

# Family, Political and Spiritual Profile of Queen Katarina Kosača-Kotromanić in the Historical Context of Her Time

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## Summary

Rarely has a historical figure and personality from the territory of today's Bosnia and Herzegovina had such a rich, multifaceted, and almost supra-national and supra-confessional prehistory, history, and post history as Queen Katarina Kosača Kotromanić did. Through her great-grandmother and great-grandfather, she traced her roots from the Nemanjić, Hrebljanović, Lazarević and Balšić families; through her grandparents, from the Balšić and Thopia families; through her father and mother, she came from the Kosača and Balšić families, and after she married, she became Queen Katarina Kosača-Ostojić-Kotromanić. In terms of social standing, Katarina was a princess, queen, queen mother, queen dowager, refugee, and a mother who was neither able nor allowed to see or ransom her two children who had been taken into Ottoman captivity. Her spiritual and religious identity was shaped by the unique Orthodox-Catholic and "Bosnian-Christian" context of fifteenth-century Zeta, Bosnia and Hum. In her final years, Queen Katarina was elevated and enriched spiritually by the Franciscan Order, through which she historically gained the Church's recognition as a Blessed One. The author will attempt to offer, always within the limits of his abilities, perceptions, knowledge, and understanding, a more complete profile of Queen Katarina within the historical context in which she was born, lived, ruled, suffered, and died. However, to achieve this, we need to re-examine three facets of Queen Katarina's profile: her family, political involvement, and spirituality. The spiritual profile will encompass, alongside her religious conviction, her intellectual abilities and perspectives, multiple skills such as *ars existendi*, *regendi et patiendi*, as

well as empathy for all that was good, beautiful, humane, philanthropic, and God-loving among Bosnian Christians, Catholics and the Orthodox in fifteenth-century medieval Bosnia and Hum.

*Keywords:* Queen Katarina; origin; familial, political and spiritual profile.

## **Obiteljski, politički i duhovni profil kraljice Katarine Kosača-Kotromanić u tadašnjem povijesnom kontekstu**

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### **Sažetak**

Rijetko je jedna povijesna osoba i ličnost s područja srednjovjekovnog Huma i Bosne, današnje Bosne i Hercegovine, imala tako bogatu, višestranu i skoro nadnacionalnu i nadkonfesionalnu pretpovijest, povijest i postpovijest kao kraljica Katarina Kosača-Kotromanić. Po prabaki i pradjedu s majčine strane vukla je korijene iz obitelji Nemanjić-Lazarević-Balšić; po baki i djedu isto tako s majčine strane potjecala je iz albanske obitelji Thopia i zetskih Balšića, po majci i ocu potjecala je iz obitelji Balšić-Kosača i po udaji postala je kraljica Katarina Kosača-Ostojić-Kotromanić. Po društvenom statusu Katarina je bila kneginja, kraljica, kraljica majka, kraljica udova i izbjeglica, majka kojoj nije bilo moguće još jednom vidjeti ili otkupiti svoje dvoje djece iz osmanskog sužanjsstva. Duhovno i religiozno potekla je iz katoličko-pravoslavnog ozračja Zete i "bosansko-krstjanskog" miljea, koji su u 15. stoljeću mogli pružiti samo Zeta, Bosna i Hum. Na kraju svoga životnog puta kraljica Katarina bila je kao osoba i ličnost oplemenjena i obogaćena duhovnošću franjevačkog reda u kojem je tijekom povijesti stekla crkveno-pravni status blaženice. U ovom prilogu autor će pokušati ponuditi, uvijek u okviru svojih mogućnosti i percepcija, znanja i spoznaja, cjelovitiju mozaik-sliku ili profil kraljice Katarine u historijskom kontekstu u kojem je rođena, živjela, vladala, trpjela i umrla. No, da bismo stekli priželjkivanu mozaik-sliku moramo osvježiti trostruki profil kraljice Katarine: obiteljski, politički i duhovni. U ovom prilogu duhovni profil uključuje osim vjerskog uvjerenja, intelektualnih sposobnosti i vida, višestruka umijeća, kao što su *ars existendi, regendi et patiendi*, kao i suosjećaj za sve ono što je bilo dobro, lijepo, humano, čovjekoljubno i bogoljubno u bosansko-humskom srednjovjekovlju 15. stoljeća među bosanskim kršćanima, katolicima i pravoslavnima.

*Ključne riječi:* Kraljica Katarina; podrijetlo; obiteljski, politički i duhovni profil.

## 1. Family Profile

Katarina Kosača's mother, Jelena Thopia Balšić (1407-1453), was the daughter of Balša III Balšić (1386-1421), the ruler of Zeta, and of the Albanian noblewoman and Catholic, Mara Thopia, the daughter of Niketa Thopia (1388-1415), the ruler of Kruje and Durrës in Central Albania.<sup>1</sup> Niketa Thopia was the illegitimate son of Karl Thopia (1331-1388), the most powerful Albanian nobleman, and ruled Kruje from 1392 to 1394 and then from 1403 to 1415. He was connected by marriage to the Angevin Neapolitan king. With his son-in-law Balša III, Niketa attempted to liberate northern Albania and the Zeta littoral from Venetians, albeit unsuccessfully.<sup>2</sup> Jelena, Queen Katarina's mother, was born in 1407, either in Ulcinj or in some still unknown place in Upper Zeta, the temporary residence of the then ruler of Zeta, Balša III.<sup>3</sup> Balša III, the father of Jelena Thopia-Balšić, was the son of Jelena Hrebljanović-Lazarević, the daughter of Prince Lazar and Princess Milica. He named his daughter Jelena after his mother.<sup>4</sup> Balša III

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<sup>1</sup> STEFANAQ POLLO – ARBEN PUTO, *Histoire de l'Albanie des origines à nos jours*, Editions Horvath, Roanne, 1974, pp. 64-66, 73-76; SKËNDER ANAMALI – KRISTAQ PRIFTI, *Historia e popullit shqiptar në katër vëllime*, I, Shtëpia Botuese Toena, Tirana, 2002, pp. 249-252; OLIVER JENS SCHMITT, *Das venezianische Albanien (1392-1479)*, Oldenburg Verlag, München, 2011, pp. 203, 233-234, 253.

<sup>2</sup> NICOLAE JORGA, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, I, Gotha, 1909, p. 352; BOŽIDAR ŠEKULARAC, *Crna Gora u doba Balšića*, Cetinje, 2011, (Cyr.), p. 47; MEHMED HODŽIĆ, "Balšići u Zeti: Od oblasne vlastele do gospodara," in: *Rostra. Časopis studenata povijesti Sveučilišta u Zadru*, 8, Zadar, 2017, pp. 67-77, here p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> O. J. SCHMITT, *Das venezianische Albanien*, pp. 255-266, 269-274; MOMČILO SPREMIĆ – JOVAN ČULIBRK (eds.), *Crkvene prilike u Zeti u doba Nikona Jerusalimca*, (Cyr.), Cetinje – Beograd, 2004, pp. 73-108.

<sup>4</sup> Jelena Lazarević-Balšić-Hranić (1366-1371?-1443), daughter of Prince Lazar Hrebljanović and Milica Nemanjić, married Juraj (Đurađ) II. Stracimirović, a Catholic, around 1385, and had a son with him, Balša III (1386-1421). In 1411, she entered a second marriage for dynastic interests with Sandalj Hranić-Kosača, the grand duke of the Bosnian Kingdom. After Sandalj's death in 1435, she did not retire to a monastery like her mother Milica but dedicated herself to further diplomatic efforts and began to take an interest in Christian mysticism, following the example of Byzantine-Serbian monks who advocated hesychasm. In the last years of her life, she devoted herself to abandoned monasteries and churches on the coast and islands of Lake Skadar. On the island of Beška, which comes from 'basilica' (Beška Gorica), she restored the

divorced his wife Mara in 1412, most probably for the banal reason that she had not given him a male heir. In 1412/1413, he married another Albanian, Bolja, also a Catholic, the daughter of Coya Zaccaria, the ruler of Sati and Dagnum (*dominus Sabatensis et Dagnensis*), the Albanian area "in the gorges of the Drin river" north-east of Lake Skadar.<sup>5</sup> Balša III had a son with Bolja, who died shortly after birth, and a daughter Teodora, the younger half-sister of Jelena Balšić-Kosača. Teodora later became the wife of Petar Vojsalić Hrvatinčić (after 1400-1456), the ruler of the Lower Regions, a Catholic and correspondent with popes Eugene IV and Nicholas V.<sup>6</sup> Matija Vojsalić (1430?-1480?), the second and last Bosnian Ottoman vassal king from 1471 to 1476, was from his cousin Dragiša's family.<sup>7</sup>

The grandmother of Jelena Thopia Balšić and Teodora Zaccaria Balšić, Jelena Lazarević-Balšić, married for the second time on 15 December 1411. Her second husband was Sandalj Hranić-Kosača. The Kosačas were Vlachs from the interfluvium of the Piva and Tara rivers near present-day Goražde, where they had their own market

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abandoned Church of St. George (Đorđe) and built churches in honour of the Mother of God (Holy Theotokos) nearby, in which, according to her will, she was to be buried. She endeavoured to raise her two granddaughters, Jelena and Teodora, in the Christian spirit of Orthodox inspiration, even though both were baptised Catholic. SIMO ČIRKOVIĆ, "Jelena", in: *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, VI, Zagreb, 1990, p. 28; ĐURO TOŠIĆ, "Sandaljeva udovica Jelena Hranić", in: *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog Instituta*, 41, Beograd, 2004, (Cyr.), pp. 423-440; SVETLANA TOMIN, *Jelena Balšić e le donne nella cultura medievale serba*, Città di Castello, 2017, pp. 43-63; DRAGUTIN PAPOVIĆ, "O nasljedstvu Balše III. Balšića", in: *Radovi - Zavod za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu*, 2, Zagreb, 2021, pp. 47-67.

<sup>5</sup> MILAN ŠUFFLAY, *Srbi i Arbanasi: (njihova simbioza u srednjem vijeku)*, Biblioteka Arhiva za arbanasku starinu, jezik i etnologiju, Beograd, 1925, p. 49; JOHN VAN ANTWERFEN FINE, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, University of Michigan Press, 1994, p. 513; O. J. SCHMITT, *Das venezianische Albanien*, pp. 505-506.

<sup>6</sup> AUGUSTIN THEINER, *Vetera monumenta Slavorum Meridionalium historiam illustrantia*, 1, Romae, 1863, pp. 389-390; JELENA MRGIĆ-RADOJČIĆ, *Donji Kraji. Krajina srednjovekovne Bosne*, (Cyr.), Beograd, 2002, p. 118.

