of the collapse of the Bosnian kingdom in 1463], *Croatica Christiana periodica* 10, no. 18 (1986): 209–10.

70 Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 205–206.

71 The Venetian authorities were convinced that the Bosnian king was capable of weathering an Ottoman invasion; see Filipović, “Ardet ante oculos,” 142.

of 1464 proved that a determined garrison could hold that fortress against a much stronger foe.⁷²

Conquests and Counter-Conquests

A disinformation campaign similar to the one that preceded the invasion of Wallachia likely preceded the Ottoman 1463 campaign as well. The Hungarian army gathered on the Serbian border, which was the most exposed side of the kingdom, and waited for Sultan Mehmed II to show his hand.⁷³ When the latter's army invaded Bosnia in May 1463, it seems that Hungarian plans envisioned the Bosnian ruler staying on the defensive while the Hungarian army conducted actions in the Ottoman rear, in the Serbian marches south of the Danube.⁷⁴

The surprisingly swift conquest of Bosnian strongholds annulled any previously existing plans and forced the Hungarian side to reconfigure its strategy. As for King Stephen Tomašević, he had, by all accounts, outlived his usefulness as far as both of his powerful neighbors were concerned. The king's indecisiveness, as well as his supposed blunders during the Ottoman invasion,⁷⁵ might mean that Stephen was reluctant to rely on King Matthias, perhaps because he thought that the Hungarian ruler would not exert himself coming to his aid, or that he would suffer the fate of Voivode Vlad III if he fled to Matthias's territory.⁷⁶ In any case, he decided to once again surrender his fortress in exchange for his life,⁷⁷ but the sultan overruled this bargain and executed him.

Whatever King Matthias's, John Vitez's, or anyone else's plans for Bosnia were, King Stephen Tomašević's death was both good and bad for any future strategies. The good side of the matter was that Bosnia was rendered a blank slate, and direct control of it, something which Hungarian rulers were trying to accomplish for two centuries, was now possible. None of the major Hungarian policymakers made any effort to reestablish the Kotromanić dynasty, and Stephen's heirs even-

72 Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 375–77; Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 215–16.

73 Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 206–207.

74 Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 132, 137–38.

75 Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 127–28.

76 Grgin noticed the similarity between King Matthias's treatment of Vlad III and Stephen Tomašević when they were facing an Ottoman invasion; see Borislav Grgin, "Južne granice Ugarsko-Hrvatskog Kraljevstva u vrijeme Stjepana Tomaševića" [Southern Borders of the Hungarian – Croatian Kingdom during the Reign of Stjepan Tomašević] in Birin *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.–1463.)*, 72–73. Ančić came to a similar conclusion in Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 133–36. Cf. Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 358–60.

77 The similarity of Stephen's conduct in the surrender of Smederevo and Ključ was noticed by Lovrenović; see Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 333.

tually died in exile.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the bad side was that with the fall of Bosnia, the Ottoman-Hungarian frontier lengthened considerably, and both Slavonia and Croatia found themselves exposed to Ottoman military pressure. Also, to establish control over Bosnia, the Hungarian king now had to fight the sultan directly.

Matthias lingered on the Serbian frontier until autumn, but a sense of urgency permeated the atmosphere. The sultan accepted the challenge that was issued in the previous year; ignoring this meant risking credibility. Besides, the Croatian nobility had vested interests in Bosnia and commenced their own operations as soon as the majority of the sultan's army had retreated. The Croatian Ban, Paul Špirančić, launched an offensive that cost him his life.⁷⁹ Count Martin Frankapan, who held numerous estates in Bosnia, mobilized his troops to reobtain them and successfully reconquered the castle of Kamengrad.⁸⁰ Some Bosnian nobles, on their part, offered to submit to Venice if the Republic would help them reconquer their holdings.⁸¹

In sum, the Hungarian king was expected to act. The most important factor, however, was the alliance between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Republic of Venice, made on September 12, 1463, in Petrovaradin in Syrmia, where King Matthias's army was encamped.⁸² The instrument of alliance was witnessed by the great lords who were in the king's army at that time. Vitez was one of them, as one of the only two bishops among the witnesses – the other one being Stephen Várdai, archbishop of Kalocsa and Bač. It is very likely that this was the crucial moment that the king was waiting for before setting out on campaign.

Ottoman possession of Bosnia was undoubtedly dangerous for the Republic of Venice, and it seems that it did not expect it to be conquered so easily. The Signoria was reluctant to send aid to Bosnia at the time of the Ottoman invasion,⁸³ but just several weeks later, they decided to wage war openly.⁸⁴ Although Pope Pius II was skeptical towards Venetian motives, he nevertheless allied with the Republic

78 Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 355–56. King Stephen's widow, Catherine Kosača, settled in Rome and unsuccessfully tried to reassert her children's claim to the Bosnian throne. See Luka Špoljarić, "Nicholas of Modruš and His *De bellis Gothorum*: Politics and National History in the Fifteenth-Century Adriatic," *Renaissance Quarterly* 72 (2019): 482–85.

79 Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 129.