<sup>7</sup> "Hrvatinići," in: *Hrvatska enciklopedija*, online edition, Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2013-2024 <<https://www.enciklopedija.hr/clanak/hrvatinići>> (17. 9. 2024).

town.<sup>8</sup> Sandalj Hranić Kosača (1370?-1435), the nephew of and successor to Duke Vlatko Vuković, a participant in the Battle of Kosovo, was the Grand Duke of the Kingdom of Bosnia and remained childless despite three marriages.<sup>9</sup> The marriage of Sandalj and Jelena was a reciprocal political arrangement, one likely shaped by the erstwhile tensions and hostilities between King Tvrtko, Duke Sandalj, Lazarević and Balšić.<sup>10</sup> On this occasion, Jelena Balšić, now Hranić, first brought her granddaughter Jelena and then later her other granddaughter Teodora to the Kosača court either in Sokol or Ključ near Gacko. At the courts in Sokol or Ključ, Jelena Balšić's granddaughter may have already met Sandalj's nephew and successor, Stjepan Kosača, her future husband, who was only three years her senior. The dominating grandmother Jelena, who was also a very pious Orthodox Christian with a strong inclination towards ascetic mysticism and the hesychasm of the Byzantine-Serbian monks,<sup>11</sup> raised her young granddaughters in the Orthodox spirit even though they had been christened Catholics. At the same time, both granddaughters had the opportunity to learn, experience, and absorb much that was good, beautiful, and pious from their devout grandmother Jelena, who was an exceedingly educated woman for her time in contrast to her husband Sandalj. Under the very powerful and unscrupulous Grand Duke, life was precarious, defined by the sword, exorbitant taxes and customs, violence, pillaging, conquests, and the displacement, ruin,

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<sup>8</sup> DRŽAVNI ARHIV U DUBROVNIKU (hereinafter: DADU), *Debita Notariae*, VIII, fol. 169v; MIHAJLO DINIĆ, "Zemlje hercega svetog Save", in: *Srpske zemlje u srednjem veku*, Beograd, 1978, (Cyr.), pp. 151-257, here p. 151-152.; ĐURĐICA PETROVIĆ, "Srednjovekovni Vlasi na teritoriji današnje Crne Gore – primer Riđani", in: BRANISLAV KOVAČEVIĆ (ed.), *Srednjovjekovna istorija Crne Gore kao polje istraživanja: Zbornik radova sa okruglog stola Istorijskog instituta*, Istorijski institut Republike Crne Gore, Podgorica, 1999, (Cyr.), p. 241; ĐURO TOŠIĆ, "Rodonačelnik plemena Kosača-vojvoda Vlatko Vuković", in: *Kosače osnivači Hercegovine*, Bileća – Gacko – Beograd, 2002, (Cyr.), pp. 243-260.

<sup>9</sup> DADU, *Lettere di Levante*, fol. 28-28v; ESAD KURTOVIĆ, *Veliki vojvoda bosanski Sandalj Hranić Kosača*, Sarajevo, 2009, p. 45.

<sup>10</sup> M. DINIĆ, *Zemlje hercega svetog Save*, (Cyr.), pp. 197-257; B. ŠEKULARAC, *Crna Gora u doba Balšića*, (Cyr.), p. 41; M. HODŽIĆ, "Balšići u Zeti", p. 72.

<sup>11</sup> ANTONIO RIGO, *Monaci esicasti e monaci bogomili. Le accuse di messalianismo e bogomilismo rivolte agli esicasti ed il problema dei rapporti tra esicasmo e bogomilismo. Orientalia Venetiana*, 2, Firenze, 1989, pp. 233-235.

and even execution of less powerful neighbours, rivals or enemies. This was the spirit and style of Sandalj Hranić, which were subsequently adopted and perfected by his nephew Stjepan Kosača, the future husband of Jelena Balšić Thopia and the father of Katarina, the future queen of Bosnia.<sup>12</sup>

However, another woman, both a mother and grandmother, could have also had a minor influence on her daughter-in-law Jelena and later on her young granddaughter and the future Bosnian queen Katarina, although our historians have paid little attention to her to date. This was the mother of Stjepan Vukčić Kosača, his father Vukac Kosača's wife, Katarina.<sup>13</sup> Very little is known about her to enable a more detailed profile. She probably came from Italy and married Duke Vukac Hranić, Sandalj's brother, around 1403. Just as Balša III named his first daughter Jelena after his mother Jelena Lazarević, so too did Duke Stjepan Kosača name his first child and daughter Katarina after his mother Katarina Vukčić Kosača, a native Italian according to legend.<sup>14</sup> We can only indirectly intuit her profile through Stjepan's eldest son Vladislav's first unsuccessful attempt to wed. Still relatively immature and most likely under the influence of the beauty and brightness of his grandmother Katarina who resided at Stjepan's court until 1456, Vladislav engaged Italian envoys to find him a young Italian noblewoman to be his bride. The envoys could have gone to the Court of the Neapolitan Alfonso I (1442-1458), with whom Herzeg Stjepan had good relations, and found a suitable noblewoman, which had been expected of them. Instead, they went to Florence, which would imply that Duke Vladislav's grandmother Katarina may have come from this town or somewhere in the vicinity, and that the envoys had tried to find a new bride among Katarina's closer or more distant relatives. However, Vladislav's envoys were deceived and instead of returning with a reputable and beautiful noblewoman, they brought a beautiful and resourceful Italian courtesan and businesswoman from Florence.

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<sup>12</sup> E. KURTOVIĆ, *Veliki vojvoda bosanski Sandalj Hranić Kosača*, pp. 106-158.

<sup>13</sup> *Same*, pp. 45, 48-49.

<sup>14</sup> She is mentioned in the Dubrovnik Archives on 5 December 1433 as Lady Katarina, widow of Vukac, Count Hranić (*domina Catarina relictā Vochac, comitis Cranich*). Cf. NICOLAE IORGA, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XVe siècle*, II, Paris, 1899, p. 312.

Her name was Elisabetta, and she was from Siena and presented as a countess (contessa).<sup>15</sup> Before his son Vladislav could organise the wedding, Herzeg Stjepan, possibly struck by the beauty of the Italian or possibly harbouring an Oedipal Complex towards his own mother, stole his son's undestined bride and made her his concubine. This all happened before the eyes of his wife Jelena, mother Katarina, daughter Katarina, who was already the Bosnian queen at the time, and two sons.<sup>16</sup> Stjepan's cruelty not only provoked disgust and vengeance but also a yearslong conflict between father Stjepan and son Vladislav, the misfortunate war with Dubrovnik, and the conflict and war with his son-in-law and Bosnian king Tomaš. The offended and humiliated Duchess Jelena supported her son Duke Vladislav and removed herself to Dubrovnik with him.<sup>17</sup> Herzeg Stjepan, his wife Jelena and son Vladislav were reconciled on the Pišče mountain in Piva on 19 July 1453 in the presence of their son Vlatko and numerous courtiers. The reconciliation was vouched by the *djed* (elder) of the Bosnian Church, its twelve clerics *strojniki*, *gost* Radin and twelve of the most important nobles.<sup>18</sup> The humiliated Duchess Jelena, whose husband's lusts and acts were incompatible with her humane and Christian world view, returned to the Court, but was exhausted and broken, and died at the beginning of October 1453, aged 45. Dubrovnik, which as at war with Herzeg Stjepan, refused to offer him their condolences.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> GASPARE BROGLIO TARTAGLIA, *Cronaca universale*, Archivio di Rimini, fol. 210v-211r.

<sup>16</sup> SIMA M. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan Vukčić-Kosača i njegovo doba*, Beograd, 1964, (Cyr.), pp. 163-164; PETAR VRANKIĆ, "Hercegova zemlja od propasti Bosne do definitivnog pada pod Turke u svjetlu suvremenih bizantskih izvora", in: IVICA LUČIĆ (ed.), *Hum i Hercegovina kroz povijest. Zbornik radova s međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa održanog u Mostaru 5.-6. studenoga 2009.*, I, Zagreb, 2011, pp. 697-739, here p. 710; SAME, "Stjepan/Ahmed-paša Hercegović (1456.-1517.) u svjetlu dubrovačkih, talijanskih i osmanskih izvora. Kontroverzne teme iz života Stjepana/Ahmed-paše Hercegovića", in: *Hercegovina*, 3, serija 3, Mostar – Zagreb, 2017, pp. 9-67, here pp. 13-14.

<sup>17</sup> S. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), pp. 163-173.

<sup>18</sup> LJUBOMIR STOJANOVIĆ, *Stare srpske povelje i pisma*, 2, Beograd, 1934, (Cyr.), pp. 66-72; S. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), pp. 197-199.

<sup>19</sup> DADU, *Consilium rogatorum* (hereinafter: *Cons. Rog.*), XIII, fol. 245v of 10. 10. 1453; S. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, p. 205; P. VRANKIĆ, "Stjepan/Ahmed-paša Hercegović", pp. 13-14.

Jelena's death opened the door for Herzeg Stjepan's lust for new women and new lands, which was immediately reflected in his search for a new wife. Although he still kept his concubine Elisabetta at court, he also attempted to secure the hand of Hedwig Gorjanska, the young widow of the Croatian-Dalmatian governor (ban), Petar Talovac (+1453). As she had the care of her two underage sons, Ivaniš and Stjepan, she rejected his proposal.<sup>20</sup> When this attempt failed, Bosnian King Tomaš also tried to secure her hand by proposing to his father-in-law Stjepan that his fifteen-year-old son, Stjepan Tomašević, born around 1438, marry Hedwig. Hedwig must have been no older than thirty,<sup>21</sup> and Tomaš also offered to protect her underage sons. However, neither the beauty of Hedwig nor the safety of her sons was at play here but the beauty and size of the Croatian-Dalmatian ban's lands between the Zrmanja and Cetina rivers. Both father-in-law Stjepan and son-in-law Tomaš's mutual enthrallment is noteworthy here.<sup>22</sup> Herzeg Stjepan continued his search for an advantageous match: with the help of the agents of his friend Ulrich II, Count of Celje, who was the Croatian-Slavonian ban, he proposed to Barbara of Liechtenstein from Nikolsburg, Moravia, present-day Czechia, but failed to secure her hand.<sup>23</sup> Herzeg Stjepan managed to gain the hand of *Barbara de Payro* (of Bayern), the illegitimate daughter of a

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<sup>20</sup> VJEKOSLAV KLAJČ, *Povijest Hrvata*, III., Zagreb, 1980, pp. 300-303; S. ČIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), pp. 205-206; P. VRANKIĆ, "Stjepan/Ahmed-paša Hercegović," pp. 13-14.

<sup>21</sup> King Tomaš's and his father-in-law Herzeg Stjepan's drive for territorial expansion was essentially identical!

<sup>22</sup> These joint plans of father-in-law Stjepan and son-in-law Tomaš were opposed by Venice, which did not want Split to fall into the hands of the Bosnian king or Herzeg Stjepan Kosača while the Talovac children were still minors. The Venetian government pledged to take custody of the children. Cf. MARKO ŠUNJIĆ, *Bosna i Venecija*, (odnosi u XIV. i XV. st.), Sarajevo, 1996, pp. 276-277; NEVEN ISAILOVIĆ, "Bračni planovi Kotromanića i državna politika Bosne polovinom XV veka", in: *Pad Srpske despotovine 1459. godine*, Beograd, 2011, (Cyr.), pp. 203-214, here pp. 205-207.

<sup>23</sup> L. THALLÓCZY, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens und Serbiens im Mittelalter*, München – Leipzig, 1914, pp. 174-177; S. ČIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), p. 216; P. VRANKIĆ, "Stjepan/Ahmed paša Hercegović", p. 15; EMIR O. FILIPOVIĆ, "Povelja hercega Stjepana Kosače Barbari od Lichtenstein 1. mart 1455", in: *Grada Arhiva Bosne i Hercegovine*, 5, Sarajevo, 2013, pp. 7-19.



Bavarian duke, who bore him a son, Stjepan, probably in 1456,<sup>24</sup> a daughter Mara around 1457, and another son in 1459, who is believed to have died in early infancy. Barbara died in childbirth or shortly after giving birth in June 1459.<sup>25</sup> His third marriage was to Cecilia, a noblewoman from the German-speaking region, who most likely came from southern Austria. She outlived her husband Stjepan, and since they had no children, she was paid a settlement by Stjepan's sons Vlatko and Stjepan on 28 May 1467 and returned to her homeland.<sup>26</sup> All of these additional family dramas – and particularly her father's – both of a positive and negative nature, must have left a deep impression on his daughter, Queen Katarina. Without doubt, she nurtured a deep respect for her father Stjepan, which was nevertheless often mixed not only with pride and love but also with the shame and humiliation her mother Jelena and she had to suffer.

## 2. The Political Profile of Queen Katarina

### 2.1. Albanian-Serbian Political Roots

If we examine Queen Katarina's roots and the paths taken by her ancestors from the Lazarević (Hrebljanović and Nemanjić), Balšić, Thopia, and Kosača families, as well as the later paths taken by her in-laws from the Ostojić, Kotromanić and Tomašević families into which she married, she must have been well informed of the politics in the Bosnian Kingdom, its directions and imperatives: expansion, conquest and the destruction of neighbouring rivals. This all occurred predominantly on the borders between Bosnia, Hum and the Croato-Hungarian Kingdom, Venice, the Serbian Despotate and

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<sup>24</sup> DADU, *Cons. Rog.*, XVI., fol. 49, 53, of 23. 6. 1459; MAURO ORBINI, *Il regno degli Slavi oggi corrottamente detti Schiavoni*, Pesaro, 1601, p. 388; JUNII RESTII, *Chronica Ragusina*, Zagreb, 1893, p. 351; S. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), p. 238; P. VRANKIĆ, "Stjepan/Ahmed paša Hercegović", p. 20.

<sup>25</sup> DADU, *Cons. Rog.*, XV., fol. 4; L. THALLÓCZY, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens*, p. 174; S. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), p. 238; P. VRANKIĆ, "Stjepan/Ahmed paša Hercegović", pp. 15-16.

<sup>26</sup> FRANZ MIKLOSICH, *Monumenta serbica, spectantia historiam Serbiae, Bosnae, Ragusii*, Wien, 1858, pp. 501-502; L. THALLÓCZY, *Studien zur Geschichte*, p. 180; S. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), p. 267; P. VRANKIĆ, "Stjepan/Ahmed paša Hercegović", pp. 18-20.

neighbouring Dubrovnik. As the Ottoman Empire grew in power and became more threatening, certain members of the Bosnian-Hum nobility saw it as a welcome ally to achieve their personal goals. The shaping of Katarina's political profile was influenced not only by her mother Jelena and her father Stjepan but also by two, practically mythical, individuals: the already mentioned great-grandmother Jelena Lazarević-Balšić-Hranić<sup>27</sup> and partially by her great-grandfather Duke Sandalj Hranić-Kosača. Her widowed great-grandmother Jelena, unlike her respective mother Milica, never took holy vows. Her reign in Zeta with her husband Đurađ II Stanimirović-Balšić<sup>28</sup> was characterised by new or abandoned Orthodox churches and monasteries in the land, especially on the coast and on the islands in Lake Skadar. Besides several diplomatic efforts, Jelena became drawn to the ascetic and mystical lifestyle of Byzantine Serbian monks, who advocated hesychasm.<sup>29</sup> Great-grandmother Jelena inherited her political instinct at a very young age from her mother Milica, who came from a collateral line of the Nemanjić family, and readily stressed the family's ties between successors of Tsar Stjepan Dušan and her husband Lazar Hrebljanović, the prince of Moravian Serbia and the Kosovo martyr. Lazar established his royal legitimacy in Serbia by virtue of his wife's (Milica's) ancestry. Great-grandmother Jelena also absorbed this and followed her not-always-successful-or-wise husband and ruler of Zeta, Prince Đurađ II; she even managed to

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<sup>27</sup> Although historian Draganović mentions the presence of Jelena, the daughter of Prince Lazar, Katarina's great-grandmother, at the beginning of his work, he does not examine the role this woman played in the education and life of the future Queen Katarina. Cf. KRUNOSLAV DRAGANOVIĆ, *Katarina Kosača bosanska kraljica*, Sarajevo, 1978, pp. 8-9.

<sup>28</sup> Juraj (Đurađ) II. Stracimirović (1385-1403) succeeded his uncle Balša II in 1385. The same year he married Jelena, the daughter of Lazar Hrebljanović, with whom he had a son, Balša III. The Balšić family were of Albanian origin and Catholics but in the meantime, they had been partially Serbianised. Cf. PETER BARTL, "Balšići", in: *Biographisches Lexikon zur Geschichte Südosteuropas* (hereinafter *BLSG*), I, München, 1974, pp. 130-132.

<sup>29</sup> Among the Serbian monks, Nikon of Jerusalem (1380-1468), who was most likely of Greek origin, stood out. He was the author of works such as *Hexameron* (1439) and *Tale of the Churches of Jerusalem* (1441). Cf. BOŠKO I. BOJOVIĆ, *L'idéologie monarchique dans les hagiobiographies dynastiques du Moyen Âge serbe*, Pontificio Istituto Orientale, Roma, 1995, pp. 209-300.

ransom him from Ottoman captivity. She ruled as regent for her underage son, the prince and ruler of Zeta, Balša III, and saw him develop into an adult and an unsuccessful ruler in Zeta. She even travelled to Venice and negotiated with Doge Michele Steno the return of littoral towns to Zeta's rule.<sup>30</sup> As the older sister, Jelena advised her brother, Despot Stefan Lazarević, and gladly wished to see him as the restorer of the entire Serbian Kingdom. She shrewdly attempted to cede the Principality of Zeta to him, and through her new marriage to Sandalj, parts of Hum and Bosnia as well. Her ailing son, Balša III, did not retire to the court of Despot Stefan Lazarević in Smederevo by chance, where he died in 1421, bequeathing Zeta to him.<sup>31</sup> Although Jelena had little respect for her nephew Đurađ Branković, the son of her older sister Mara, because of his constant colluding with the Ottomans, both Serbia and Zeta fell into his hands from 1427 to 1456. Jelena would never have dreamed that for a brief period in 1459, Serbia would fall into the hands of her great-granddaughter's (Queen Katarina Kosača's) stepson, Stjepan Tomašević, "the last Serbian despot and last Bosnian king," and his young bride Jelena, Queen Mara Branković-Tomašević, "the last Serbian despotess and last Bosnian queen," as many Croatian, Serbian, and Bosnian and Herzegovinian historians have frequently thought, stated and noted.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> O. J. SCHMITT, *Das venezianische Albanien*, pp. 262-263.

<sup>31</sup> D. PAPOVIĆ, "O nasljedstvu Balše III.", pp. 54-56.

<sup>32</sup> South Slavic historiographies do not sufficiently distinguish between the execution (death) of King Stjepan Tomašević and the state-legal cessation of the Bosnian Kingdom. The fact is that in 1463, the royal part of the Bosnian Kingdom, the lands owned by the king, fell under the Ottomans, while other parts of the country, which were also considered part of the Bosnian Kingdom, suffered a different fate. Hum remained partially under the control of Stjepan Vukčić Kosača and his sons until 1482. Završje or the Western Sides remained in the hands of various noble families. The Srebrenica and Jajce Banates were under the control of the Hungarian king until 1512 and 1528 respectively. Cf. HAZIM ŠABANOVIĆ, "Početak stalne turske vlasti u Bosni. Osnivanje Bosanskog krajišta", in: *Znakovi vremena*, 57-58, Sarajevo, 2012, pp. 43-72; SIMA ĆIRKOVIĆ, "Vlastela i kraljevi u Bosni posle 1463 godine", in: *Istorijski glasnik*, 3, Beograd, 1954, (Cyr.), pp. 123-131, here p. 124; D. LOVRENOVIĆ, *Na klizištu povijesti*, pp. 372-393; KREŠIMIR REGAN, *Bosanska kraljica Katarina: pola stoljeća Bosne 1425-1478*, Zagreb, 2010, pp. 135-148; ŽDENKA JANEKOVIĆ RÖMER, "Kraj srednjovjekovnog Bosanskog Kraljevstva u Dubrovačkim izvorima", in: ANTE BIRIN (ed.), *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.-1463.) – slom srednjovjekovnoga*

With the fall of Smederevo in 1459, all of Serbia finally fell into the hands of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, while Zeta came under Ottoman rule for the first time in 1479. Since Katarina Kosača, Jelena's great-granddaughter, was born in 1425, she must have had, during childhood, the opportunity to personally meet and come to love her great-grandmother Jelena and adopt much of her wisdom, piety, and political skill. However, whether Katarina had known that her great-grandmother Jelena, once a powerful duchess and Sandalj's widow as of 1435, had to fight, humiliated, for her husband's deposit in the Dubrovnik treasury and for her inheritance and estates, before finally finding her resting place on the island of Beška on Lake Skadar will remain a mystery to us. As is known, Jelena built her endowment on Beška and dedicated herself to new values that "were not of this world." She died there most likely in early 1443, three years before the marriage of her great-granddaughter and future queen Katarina.<sup>33</sup> And less than thirty years later, the widowed Katarina also sought and pleaded in vain to have a portion of the royal deposit from the Dubrovnik treasury paid to her so she could live and ransom her children from Ottoman captivity. Her request was denied! Later in Rome, under the influence of Franciscan chaplains and confessors who gathered around the church of Santa Maria *in Aracoeli*, she joined the Third Order of St. Francis as a layperson and died as a member, and was buried in the same church, where her tombstone has been preserved to this day.<sup>34</sup>

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*Bosanskog kraljevstva. Zbornik radova sa Znanstvenog skupa održanog 11.-12. studenoga 2011. godine u Jajcu*, Zagreb, 2013, pp. 47-67, here pp. 58-59.

<sup>33</sup> In the small town of Ključ, near Gacko, the favourite residence of Sandalj Hranić, Stjepan Vukčić Kosača, his wife Jelena Balšić, and their son Vladislav issued a statement on 1 April 1443 that they were taking over the legacy (legate) intended for them by the people of Dubrovnik, which the late Sandalj's wife, Jelena Hranić-Balšić-Lazarević, had left them in her will dated 2 November 1442. Cf. Đ. Tošić, "Sandaljeva udovica Jelena Hranić", (Cyr.), p. 438; DUŠAN I. SINDIK, "Testament Jelene Balšić", in: JOVAN ČULIBRK (ed.), *Nikon Jerusulimac. Vrijeme. Ličnost i djelo*, Svetagora, Cetinje, 2004, (Cyr.), pp. 151-157; S. TOMIN, *Jelena Balšić*, p. 50.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. BAZILIJE PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić Kosača (1424-1478)", in: *Povijesno-teološki simpozij u povodu 500. obljetnice smrti bosanske kraljice Katarine*, Sarajevo, 1979, p. 21; Emir Filipović offers a new perspective on the spiritual aspect of Katarina's life and activities. Cf. EMIR O. FILIPOVIĆ, "Was Bosnian

Through his personality and politics, Sandalj Hranić, the husband of Jelena Lazarević-Balšić-Hranić, could have undoubtedly had a significant influence on his granddaughter Jelena Balšić-Thopia, who lived at his court until her marriage, and indirectly on his great-granddaughter Katarina, who may have visited more often before his death in 1435. There were no known political efforts or appearances, joint or individual, of mother Jelena and daughter Katarina in the period from 1425 to 1435 while Duke Sandalj was alive. The arranged marriage between Sandalj's nephew Stjepan Vukčić and Jelena Balšić-Thopia was, without a doubt, a very promising joint political and family calculation by the Kosača and Balšić families. With this marriage, which was entered into at the end of November 1424,<sup>35</sup> Sandalj had his sights not only on the Balšić legacy but also