80 Lajos Thallóczy and Samu Barabás, eds., *Codex diplomaticus comitum de Frangipanibus*, vol. 2, 1454–1527 (Budapest: A M. tud. akadémia könyvtárközpontja, 1913), 54, doc. 54.

81 Filipović, "Arde ante oculos," 154.

82 Theiner, *Vetera monumenta* 2, 380–82, doc. 566. See also Magda Jászay, "Venezia e Mattia Corvino," in *Italia e Ungheria all'epoca dell'umanesimo corviniano*, eds. Sante Graciotti and Amedeo di Francesco (Florence: Olschki, 1994), 6–7.

83 Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 353.

84 Paparelli, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini*, 244. The recent Ottoman conquest of the Genoan island of Lesbos probably contributed to this decision.

in October 1463 and proclaimed a crusade.⁸⁵ It is possible that Vitez's contacts played a part in this change of attitude. At long last, with its western border secured and fueled by Venetian money, Hungary could act decisively. In that same October of 1463, for the first time in more than a decade, it embarked on a grand offensive against the Ottomans.⁸⁶ However, Bosnian fortresses were now manned by Ottoman garrisons and proved to be a formidable obstacle. Although the king's army could not achieve a victory as complete as the sultan's, it nevertheless conquered enough of Bosnia to establish a buffer zone.

This campaign proved to be important enough for Vitez to commit his personal troops. After its completion, he was given the entire Bihor County in perpetuity. The king stated that this grant was a reward for Vitez's services, which included contributing troops for the Wallachian and Bosnian campaigns.⁸⁷ It is also possible that he, and perhaps even Janus Pannonius, personally ventured into Bosnia. Pannonius later told a story, recorded by his contemporary, Vespasiano da Bisticci, that he personally helped clear the snow that had covered the king's camp while on campaign in Bosnia.⁸⁸ He might have referred to the 1463 campaign.

Vitez continued to maintain close contacts with Venice throughout the campaigning season. His old associate, Bishop Nicholas of Modruš, was sent on a mission to Venice after the alliance between the Republic and King Matthias was made, and he returned to the king while he was on campaign. He brought with him two of his own manuscripts, one of which he presented to Vitez and the other to the Archbishop Várdai.⁸⁹ Nicholas's arrival and the report which he brought caused a stir in the king's camp. Apparently, the shipments of aid from the Republic were running late, and the king was displeased with Venice's intervention in the conflict between Duke Stephen Vukčić Kosača, the greatest remaining Bosnian lord, and his son, Wladislas. This worried the Venetian ambassador, Giovanni Emo, who conferred with Vitez and Várdai regarding these matters.⁹⁰ This shows that Vitez was still a contact person for Venetian diplomats at the Hungarian court.

85 Paparelli, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini*, 244–48. Another signatory of the alliance was the extravagant Duke of Burgundy, whose participation in further actions was minimal.

86 Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 363–64. The Hungarian army likely besieged Jajce at the beginning of October; see Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 212.

87 De Bonfinis, *Rerum ungaricarum decades* 4, 2. See also György Pray, *Specimen hierarchiae Hungaricae*, vol. 2 (Bratislava, 1779), 149–52.

88 Da Bisticci, *Le Vite* 1, 331.

89 Špoljarić, "Politika, patronat," 10.

90 Nagy and Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacizai emlékek* 1, 258–61, doc. 159. Regarding the role of Venice in the duke's reconciliation with his son, see Sima Ćirković, *Herceg Stefan Vukčić – Kosača i njegovo doba* [*Duke Stefan Vukčić – Kosača and His Time*] (Beograd: Izdavačka ustanova "Naučno delo," 1964), 255–56 and Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 367.

So far, we have seen that Vitez strived to secure Venetian aid for the king's Bosnian campaign, and although the campaign stopped short of conquering the whole of Bosnia, it could have nevertheless been considered a success. In fact, the Signoria was eager for the king to press on. In January 1464, they agreed to subsidize the next expedition with sixty thousand ducats and asked their ambassador to assess how many troops, and for which purposes, could be mustered with that money. The ambassador had previously assessed that the king had twelve thousand feudal levies (for whose continued service he would have to pay himself after three months on campaign) at his disposal, along with several thousand troops of the royal household. The rest of his army would have had to be made up of mercenaries, for which Venetian funds were essential. The Signoria recommended bringing in companies from Bohemia and Poland.⁹¹ This enormous investment was justified by Matthias's previous successes: a good part of Bosnia, including the capital of Jajce, was conquered by his army, and Duke Stephen of Herzegovina and his son, Wladislas, with what was left of their holdings, acknowledged him as their sovereign.⁹² The Republic of Dubrovnik displayed how a prudent limitrophe state should behave by judging Matthias as presenting the greater danger at the moment and paying him the tribute it usually rendered unto the sultan.⁹³

This promising perspective was enhanced by the successful defense of Hungarian conquests in Bosnia during the Ottoman counter-offensive in the summer of 1464. Matthias waited until the sultan's main army departed before striking again. It is obvious that both he and Mehmed II were avoiding a direct clash. Szakaly even went as far as dubbing these events "a sham war."⁹⁴ This Fabian strategy turned out to be favorable for the Hungarian side. Nevertheless, the death of Pope Pius II in August 1464 precipitated a strong and sudden decline in crusading zeal. The Pope died at the head of a would-be crusader army, which afterwards disbanded.

Pius's policy towards Bosnia was not a decisive factor in Hungary's strategy, and in the case of the late King Stephen Tomašević, it was even detrimental to it. Perhaps this is the reason why Janus Pannonius expressed a cynical view of the late Pope's efforts in his poem commemorating his death during a failed crusading campaign: he said that this turn of events may have been fortunate, because (loosely translated) the Pope had bitten off more than he could chew ("*fortasse*

91 Nagy and Nyáry, *Magyar diplomaciai emlékek* 1, 263–65, doc. 161.

92 Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 368–69.

93 Zdenka Janeković – Römer, "Kraj srednjovjekovnog Bosanskog Kraljevstva u dubrovačkim izvorima" [The End of the Medieval Bosnian Kingdom (1463) in the Sources from the Archives of Dubrovnik], in Birin, *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.–1463.)*, 58–59.

94 Szakály, "Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare," 98.

fuisset pervenisse minus quam properasse fuit").⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Matthias's 1464 Bosnian campaign turned out to be his last significant attempt at conquest in that theater.

Unlike the 1463 campaign, which ended with the successful capture of its main objective, the Bosnian capital of Jajce, the 1464 campaign ended with a lackluster withdrawal of the Hungarian king's army after a failed siege of Zvornik on the river Drina.⁹⁶ Vitez personally participated in the siege. He is mentioned as appearing before the king in his camp below Zvornik in a royal charter issued on October 19, 1464.⁹⁷ This would also be Vitez's last involvement with Bosnian matters, as in the later years, the king's and his own interests would shift towards the west. Nevertheless, this lack of interest in furthering Hungarian gains in Bosnia suggests that the main goals of the expansion were achieved.⁹⁸ A buffer zone was established between Ottoman and Hungarian territories, and that was the purpose which Bosnia would serve for the next half a century.

Conclusion

Considering the timeline of events that we have attempted to reconstruct above, and the accompanying assumptions regarding the reaction of their contemporaries to them, we can conclude the following. From the Hungarian perspective, and by extension in Vitez's schemes as well, Bosnia could exist only as a Hungarian vassal. A greater level of independence could not be allowed, even if it involved going against the Pope's plans.

Vitez was involved both in the attempts to keep the Bosnian ruler subordinated to the king of Hungary and in the process of reconfiguring the Hungarian strategy in the face of the persistent Ottoman dismantling of its buffer zone. The main purpose of all these efforts was the same: keeping Bosnia in the Hungarian orbit. If its obedience could not be secured by peaceful means, it was to be conquered outright. As its ruler was untrustworthy and evidently incapable of defending it, and as a suitable candidate for his successor was not available, an arrangement similar to the one reached in Wallachia was not an option. We have seen that attempts to maintain Bosnia as a vassal failed repeatedly. Vitez was one of the Hungarian interlocutors of King Stephen Tomaš when a union of Bosnia and Serbia was attempted in 1459 and, again, in 1462 when Stephen's son, Stephen

95 Paparelli, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini*, 263–64.

96 Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 377–78; Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis*, 220–21.

97 HU – MNL – DL 16 073.

98 Grgin theorized that the Hungarian strategy that could have included relinquishing parts of Bosnia to the Ottomans, and retaining a strategic buffer zone was conceived as early as King Stephen Tomašević's coronation. See Grgin, "Južne granice," 73.

Tomašević, attempted a reconciliation with the Hungarian king. Both plans quickly proved to be infeasible. With this in mind, it seems that the Hungarian conquest of Bosnia was a result of the reconfigured Hungarian strategy necessitated by the loss of limitrophe vassal states. As such, it would have fit into Vitez's plans. An unreliable vassal was removed from the picture, and the expansion of the Ottoman Empire in the south of the Kingdom of Hungary, namely towards Slavonia and Croatia, was not only stymied but reversed.

Vitez's contribution to these processes was mainly his strategic reorientation of Hungarian international strategy from the west to the east. The peace treaty with Emperor Frederick III allowed vast energies to be devoted to countering the Ottoman Empire, not only in the form of the kingdom's troops, but also in the form of foreign resources which it made available. Vitez also devoted much of his diplomatic efforts to establishing communication with the Republic of Venice. He was the one who conversed with the Venetian ambassador and government at a critical time when a new Hungarian strategy was taking shape. If we accept that the end goal of these efforts was the one stated above, we can conclude that they were successful.

In this paper, we have tried to disentangle the threads of late medieval international politics to identify the contribution of a specific person, Bishop John Vitez, to Hungarian political strategies involving Bosnia. A better understanding of the activities of specific persons may help us understand the political priorities that lay behind apparent reactions of contemporaries to events unfolding around them. If our reconstruction is correct, Vitez's actions were logical and followed a consistent pattern throughout the last years of the medieval Kingdom of Bosnia.

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