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Queen Katarina a member of the Third Order of St. Francis", in: *Radovi – Zavod za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu*, 1, Zagreb, 2015, pp. 165-182; SAME, "Je li bosanska kraljica Katarina bila franjevačka trećoredica?", in: *Jukić*, 48-49-50, Sarajevo, 2022, pp. 147-170; On the arrival of the Third Order in the Bosnian Kingdom see: PETAR RUNJE, "Trećoredci na području Jajca u srednjem vijeku", in: *Vjesnik franjevac trećoredaca*, 23/1, Zagreb, 1986, pp. 34-36; SAME, *Prema izvorima II. Rasprave i članci o hrvatskim franjevcima trećoredcima glagoljašima*, Povijesno društvo otoka Krka – Provincijalat franjevac trećoredaca-glagoljaša, Krk – Zagreb, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> DADU, *Acta Minoris consilii*, III, fol. 177 (25. 11. 1424.); In 1893, Serbian historian Ilarion Ruvarac noted incorrectly that Sandalj and Jelena had married Balša III's eldest daughter, Jelena's granddaughter, also named Jelena, to Sandalj's stepson Stjepan, who was later known as Herzeg Stjepan, around 1423, and that this Jelena bore Stjepan a daughter Katarina in 1424, who was later the Bosnian queen (*Сандаљ и Јелена удадоше старију кћер Балше III., Јеленину унуку, по имену Јелену, за синовца Сандаљевога Стјепана, потоњег Херцега Стјепана око год. 1423. и та Јелена родила је Стјепану год. 1424. Катарину, потоњу краљицу босанску*). ILARION RUVARAC, "Dvije bosanske kraljice", in: *Zbornik Ilariona Ruvarca*, Beograd, 1934, (Cyr.), pp. 446-457, here p. 450. Ruvarac's thesis was perpetuated by the eminent historian Bazilije Pandžić when he claimed that Jelena Balšić had given birth to daughter Katarina Vukčić Kosača around 1424. Cf. B. PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić Kosača", p. 15. Similarly, another eminent historian, Krunoslav Draganović, who was not familiar with the sources in the Dubrovnik Archive and did not know the date Katarina's parents were married, placed Katarina's birth in the period 1424-1425. Cf. K. DRAGANOVIĆ, *Katarina Kosača*, p. 10. Ruvarac's thesis has been corrected in recent Serbian historiography by historians Ćirković and Tošić. Cf. S. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), p. 6; ĐURO TOŠIĆ, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina (1425.-1478.)", in: *Zbornik za istoriju Bosne i Hercegovine*, Beograd, 1997, (Cyr.), p. 75. In recent Croatian historiography, Katarina Kosača's date

on the rights and lands of the neighbouring Branković and Crnojević families.<sup>36</sup> Since Balša III had left no male heir or claimant to Zeta, his daughters Jelena and Teodora, with the political skill of their grandmother and mother Jelena Lazarević-Balšić, could have underscored their rights to their father's lands and estates. These estates could have included those acquired through marital ties with the families of Niketa Thopia and Coya Zaccaria, if they had not been seized earlier by the Venetians or Ottomans. It is true that, besides Venice, several powerful individuals laid claim to Zeta, including the Serbian Despot Stefan Lazarević and his successor Juraj (Đurađ) Branković, and as of 1451, Stefan Crnojević, who became the ruler of Zeta in 1451.<sup>37</sup> It is also important to note that Duchess Jelena Hranić married her other granddaughter, Teodora, to one of the first and most important houses of the Bosnian-Croatian nobility, marrying her to Petar Vojsalić Hrvatinić, the great-nephew of the great Bosnian duke, viceroy, and duke of Split, Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić. The Dubrovnik archive confirms that the two Balšić half-sisters, Jelena and Teodora, were to be treated at the court of Stjepan Kosača by the Dubrovnik physician Kristofor Bonacije, a native of Padua, at the end of June 1443.<sup>38</sup> Hearing that King Tomaš wished to have two Franciscans as chaplains for himself and Katarina, Petar Vojsalić, the husband of Teodora Balšić, requested the same privilege for himself and his wife Teodora through Legate Tommasini. Pope Nicholas V approved this request on the same day, 18 June 1447, and took him,

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of birth was corrected by Regan and Molinar. Cf. K. REGAN, *Bosanska kraljica Katarina*, p. 3; MLADEN ANTO MOLINAR, *Katarina Kosača Kotromanić posljednja bosanska kraljica*, Kiseljak, 2022, pp. 20-21. The organisers of the international conference in Mostar commemorating the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Queen Katarina had not incorporated the more recent historical findings, which included the date of her parents' wedding (end of November 1424) and the earliest possible year of her birth (1425).

<sup>36</sup> E. KURTOVIĆ, *Veliki vojvoda bosanski Sandalj Hranić Kosača*, p. 86.

<sup>37</sup> LJUBOMIR STOJANOVIĆ, *Stari srpski zapisi i natpisi*, I, Beograd, 1902, (Cyr.), no. 232, p. 74. B. ŠEKULARAC, *Novi prilozi za rodoslov Crnojevića*, *Dukljansko-crnogorski istorijski obzori*, Cetinje, 2000, (Cyr.), p. 37; PETER BARTL, "Crnojevići", in: EDGAR HÖSCH – KARL NEHRING – HOLM SUNDHAUSEN (ed.), *Lexikon zur Geschichte Südosteuropas*, Böhlau Verlag, Wien – Köln – Weimar, 2004, pp. 171-172; D. PAPOVIĆ, "O nasljedstvu Balše III.", p. 47-49.

<sup>38</sup> DADU, *Cons. Rog.*, VIII., fol. 223 of 28. 6. 1443.

his family, and his duchy under his protection, calling him the only Catholic among the Bosnian princes who kept the holy Catholic faith undefiled (*solus catholicus inter principes regni Bosne sanctam fidem catholicam illibatam servasti*).<sup>39</sup> Thus, these are the first examples of highly privileged Catholic nobility from the time of King Tomaš, and they would steadily increase in number during his and Katarina's reign and complement the already emerging Catholic Renaissance in the Bosnian Kingdom.<sup>40</sup>

However, the political rise of the Balšić sisters, Jelena and Teodora, and their children did not stop here. When King Tvrtko II Kotromanić died in November 1443, just a few months after Duchess Jelena Lazarević, great changes occurred in Bosnia. As early as 5 December 1443,<sup>41</sup> according to the people of Dubrovnik, Bosnia had a new king, who had been elected at the assembly (*stanak*) of the Bosnian nobility at the end of November. This was Tomaš Ostojić, the nephew of King Tvrtko II, the illegitimate son of King Stjepan Ostoja, and the younger brother of Radivoje Ostojić, who had been the anti-king in Bosnia from 1432 to 1434. The election was opposed primarily by the Grand Duke of Hum, Stjepan Vukčić Kosača. However, much more dangerous for Tomaš were two other claimants to the Bosnian throne: his aforementioned older half-brother Radivoje and Count Friedrich II of Celje with his son Ulrich, who were waiting for the first opportunity to overthrow him.<sup>42</sup> They would initially be supported by Duke Stjepan Kosača.

At the same time, this was the turbulent period in which the Christian offensive was being prepared against the increasingly frequent Ottoman incursions into the Bosnian Kingdom. In the newly arisen situation, King Tomaš acted adeptly and quickly: he established good relations with Venice, with the Roman-German King Friedrich

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<sup>39</sup> A. THEINER, *Monumenta Hungarorum*, II, p. 235; E. FERMEŢŢIN, *Acta Bosnae*, pp. 205-206; DOMINIK MANDIĆ, *Bogumilska crkva bosanskih kristijana*, Chicago – Roma – Zürich – Toronto, 1979, p. 497; PEJO ČOŠKOVIĆ, *Crkva bosanska u XV. stoljeću*, Institut za istoriju, Sarajevo, 2005, p. 209.

<sup>40</sup> P. ČOŠKOVIĆ, *Crkva bosanska*, pp. 210-211.

<sup>41</sup> DADU, *Cons. Rog.*, VIII., fol. 259r of 5.12.1443.

<sup>42</sup> S. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), p. 72; PEJO ČOŠKOVIĆ, *Bosanska kraljevina u prijelomnim godinama 1443-1446*, Banjaluka, 1988, pp. 38-39.

III,<sup>43</sup> and with the help of the Transylvanian Voivode John Hunyadi (Janko Sibirjanin), he also established contact with the Polish-Hungarian-Croatian King Vladislav (Wladyslaw), who recognised him as the Bosnian king<sup>44</sup> but unfortunately died in the Battle of Varna shortly after on 10 November 1444. Tomaš's resourcefulness was quickly rewarded by the people of Dubrovnik, who had begun to seriously consider him a good neighbour, trading partner, and strong member of the anti-Ottoman coalition, even though Tomaš's opponents, Duke Stjepan and half-brother Radivoje, had advised them not to recognise him as king.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, the papal legate, the bishop of Hvar, Tommaso Tommasini, most likely with the help of the Bosnian vicar, first approached King Tvrtko II<sup>46</sup> and then King Tomaš, and won them over to the Catholic faith. In the case of Tomaš, this must have happened before 17 April 1444. Namely, on that day, Pope Eugene IV informed Andrija, the administrator of the parish in Glanesk (Gdansk in Prussia?), that besides many others, "the Bosnian king has also returned to the good path of the Christian faith."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> In South Slavic historiographies, Frederick III (1415-1492) was often incorrectly titled German Emperor long before he was crowned emperor. Frederick III was primarily elected the Roman-German King in Frankfurt on Candlemas, 2 February 1440. In Rome, in old St. Peter's Basilica, Pope Nicholas V crowned him Roman-German Emperor on 19 March 1452. In 1486, Frederick III proclaimed the then Roman-German Empire the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, which lasted until 1806. Cf. WILHELM BAUM, "Friedrich III. von Habsburg", in: *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* (BBKL), Band 24, Bautz, Nordhausen, 2005, col. 635-648.

<sup>44</sup> MARKO PEROJEVIĆ, "Stjepan Tomaš Ostojić", in: *Povijest hrvatskih zemalja Bosne i Hercegovine*, I, Napredak, Sarajevo, 1942, pp. 505-554, here pp. 506-507.

<sup>45</sup> N. JORGA, *Notes*, II, p. 406.

<sup>46</sup> MARTÈNE EDMOND – DURAND URSINUS, *Veterum scriptorum et monumentorum historicorum, dogmaticorum, moralium amplissima collectio*, I., Reprint, New York, 1968, p. 1592; D. MANDIĆ, *Bogumilska crkva*, p. 493.

<sup>47</sup> "...nos post sacratissimam unionem Graecorum cum ecclesia occidentali magnis laboribus et expensis per nos factam, Armenios etiam ...ac Regem Bosnae ad bonam frugem christianae fidei reduxisse. ODORICUS RAYNALDUS, *Annales Ecclesiastici. Continuatio Baronii*, IX., Luccae, 1752, p. 427; M. PEROJEVIĆ, "Stjepan Tomaš Ostojić", p. 510; D. MANDIĆ, *Bogumilska crkva*, p. 492; P. ČOŠKOVIĆ, *Bosanska kraljevina*, pp. 186-187. It is not clear why Fermendžin published a brief summary of this letter under the incorrect date of 3 September 1444. Cf. E. FERMEŢŢIN, *Acta Bosnae*, p. 185.



Eugene IV rejoiced at Tomaš's conversion and placed it in a global, Christian, conciliar, and ecumenical context.<sup>48</sup> He even informed the Patriarch of Alexandria, Mark, in Egypt, in January 1445, that along with the Armenians, Jacobites, Nestorians, Georgians, and Ethiopians, the Bosnian king had also returned to the true faith.<sup>49</sup> Pope Eugene IV also wrote to the king on 23 May 1445 and praised him for having kept himself pure of the heretics since ascending the throne.<sup>50</sup> In addition, Pope Eugene IV recognised King Tomaš on 29 May 1445 as the legitimate son of King Ostoja and annulled his marriage to Vojča, a woman of low birth and a Bosnian Christian,<sup>51</sup> which Tomaš had also been, thus inadvertently establishing the conditions for a Catholic union with Katarina Kosača and his ascent to the Bosnian throne with her.

## 2.2. Political Marriage

In addition to all these state-administrative and church-political successes, King Tomaš also had to prove himself militarily and strategically. Therefore, he, together with Ivaniš Pavlović and numerous Bosnian and Hum nobles, such as Radivojević, Klešić, Kovačević,

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. KARL AUGUST FINK, "Eugen IV. Konzil von Basel-Ferrara-Florenz", in: *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte*, III/2, Herder, Freiburg – Basel – Wien, 1968, pp. 572-588; JEAN RICHARD, "La ricerca dell'Unione con le altre Chiese Orientali", in: *Storia del Cristianesimo. Religione-politica-cultura. Un tempo di prove (1274-1449)*, VI, Borla/Città Nuova, Roma, 1998, pp. 785-793.

<sup>49</sup> *BULLARIUM POLONIAE*, vol. V, 1431.-1449., École Française de Rome, Roma, 1995, p. 221, no. 1226; D. LOVRENOVIĆ, *Na klizištu povijesti*, p. 290. The papal jubilee mood must be understood in the context of the then general Church Council in Basel-Ferrara-Florence, which discussed the return of the Hussites, Bosnian Christians, Eastern and Ancient Eastern churches to the fold of the Catholic Church. Cf. RAYMOND JANIN, *Les Églises orientales et les rites orientaux*, Letouzey, Paris, 1955; JOHANNES HELMRATH, *Das Baseler Konzil 1431-1449*, Böhlau Verlag, Köln, 1987, pp. 175-178.

<sup>50</sup> *In regium culmen conscendisti, purum te atque incontaminatum ab hereticorum qui predicti regni partes jam diu obtinuerunt vulpina et fraudulenta verstutia et pestiferis fallaciis ut catholicus princeps, conservasti*. O. RAYNALDUS, *Annales*, IX, p. 467; D. MANDIĆ, *Bogumilska crkva*, p. 493.

<sup>51</sup> E. FERMEŢŢIN, *Acta Bosnae*, p. 198; M. PEROJEVIĆ, "Stjepan Tomaš Ostojić", pp. 510-511; D. MANDIĆ, *Bogumilska crkva*, 1979, p. 496; K. DRAGANOVIĆ, *Kraljica Katarina*, pp. 20-21.

Vojsalić, and others, entered into conflict with Grand Duke Stjepan Vukčić at the beginning of 1444. The Serbian Despot Juraj (Đurađ) Branković and the Ottomans joined the war. Although the war was waged with varying success, King Tomaš forced Duke Stjepan to a truce and asked for the hand of his daughter Katarina, which the latter, despite his aversion to the king, could not refuse. Hum and Bosnian nobles such as Ivaniš Pavlović and Petar Vojsalić rejected the truce and reconciliation with Duke Stjepan.<sup>52</sup> The reaction of Petar Vojsalić, the husband of Teodora Balšić, the half-sister of Katarina's mother Jelena, is interesting: he refused to accept the truce between his brother-in-law and Duke Stjepan Kosača and did not attend the future king's wedding to his niece Katarina. Dubrovnik envoys, whose government followed the unfolding of events in the Bosnian Kingdom with great attention, arrived in mid-May bearing the customary gifts for the king and queen.<sup>53</sup> Duke Stjepan arrived in Milodraž on Thursday, 19 May with his daughter Katarina and a large entourage.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, the wedding and marriage of King Tomaš and Princess Katarina Vukčić Kosača, after her prior conversion, could have been performed according to Catholic rites,<sup>55</sup> not

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<sup>52</sup> S. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), p. 92; D. LOVRENOVIĆ, *Na klizištu povijesti*, pp. 283-292.

<sup>53</sup> N. JORGA, *Notes*, II., p. 417; P. ČOŠKOVIĆ, *Bosanska kraljevina*, p. 104.

<sup>54</sup> N. JORGA, *Notes*, II., p. 417; S. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), p. 93; P. ČOŠKOVIĆ, *Bosanska kraljevina*, pp. 105-106.

<sup>55</sup> It is impossible to accept Draganović's claim without comment: *Katarina was evidently a Catholic, so her marriage did not require any dispensations from the Holy See*. Cf. K. DRAGANOVIĆ, *Kraljica Katarina*, p. 21. Pandžić was more cautious on this matter and claimed that Katarina *followed her future husband in faith*. B. PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić Kosača", p. 17. Mandić appears to be most correct when he claims: *Katarina was a Bogomil believer in her youth, like her father, and only became a Catholic before her wedding*. D. MANDIĆ, *Bogumilska crkva*, p. 496. Even Roman sources state that she was a member of the Bosnian Church. We do not know exactly when Katarina renounced the Bosnian Christian faith and joined the Catholic Church – in the spring of 1446 at the latest, during preparations for the wedding. In Rome, as late as 1452, it was believed that Katarina had renounced the teachings of the Bosnian Church, as had her husband. In a letter from Nicholas V, addressed to Bishop Tommasini, dated 1 July 1452, there was an extensive description, like a eulogy, of how the most illustrious Bosnian King Stjepan Tomaš and his wife, as well as numerous barons, noble soldiers, and other persons of both genders,

in Mile, today's Arnautovići near Visoko, as some individuals have claimed,<sup>56</sup> but at the king's court in Milodraž on Saturday, 21 May or Sunday, 22 May 1446 at the latest.<sup>57</sup> It would have been logical for the papal legate Tommasini to marry the couple, however, no archival sources have been found yet to substantiate this. The newlyweds could also have been married by the Srebrenica-Visoko bishop, Tomo Matić, a native of Trogir, who was in Bosnia at the time,<sup>58</sup> or by one of the two prominent Franciscans of the time, such as the Bosnian vicar Fabijan Kenyeres from Baja in Hungary or the then Bosnian custos, whose identity is still unknown.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, historian Perojević's claim from 1942, which some others have adopted in the meantime, that "She married without any protest or dispensation from the pope and remained a fervent Catholic all her life" is historically and

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enlightened by divine grace, had renounced all the errors of the Patarene heresy and recognised the light of truth that the mother and teacher of all, the Holy Roman Church, holds and professes, which they also professed, profess, and hold ...*Carissimus in Christo filius noster Tomaš Stephanus, rex Bosnae illustris ac eius uxor, et etiam quamplures barones, nobiles, milites et alie utrisque sexus persone, divina illustrante gratia, quoscumque Patarenorum heresis deponentes errores ac veritatis lumen recognoscetes quod mater omnium et magistra sancta Romana Ecclesia tenet et profitetur, professi fuerint, profitentur et tenent...* AUGUSTIN THEINER, *Monumenta historica Hungariam sacram illustrantia*, II., Romae, 1860, p. 264. This eulogy on the very successful Catholic mission in the Bosnian Kingdom could only have been sent to Rome by the papal legate Tommasini or the local missionaries and investigators (inquisitors), the Franciscans. Pandžić incorrectly notes the publication year of the 2nd volume of Theiner's epochal work as (1862 sic!). B. PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić Kosača", p. 17.

<sup>56</sup> DEJAN ZADRO, "Franjevačka crkva i samostan sv. Nikole u srednjovjekovnim Milama", in: *Prilozi*, 33, Sarajevo, 2004, pp. 59-100.

<sup>57</sup> Historian Pandžić, citing the older Franciscan historian D. Mandić, is incorrect when he claims that Tomaš and Katarina were married on Ascension Day 1446, i.e., Thursday, 26 May 1446. Cf. D. MANDIĆ, *Bogumilska crkva*, p. 49; B. PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić Kosača", p. 16. Another renowned historian Draganović also erred when he claimed that the wedding was held in August 1446. K. DRAGANOVIĆ, *Katarina Kosača*, p. 21; P. ČOŠKOVIĆ, *Bosanska kraljevina*, p. 105; K. REGAN, *Bosanska kraljica Katarina*, p. 33.

<sup>58</sup> DOMINIK MANDIĆ, "Srebreničko-visočka biskupija", in: *Rasprave i prilozi iz stare hrvatske povijesti*, Rim, 1963, pp. 488-490.

<sup>59</sup> DOMINIK MANDIĆ, *Franjevačka Bosna: Razvoj i uprava Bosanske Vikarije i Provincije 1340.-1735*, Hrvatski povijesni institut, Rim, 1968, pp. 111, 231.

archivally untenable in this form.<sup>60</sup> Katarina would only become a convinced and fervent Catholic as queen through thorough religious instruction and personal spiritual maturation.

After the wedding, as representatives from Dubrovnik reported at the time,<sup>61</sup> King Tomaš planned to go to the assembly (*stanak*) and his coronation in Mile, the Bosnian coronation site since 1377, with the leaders of the Bosnian Kingdom. Although King Stjepan Tomaš, together with Katarina, wanted to solemnly present himself to his subjects as the legitimate successor to King Tvrtko II, the coronation did not take place, most likely due to political, dynastic, and internal disagreements among the leading Bosnian nobles. King Tomaš was simultaneously under the patronage of the Hungarian king and under the burden of the substantial annual tribute to Sultan Murat II.<sup>62</sup> Tomaš and Katarina's eventual coronation with both the Bosnian and papal crowns, the latter being completely unavailable to them at the time, would have been too great a provocation for both the Hungarians, who had patronage rights over Bosnia, and the Ottomans, who saw the pope as the main opponent to their expansion to the West. At the same time, one constant and threatening fact remained for Tomaš, crowned or uncrowned: his avaricious father-in-law, Grand Duke Stjepan Kosača, never respected or valued him and would never attend his coronation because on Monday, 23 May, he had already left Milodraž and returned to his duchy. To understand the character of Duke Stjepan, the following is vital: no one knew exactly who had bestowed on him the title of *herceg* – the German King Friedrich III, the Neapolitan King Alfonso the Magnanimous, Pope Nicholas V, Sultan Murat II, Doge Francesco Foscari, the Bosnian King Tomaš, or, what is most likely, Stjepan gave himself the title. Dubrovnik was the first to congratulate him on his newly acquired honour *de nova dignitate acquisita* (on the newly acquired

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<sup>60</sup> M. PEROJEVIĆ, "Stjepan Tomaš Ostojić," p. 512.

<sup>61</sup> DADU, *Lett. di Lev.*, XIII., fol. 205-206; S. ČIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), p. 106.

<sup>62</sup> Tomaš allegedly paid 25,000 gold coins annually. Cf. *SPICILEGIUM OBSERVATIONUM HISTORICO-GEOPHICARUM DE BOSNIAE REGNO HUNGARICI...*, Lugduni Batavorum (Leiden), 1737, p. 73; D. LOVRENOVIĆ, *Na klizištu povijesti*, p. 293.

dignity) on 17 October 1448.<sup>63</sup> They were also the first to defame him and attribute his title to the Ottomans: "if one whom the Turks have honoured with the title herzeg can be called a herzeg."<sup>64</sup> He was first called the Herzeg of Hum and the Littoral, and from the spring of 1449, "Herzeg of Saint Sava."<sup>65</sup> Two other prominent dukes, Ivaniš Pavlović and Petar Vojsalić, who did not attend the wedding, probably would not have attended the coronation either, just as Stjepan Kosača refused to stay for the planned coronation. In the absence of these three Bosnian-Hum leaders, the coronation with the Bosnian or papal crown would have been meaningless in any case. In this context, one can justifiably ask how the supporters of the Bosnian Church and their elder *djed*, as an additional important factor, would have reacted to a coronation with a papal crown. In the beginning, Tomaš and Katarina ruled wisely and did not neglect the Bosnian Church, as evidenced by the royal charter of 22 August 1446.<sup>66</sup>

Amidst all the unknowns, the only thing we know for certain is that as early as 25 May 1446, the newly married royal couple was in Kraljeva Sutjeska, where Stjepan Tomaš issued a very important charter. The charter granted royal protection to Doroteja of the Hrvatinić family, the widow of Prince Ivaniš of Blagaj, and her son Miklouš (Nikola) and all their goods.<sup>67</sup> Today it is known that Stjepan Tomaš was supposed to have been crowned with a papal crown, which had

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<sup>63</sup> DADU, *Cons. Rog.*, XI, f. 12v; A. Ivić, "Kada i od koga je Stjepan Vukčić dobio titulu hercega od svetoga Save", in: *Letopis Matice srpske*, 230, 1905, (Cyr.), pp. 80-94; L. THALLÓCZY, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens*, pp. 146-159; S. ČIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), p. 106.

<sup>64</sup> S. ČIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), pp. 106-107.

<sup>65</sup> S. ČIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), p. 106.

<sup>66</sup> P. ČOŠKOVIĆ, *Bosanska kraljevina*, pp. 141-142. The king's charter issued to the Dragišić brothers on 22 August 1446 was guaranteed by the authority of *djed* Miloje and the Bosnian Church. This is clear evidence that even after Tomaš's wedding, the Bosnian Christian Church had the reputation of a state church. Cf. F. MIKLOSICH, *Monumenta Serbica*, p. 440.

<sup>67</sup> ĐURO ŠURMIN, *Hrvatski spomenici. Acta croatica*, vol. 1 (1100-1499), *Monumenta Historico-Juridica Slavorum Meridionalium* (MHJSM) 6, Zagreb, 1898, pp. 165-167; P. ČOŠKOVIĆ, *Bosanska Kraljevina*, p. 110; K. REGAN, *Bosanska kraljica Katarina*, p. 34; SRĐAN RUDIĆ, "Povelja kralja Stefana Tomaša Doroteji Blagajskoj – Sutjeska, 1446, maj 25", in: *Grada o prošlosti Bosne*, 8, Banja Luka, 2015, pp. 59-71.

been sent to him by Eugene IV. It arrived in Split and was stored in the treasury of the Cathedral of St. Domnius. On 20 July 1446, Bishop Tommasini took this crown and most likely took it with him to Bosnia. It was a golden crown decorated with pearls and gemstones (*coronam auream fulcitam perlis et lapidibus preciosis*).<sup>68</sup> However, King Stjepan Tomaš and Queen Katarina were never crowned with the papal crown. Whether Stjepan Tomaš had been crowned somewhat later, together with Katarina, with the Bosnian crown, which was kept in Bobovac, remains a mystery as well. However, none of this deterred the Croatian Franciscan Andrija Kačić-Miošić, who, living three hundred and eleven years later (1756), could not have known or understood what had happened in Bosnia, from composing a beautiful poem on the royal wedding celebration in Milodraž as cited below.<sup>69</sup>

### 3. Personal and Spiritual Profile

#### 3.1. Childhood

We know almost nothing about Katarina's birth, life and upbringing until 1442.<sup>70</sup> We know that her parents, Stjepan Kosača and Jelena Balšić, as evidenced by Dubrovnik sources, were married in the fortified city of Sokol at the end of November 1424.<sup>71</sup> Katarina could

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. LJUDEVIT THALLÓCZY, *Povijest (Banovine, grada i varoši) Jajca 1450.-1527.*, Zagreb, 1916, p. 48, note. 3; D. LOVRENOVIĆ, *Na klizištu povijesti*, pp. 283-292.

<sup>69</sup> *Otkad je Lika i Krbava Slavna Bosna viteška država... nisu lipši svati sakupljeni... što su svati kralja bosanskoga po imenu Kristića Stipana i njegove lipe zaručnice dijevojke Kate Hercegovke.* ANDRIJA KAČIĆ-MIOŠIĆ, *Razgovor ugodni naroda slovinskog*, Zagreb, 1956, p. 74; Đ. TOŠIĆ, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", (Cyr.), p. 78.

<sup>70</sup> L. THALLÓCZY, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens*, pp. 110-120; K. DRAGANOVIĆ, *Katarina Kosača*, pp. 10-18; B. PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić", pp. 15-16; Đ. TOŠIĆ, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", (Cyr.), pp. 76, 110; K. REGAN, *Bosanska kraljica Katarina*, p. 33; E. O. FILIPOVIĆ, "Was Bosnian Queen Catherine a Member of the Third Order of St. Francis?", p. 171; LUKA ŠPOLJARIĆ, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina i humanisti, dio prvi: Leonardo Montagna i njegovi epigrami", in: *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti*, 36, Zagreb, 2018, pp. 61-80.

<sup>71</sup> The Dubrovnik government decided on 25 November 1424 not to send an embassy to the wedding of Prince Stjepan, nephew of Grand Duke Sandalj Hranić, and Jelena Balšić, granddaughter of Sandalj's wife Jelena, but only to

therefore have been born sometime in August or September 1425 at the earliest and was most likely born in the city of Sokol, the main seat of the Kosača family, and certainly not in Blagaj, as some historians have claimed.<sup>72</sup> The reason lies with her great-grandmother, Duchess Jelena Hranić, who controlled everything at Sandalj's court: her husband Sandalj and his family plans and affairs, as well as the business and private life of the future Duke Stjepan Kosača and his wife Jelena. Great-grandmother Jelena, an exceptionally agile and domineering woman, certainly would not have passed up the opportunity to be present when her granddaughter Jelena was giving birth. After all, she had attended the birth of her granddaughter Jelena in Ulcinj or some other place in Zeta and cared for her with devotion. Why would she not attend her granddaughter's first labour and the birth of her great-granddaughter in her court in Sokol, and certainly not in distant Blagaj! It can be safely assumed that as a young couple, Stjepan and Jelena discovered the attractiveness and beauty of other places or cities in Sandalj's duchy, such as Sokol in the confluence of the Piva and Tara rivers, Blagaj above the Buna spring, the town of Ključ near Gacko, Novi at the entrance to the Bay of Kotor. It can be assumed that Duchess Jelena Kosača had never been to the newly built town-fortress in Ljubuški, which Stjepan had built around 1452, where he took refuge and socialised with other women such as his Florentine friend Elisabetta. After Katarina, Stjepan and Jelena Kosača had two sons – Vladislav (1426?-1490) and Vlatko (1427?-1489). The years of birth are not certain.<sup>73</sup> It seems implausible that his daughter Mara Kosača was the fourth child of the union of Duke

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send a gift of fabrics worth 400 perpers. DADU, *Cons. Min.*, III, fol. 177r of 25.11.1424; Đ. Tošić, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", (Cyr.), p. 75; K. REGAN, *Bosanska kraljica Katarina*, pp. 33-35.

<sup>72</sup> Therefore, it was premature to celebrate the 600th anniversary of her birth as early as 2024. Likewise, the claim that she lived (*vixit*) to the age of 54, as written on the tombstone in the Church of Santa Maria in *Aracoeli* in Rome, is also incorrect.

<sup>73</sup> In 1440, Stjepan's two sons, Vladislav and Vlatko, inherited their share of Sandalj's deposit in Dubrovnik. Whether both brothers had reached the age of 14 and were of legal age that year, or whether they jointly withdrew the deposit irrespective of their age cannot be concluded from Dubrovnik sources. Cf. LJ. STOJANOVIĆ, *Stare srpske povelje i pisma*, (Cyr.), p. 50; S. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.) p. 6; Đ. Tošić, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", (Cyr.), p. 75, note. 16.

Stjepan and his wife Jelena: she was not mentioned in the will of her great-grandmother Jelena from 1442, and Duke Vlatko married her off to Ivan Crnojević (1465-1490) as his second wife in 1469! It also seems unlikely that Herceg Stjepan would not have promptly exploited his daughter Mara as valuable human capital in his marriage and conquest plans across Hum, Zeta, Bosnia, Dalmatia, Croatia and Hungary! It is more likely that Mara Kosača was born around 1457 as the second child from Stjepan's marriage to Duchess Barbara, the mother of Stjepan Hercegović.<sup>74</sup>

Katarina is mentioned for the first time in the will of her great-grandmother Jelena Hranić (25 November 1442), in which she bequeathed to *Lady Katalena "ubotci mali" and "lutca zlata," small earrings, and a golden bracelet.*<sup>75</sup> Historical records in the Dubrovnik Archives show that musicians and jugglers (the musicians of the time) from Dubrovnik stayed at the Kosača residence (court), that the event was entertaining with guests, music, song, and revelling. There were also buffoons (entertainers). There must have also been tutors or educators at the court, representatives from the ranks of the Bosnian Christians, Orthodox monks, and Franciscans from Italy, Dalmatia, that is, from Croatia, who would later receive the proud attribute "Bosnian" and who had business, political, and religious meetings with Duke Stjepan. Thus, Pope Nicholas V reported to Legate Tommasini on 1 February 1449 that Duke Stjepan had sent his envoys and expressed verbal obedience to the Pope (*obedientiam verbalem*) and that his envoys had declared he was a Catholic Christian (*ipsum*

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. VELJAN ATANASOVSKI, *Pad Hercegovine*, Beograd, 1979, (Cyr.), p. 110; Đ. TOŠIĆ, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", (Cyr.), p. 76; P. VRANKIĆ, "Stjepan / Ahmed-paša Hercegović", pp. 20-22. If she was born around 1457, she could have been 12 years old at the time of her marriage in 1469, approximately the same age as the last Bosnian queen, Mara, born in 1447 and married in 1459. Mara Kosača-Crnojević became an important figure in Zeta, or Montenegrin, history. She allegedly had three sons and a daughter in her marriage to Ivan. It is a major oversight of Montenegrin historiography that no scholarly articles or a monograph have been dedicated to this noble woman yet!

<sup>75</sup> F. MIKLOSICH, *Monumenta Serbica*, (Cyr.), pp. 415-417, here p. 415; Đ. TOŠIĆ, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", (Cyr.), p. 76; K. REGAN, *Bosanska kraljica Katarina*, p. 33.



*catholicum Christianum esse*).<sup>76</sup> Patriarch Gennadius II reported in his letter to the Sinai monks in 1454/1456 that the *Bosnian bishop* (David!), *who was Orthodox because he was a Serb, had endeavoured to make the self-ruling duke* (Stjepan!) *in the other part of Bosnia – and whomever he could there – Orthodox Christians, subjects of our Church*.<sup>77</sup> Thus, Herzeg Stjepan maintained relations with both Churches but privately remained a Bosnian Christian (Patarene)!

Katarina must have learnt to read and write 'Rvasko pismo' (Croatian script), the Croatian or western variant of Cyrillic, at her father Stjepan's court, which Ćiro Truhelka, in order to ingratiate himself with the powerful Austro-Hungarian minister of finance, Benjamin Kállay, named Bosančica in 1889.<sup>78</sup> It is reasonable to assume that she also learnt to read and write the Serbian variant of Cyrillic with her great-grandmother Jelena, as well as the Latin script. These were the prerequisites for her to master and understand the Italian and partially Latin scripts, in which the important documents and charters used in Dubrovnik and other coastal towns were written, which

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<sup>76</sup> O. RAYNALDUS, *Annales*, IX, p. 538; D. MANDIĆ, *Bogumilska crkva*, p. 497; K. DRAGANOVIĆ, *Katarina Kosača*, pp. 12-15; Đ. TOŠIĆ, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", (Cyr.), p. 76.

<sup>77</sup> LOUIS PETIT – X. A. SIDERIDES – MARTIN JUGIE (ed.), *Oevres completes de Gennaade Scholarios*, IV, Maison de la Bonne Presse, Paris, 1935, p. 200; AUGUSTIN PAVLOVIĆ, "Katolici i pravoslavni u našim krajevima prema grčkim vrelima iz 15. stoljeća", in: *Croatica Christiana periodica*, 25, Zagreb, 1990, pp. 95-108, here p. 97; FRANJO ŠANJEK, "'Krstjani' crkve bosanske", in: *Radovi – Zavod za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu*, vol. 32-33, Zagreb, 1999-2000, pp. 426-427.

<sup>78</sup> ĆIRO TRUHELKA, "Die Bosančica", in: *Wissenschaftliche Mitteilungen aus Bosnien und der Herzegowina*, 2, Sarajevo, 1894, pp. 65-83, here p. 65; EDUARD HERCIGONJA, *Tropismena i trojezična kultura hrvatskoga srednjovjekovlja*, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 2006; BENEDIKTA ZELIĆ-BUČAN, *Bosančica ili hrvatska ćirilica u srednjoj Dalmaciji*, Split, 2000; ANICA NAZOR, "Prožimanje glagoljice i ćirilice na hrvatskom prostoru", in: EDUARD HERCIGONJA (ed.), *Hrvatska i Europa II., Srednji vijek i renesansa*, Zagreb, 2000, pp. 288-297; MIROSLAV PALAMETA, "Kulturološki kodovi u hrvatskoj ćiriličnoj epigrafici", in: *Filologija*, 62, Zagreb, 2014, pp. 183-201, here pp. 187-188; JOSIP BRATULIĆ, "Hrvatska ćirilica kao poslovno pismo", in: *Filologija*, 63, Zagreb, 2014, pp. 17-32. <https://enciklopedija.hr/clanak/bosancica> (23. 4. 2025).

Katarina undoubtedly visited with her father and brothers.<sup>79</sup> Although we have no confirmation from the Dubrovnik Archives, her father Stjepan could have supported and engaged several tutors at his court, not only for Katarina but also for her brothers Vladislav and Vlatko, or even sent them for further education to a male or female monastery, or to the family of his business partners in Dubrovnik, as he later did with his youngest son Stjepan.<sup>80</sup> However, Katarina's main educators were and remained the two Jelenas: her great-grandmother and mother. When we look at the profile of the aforementioned great-grandmother, princess and duchess Jelena, we must not forget that she was born sometime after 1366, during the rule of Tsar Uroš the Weak, son of Dušan the Mighty. Perhaps it is not widely known that the "destiny" of the weakened Serbian Empire after Dušan's death in 1355 until the Battle of Maritsa in 1371 was *de facto* guided by Empress Mother Jelena of Bulgaria, Dušan's widow, Uroš's mother, because her son Uroš was an incompetent ruler. In contrast, Serbian culture at the time was very rich: literature, art, oratory, and theology flourished; churches and monasteries were built; the number of so-called endowments was at an enviable level; and numerous copies and translations of very valuable Byzantine codices were made. This lasted until 1389, until the Kosovo tragedy.<sup>81</sup> In this cultural, Orthodox, Serbian-Byzantine impregnated world, Jelena Lazarević-Balšić-Hranić, Katarina's great-grandmother, was born and raised. She had a wealth of knowledge, spiritual maturity, the political and pedagogical experience and skill to try to raise her son Balša and her two granddaughters, Jelena and Teodora, both spiritually and intellectually with dignity and tolerance, and she would also

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<sup>79</sup> On Latin literacy in medieval Bosnia and Hum, see: TOMISLAV GALOVIĆ, *Ego a puero baptizatus fui et litteras latinas didici...*, Prilog proučavanju latinske pismenosti u srednjovjekovnoj Bosni (s posebnim osvrtom na 15. stoljeće), in: ANTE BIRIN (ed.), *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.-1463.) – slom srednjovjekovnoga Bosanskog Kraljevstva. Zbornik radova sa Znanstvenog skupa održanog 11. i 12. studenoga 2011. godine u Jajcu*, Hrvatski institut za povijest u Zagrebu – Katolički bogoslovni fakultet u Sarajevu, Zagreb – Sarajevo, 2013, pp. 179-219.

<sup>80</sup> M. ORBINI, *Il regno degli Slavi*, pp. 386-387; P. VRANKIĆ, "Stjepan /Ahmed-paša Hercegović", pp. 21-22.

<sup>81</sup> SIMA M. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Srbi među evropskim narodima*, Equilibrium, Beograd, 2004, (Cyr.), pp. 70-78, 86-91.

positively influence, as much as her age allowed, her great-granddaughter Katarina Kosača. Knowing all this today, it is no accident or error that Katarina's proud family origin was inscribed in Latin on her tombstone in Rome: "born of the lineage of Jelena and the house of Prince Stjepan" (*et genere Helenae et domo principis Stephani natae*). Katarina's rule, attitude, and convictions, both at the Bosnian court (1446-1463) and during her flight and search for aid and refuge, until finding her final residence in Rome, remained consistent with her principles and religious beliefs.

### 3.2. The Renaissance of the Catholic Church in the Bosnian Kingdom

Katarina's religious conversion and the privilege granted by Pope Nicholas V on 18 June 1447<sup>82</sup> were a new and very important turning point in the social, cultural, and spiritual life of the Bosnian queen. It was not just a formal conversion to a new faith or confession before marriage, but a familiarisation and deepening of the Catholic faith and Western Christian practices, whose full scope had previously been unknown to her. Katarina, like her great-grandmother Jelena Lazarević and other eastern or western rulers and queens, would not only confess and practice her faith *in foro interno*, through attending Holy Masses, personal prayers, fasting, and daily good deeds, but she also confessed and witnessed her faith *in foro externo*, through an exemplary life, the construction of numerous churches, shrines, and the establishment of some of her own foundations. As queen, she erected, together with King Tomaš, a multitude of new chapels and churches throughout Bosnia, primarily on lands owned by the crown. The Franciscans, who attended them, greatly contributed to this endeavour with their particular spirituality and forms of piety

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<sup>82</sup> A. THEINER, *Monumenta historica Hungariam*, II., p. 235; E. FERMENDŽIN, *Acta Bosnae*, p. 205. Historian Pandžić is incorrect when he claims that Pope Eugene IV granted Queen Katarina the privilege *to select two chaplains for herself from among the Bosnian Franciscans* on 18 June 1446. He incorrectly referenced the *Bullarium franciscanum*, which clearly states that Pope Nicholas V granted privileges on 18 June 1447, not only to Queen Katarina, but also to Petar Vojsalić and King Tomaš. Katarina was only listed in third place. Cf. B. PANDŽIĆ, "Kraljica Katarina", p. 17; *BULLARIUM FRANCISCANUM, Nova series*, I, Quaracchi-Firenze, 1929, pp. 539-540, n. 700.

in the form of indulgences, not only on the day of Porziuncola but also on other occasions and in other places, which were welcomed by the simple Catholic faithful throughout Europe, as well as in the Catholic Croatian lands. However, this typical Franciscan devotion, which other Church orders would partially adopt, and which Rome would generously recommend, did not always coincide with interpretations of the Gospel in Europe during the rise of nationalism, Humanism, and the Renaissance in the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. In this context, it is particularly important to mention the ecclesiological pronouncements of John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, and Martin Luther, especially the latter's 58<sup>th</sup> thesis of 31 October 1517.<sup>83</sup> Namely, as early as 1216, Pope Honorius III had granted Saint Francis, thereby the Franciscan Order and indirectly the entire Church, the privilege of full indulgence from temporal punishments for committed sins, specifically on the day of Porziuncola. The practice of indulgences in a broader sense was confirmed by the Council of Basel in its decree of 14 April 1436, which proclaimed an extraordinary Jubilee Year with indulgences to secure financial resources for the continuation of the Latin-Greek church council in Basel.<sup>84</sup> The doctrine of indulgences was brought to Bosnia and Hum by the Franciscans, who spread it to all the chapels, churches, and established parishes and monasteries. From the very beginning, Rome established definite conditions for obtaining forgiveness of sins to curb potential abuses of these privileges: only sincere reconciliation with God and with the Church through the sacraments of confession and communion led to the forgiveness of sins and remission of eternal punishment. However, remission of temporal punishment is achieved through prayer, fasting, and good works here on earth, and through purgatorial suffering after death. These indulgences, whether plenary or partial, when visiting a consecrated church, completed or still under

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<sup>83</sup> BERNDT HAMM, „Typen spätmittelalterlicher Gnadenmentalität“, in: BERNDT HAMM – VOLKER LEPPIN – GURRY SCHNEIDER-LUDORF (eds.), *Media Salutis. Gnaden - und Heilsmedien in der abendländischen Religiosität des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit*, (Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation, (58), Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2011, pp. 43-83.

<sup>84</sup> ROMAN IVASHKO, "The historical value of the indulgence of 1436 issued by the Council of Basel", in: *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions und Kulturgeschichte*, 114 (2020), pp. 229-236.

construction, could grant full or partial remission of temporal punishments for committed sins.<sup>85</sup> Thus, the Franciscans of the Bosnian Vicariate advised the uninformed King Tomaš and Queen Katarina to petition the Pope, in petitions they themselves drafted, to grant plenary or partial indulgences for all the churches they had begun to build and which would later *ipso facto* pass into Franciscan hands. It is important to note that the first known indulgence was granted for the Church of the Holy Trinity in Vrela (Otinovci) in Kupres on 18 June 1447, which Queen Katarina had begun to build on the ruins of a late antique basilica out of personal pious motives (*pro sua devotione*).<sup>86</sup> In Bosnia at the time, the Church of Saint Catherine had been erected next to the already existing Franciscan monastery in Kreševo,<sup>87</sup> as had a chapel in Kozograd Castle near Fojnica, where Queen Katarina lived for a short time before she fled Bosnia in 1463. During Katarina's time, the following churches were built: St. Mary's in Greben (Krupa na Vrbasu),<sup>88</sup> St. Mary's in "Virben" (Vrbanja, Kotor Varoš),<sup>89</sup> the Church of St. George in Jezero, built by

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<sup>85</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2016, no. 1471-1479.

<sup>86</sup> A. THEINER, *Monumenta historica Hungariam*, II, p. 234; E. FERMENDŽIN, *Acta Bosnae*, p. 205. Cf. D. MANDIĆ, *Bogumilska crkva*, p. 499; ĐURO BASLER, "Kupres", in: *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja*, VIII, Sarajevo, 1953, pp. 335-343; PAVAO ANĐELIĆ, "Doba srednjovjekovne bosanske države", in: *Kulturna historija Bosne i Hercegovine*, Veselin Masleša, Sarajevo, 1966, pp. 405-536, here p. 445; MIROSLAV DŽAJA – KRUNOSLAV DRAGANOVIĆ, *Sa Kupreške visoravni. Monografija rodnog kraja*, Otinovci-Kupres, 1970, p. 47; BRUNO LJUBEZ, *Katolička crkva u jajačkom kraju. Crtice iz sakralne povijesti*, Franjevački samostan "Sv. Luka" Jajce, Jajce, 2004, p. 54; EDIN VELETOVAC, "Kasnoantičke bazilike u Bosni i Hercegovini", in: *Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta u Sarajevu (Historija, Historija umjetnosti, Arheologija)*, XVII/3, Sarajevo, 2014, pp. 277-299, here p. 281.

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.bosnasrebrena.ba/kresevo-samostan-sv-katarine-i-zupauznesenja-bdm> (5. 2. 2025). Nor is there any concrete information about Queen Katarina's contribution to the construction of the church in Kreševo in the article: "Povjestničke crtice o Kreševu i samostanu sv. Katarine dj. i muč.", in: *Franjevački glasnik*, 19 (1896), pp. 291-296.

<sup>88</sup> K. DRAGANOVIĆ, *Katarina Kosača*, p. 30.

<sup>89</sup> A. THEINER, *Monumenta historica Hungariam*, II, p. 234; E. FERMENDŽIN, *Acta Bosnae*, p. 204; K. DRAGANOVIĆ, *Katarina Kosača*, p. 30.

Juraj Vojsalić-Hrvatinić,<sup>90</sup> and the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle, begun by King Tomaš in Vranduk in 1447.<sup>91</sup> The Church of St. Catherine in Katina near Jajce can be considered one of the last churches which was granted an indulgence by Pope Pius II in his bull of 13 December 1458, which explicitly mentioned that it had been built that year by Queen Katarina.<sup>92</sup> The city already had the old Church of St. Mary with the adjoining slender bell tower, where the relics of St. Luke, brought and donated by the despot's wife or Queen Mara, were later stored. In 1528, the church was converted into the Fethija Mosque, also known as Suleyman's Mosque. *Today, alas, the church still stands as a ruined memorial to Bosnian history and culture.*<sup>93</sup> Finally, Katarina may have been able to embellish the still unfinished Church of St. Michael in Bobovac, where she buried her husband Stjepan Tomaš in 1461.<sup>94</sup> In the Bosnian-Hum context, the Church of the Holy Trinity in Vrela, Kupres, endowed with papal indulgences, was particularly interesting. After the definite fall of the Bosnian Kingdom (1527), it was not long before this church was defiled and

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<sup>90</sup> A. THEINER, *Monumenta historica Hungariam*, II, p. 234; E. FERMENDŽIN, *Acta Bosnae*, p. 205; B. LJUBEZ, *Katolička crkva u jajačkom kraju*, 2004, pp. 130-140.

<sup>91</sup> A. THEINER, *Monumenta historica Hungariam*, II, p. 233; E. FERMENDŽIN, *Acta Bosnae*, p. 204.

<sup>92</sup> A. THEINER, *Monumenta historica Hungariam*, II, p. 318; E. FERMENDŽIN, *Acta Bosnae*, p. 238; JURAJ KUJUNDŽIĆ (ĐURO BASLER), "Srednjovjekovne crkve u Jajcu", in: *Dobri pastir 1972.*, Sarajevo, 1972, pp. 273-282; K. DRAGANOVIĆ, *Katarina Kosača*, p. 30. See also PETAR RUNJE, "O crkvi svete Marije u Jajcu, trećoredcima i časnoj sestri Stanici trećeg reda Sv. Franje u srednjem vijeku", in: *Marulić*, 20/4, Zagreb, 1987, pp. 413-417; B. LJUBEZ, *Katolička crkva u jajačkom kraju*, pp. 141-144. Besides the Church of St. Catherine in Katina, on the outskirts of Jajce, which had already been built by Queen Katarina, it appears that she also had the abandoned temple of the Bosnian Christians expanded and restored and converted into a new and larger Church of St. Catherine in the centre of Jajce. Cf. B. LJUBEZ, *Katolička crkva u jajačkom kraju*, pp. 53-64, especially pp. 62-64.

<sup>93</sup> MLADEN ANČIĆ, *Jajce, portret srednjovjekovnog grada*, Split, 1999, pp. 101-102. Today it is Suleyman's Mosque! B. LJUBEZ, *Katolička crkva u jajačkom kraju*, pp. 37-51.

<sup>94</sup> PAVAO ANĐELIĆ, *Bobovac i Kraljeva Sutjeska*, Sarajevo, 1973, pp. 88-98; MAJA LOVRENOVIĆ, "Crkva Sv. Mihovila u Bobovcu", in: *Zbornik radova o fra Anđelu Zvizdoviću*, Sarajevo – Fojnica, 2000, pp. 109-123, here p. 112.

ruined. We can surmise that the shrine may have had two strong opponents: the remnants or returnees of the Bosnian Christians, who, in their Creed, as some have incorrectly written, did not profess the Holy Trinity, which is no longer scientifically acceptable today,<sup>95</sup> or the newly arrived adherents of Islam, who saw traces of polytheism in the cult of the Holy Trinity, which the Noble Quran had already refuted in the 4th surah (*En-Nisa*, 171).<sup>96</sup>

The king and queen were attended by two unnamed Franciscans, who most likely rotated frequently, and the papal legate in Bosnia (1439-1461), Tommaso Tommasini (1429-1462). He was a Venetian by origin, by empathy a Croatianised Italian, by service the bishop of Hvar, by monastic discipline a Dominican, by worldview a humanist, an excellent theologian and diplomat, and a man of very broad views unlike many of the preachers and inquisitors of the time. He was a witness to the Catholic renewal, or rather the architect of the Catholic Renaissance in the Bosnian Kingdom, and as the papal legate in Bosnia (1439-1461), he was the best advisor to King Stjepan Tomaš and Queen Katarina.<sup>97</sup> Tommasini arrived in the Bosnian Kingdom

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<sup>95</sup> The simpler ranks of Bosnian Christians did not have a profound Christian education and did not believe in the Holy Trinity. The more educated and influential layer, as witnessed by *gost Radin*, believed in the "almighty Lord God" and in the "undivided Holy Trinity" and certainly did not destroy Catholic churches. Cf. ČIRO TRUHELKA, "Testament gosta Radina", in: *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja*, 23, Sarajevo, 1911, pp. 371-375; K. DRAGANOVIĆ, *Katarina Kosača*, p. 31; FRANJO ŠANJEK, *Bosansko-humski (hercegovački) krstjani i katarsko-dualistički pokret u srednjem vijeku*, Zagreb, 1975, pp. 177-183; JOSIP SOPTA, "Gost Radin (Radivoj) Butković i njegov grob", in: *Hercegovina*, 6-7, serija 2, Mostar, 2000-2001, p. 51; DŽENAN DAUTOVIĆ, "Crkva bosanska: moderni historiografski tokovi, rasprave i kontroverze (2005-2015)", in: *Historijska traganja*, 15, Sarajevo, 2015, pp. 127-160.

<sup>96</sup> *THE NOBLE QUR'AN*, MUHAMMAD TAQI-UD-DIN AL-HILĀLĪ, MUHAMMAD MUHSIN KHĀN (trans.), Darussalam, Riyadh, 2002, p. 116.

<sup>97</sup> JOHN VAN ANTWERFEN FEIN, *The Bosnian Church: A new interpretation*, East European Quarterly, 1975, pp. 250-251; SAME, *The late medieval Balkans*, p. 578; SALIH JALIMAM, "Djelatnost Tome Tomasinija u srednjovjekovnoj Bosni", in: *Zbornik radova Pedagoškog fakulteta u Zenici*, III, Zenica, 2005, pp. 59-87; STJEPAN KRASIĆ, "Toma Tomasini, hvarski biskup, teolog i diplomat (1429.-1462.)", in: *Starine*, 65, Zagreb, 2005, pp. 91-162, here pp. 108-111; DŽ. DAUTOVIĆ, "Crkva bosanska: moderni historiografski tokovi, rasprave i kontroverze (2005-2015)", pp. 127-160.

during a very intense period: Pope Eugene IV was implementing intense and globally unionist politics; attempts were being made to renew the Church after the Western Schism; efforts were being made towards reconciliation and reunification with the sister Orthodox Church and other Eastern Churches; attempts were being made to win over the Bohemian Hussites; and efforts were being expended to convert Bosnian Christians in Bosnia with the primary goal of suppressing further Ottoman penetration into Southern Europe.<sup>98</sup>

At the beginning of his reign, as was expected of him, King Tomaš, along with Queen Katarina, still had great respect for the Bosnian Church and its head, *djed* Miloje, with whom they were most likely bound by domestic and business ties. Thus, in August 1445, the king paid outward homage to the leader or leaders of the Bosnian Church, still an important mark of respect at the time in the Bosnian ruler's dealings with the dignitaries of this church. Three months after the wedding, on 22 August 1446, King Tomaš entrusted the princes Pavao, Marko, and Juraj, the sons of Ivan Dragušić from the Hrvatić family, into the hands of *djed* Miloje and the Bosnian Church by charter.<sup>99</sup> In their rigidity or due to a lack of understanding of the already established practices of dealing with the *djed* of the Bosnian Church, the attending Franciscans, seeing King Tomaš's association with them, withheld the sacraments from the king and accused him in Rome of colluding with heretics. Despite the accusations of the Franciscan missionaries, King Tomaš, with the help of Legate Tommasini, managed to justify himself in Rome, emphasizing that the Bosnian Christians were very influential. Rome subsequently advised the Franciscans to be more lenient towards their ruler.<sup>100</sup> In a letter dated 1 February 1449, Pope Nicholas V underscored Tomaš's loyalty to the Roman Church, although he was aware of the political

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. footnote 48 and its reference.

<sup>99</sup> F. MIKLOSICH, *Monumenta serbica*, p. 440; P. ČOŠKOVIĆ, *Crkva bosanska u XV. stoljeću*, pp. 417-419.

<sup>100</sup> DANIELE FARLATI, *Illyricum sacrum*, IV, Venetiae, 1769, p. 257; E. FERMENDŽIN, *Acta Bosnae*, p. 208; DRAGUTIN KNI EWALD, "Vjerodostojnost latinskih izvora o bosanskim krstjanima", in: *Rad JAZU*, CCLXX, Zagreb, 1949, pp. 115-226, here p. 155; D. MANDIĆ, *Bogumilska crkva*, p. 495; FRANJO ŠANJEK, *Bosansko-humski krstjani u povijesnim vrelima (13.-15. st.)*, Zagreb, 2003, pp. 129-130.



power of the remaining heretics, among whom he listed Duke Stjepan (*Stephanus Voajvoda*) and Duke Ivan Pavlović (*Johannes vero Pavlovich voajvoda*).<sup>101</sup> On 19 February 1451, Papal Legate Tommasini wrote from Hvar to the then supreme head of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance, John of Capistrano, about noteworthy events in very flattering terms: "heretics vanish like wax before fire when friars come to places occupied by heretics" (*hoc mirabile dico PV et valde notandum, quod in locis occupatis per hereticos statim ut Fratres sunt, evanescunt sicut cera a facie ignis*).<sup>102</sup> The same John of Capistrano, once a distinguished lawyer, inquisitor, and persecutor of Jews in the Kingdom of Naples, had in the meantime become the papal legate for Central and Eastern Europe and a leader and animator of the Christian military against the Ottomans. On 4 July 1455, he reported to Pope Callixtus V that a large number of Bosnian heretics, adherents of the Patarene faith, had converted to the faith of the Roman Church thanks to the persistent work of the Franciscans. At the same time, he complained about the Raška metropolitan and the Orthodox clergy, who were hindering conversion of the Patarenes and converting Catholics to Orthodoxy. According to him, the Patarenes would rather die without conversion than accept the "Raška faith" (*magis volentes extra fidem mori, quam eorum Rascianorum fidem suscipere*).<sup>103</sup> Today we must assess such reports sent to Rome or Constantinople with sobriety. They had or still have only relative historical value. All preachers, missionaries, visitors, inquisitors, Franciscans, Dominicans, as well as papal legates and the Raška metropolitan with his monks and Patriarch Gennadius Scholarius primarily emphasised their missionary or diplomatic successes in their letters and reports, presenting a desirable but unreal picture

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<sup>101</sup> O. RAYNALDUS, *Annales*, IX, p. 538; D. MANDIĆ, *Bogumilska crkva*, p. 499.

<sup>102</sup> LUCA WADDINGUS, *Annales Minorum seu trium ordinum, a S. Francisco institutorum*, XII, Romae, 1735, p. 112; D. MANDIĆ, *Bogumilska crkva*, 1979, p. 212, n. 93. Mandić incorrectly cites 1731 as the year of publication of Volume 12 of Waddingus's *Annales*. More on John of Capistrano can be found in: STANKO ANDRIĆ, *Čudesna svetoga Ivana Kapistrana – povijesna i tekstualna analiza*, Slavonski Brod – Osijek, 1999.

<sup>103</sup> E. FERMENDŽIN, *Acta Bosnae*, p. 225; D. MANDIĆ, *Bogumilska crkva*, p. 503; F. ŠANJEK, *Bosansko-humski krstjani u povijesnim vrelima*, p. 113. Mandić cites the year incorrectly as 1445, p. 503.

of the then religious reality in the Bosnian Kingdom. Failure was usually attributed to the numerous and strong presence of Bosnian Christians, the fickleness of King Tomaš, or, as here, to obstruction by the Raška metropolitan and his clergy. The Franciscans, who mostly came from foreign lands, failed to understand despite their undisputed success that the Bosnian Church and its dignitaries were still, until the mid-15th century, an indispensable factor of stability, a kind of state-legal institution with which kings, higher and lower nobility, dukes, princes, and all local lords closely cooperated.<sup>104</sup>

### **3.3. Queen Katarina and the Persecution of the Bosnian Church Christians**

After this brief overview, we can justifiably ask: how did Queen Katarina act and what did she feel when her husband King Tomaš, aided by the Franciscans, began the conversion and expulsion of Bosnian Christians in the second half of 1459? Before we briefly address this issue, we must mention several familial and political circumstances which have not been adequately considered in this context. King Tomaš and Queen Katarina had a very important joint familial and state-legal problem that they had to resolve: to secure the succession and thrones for their children. First, there was Tomaš's son Stjepan, born most likely in 1438, whom the king had with his first wife Vojča. Then there were Sigismund (1449?) and Katarina (1453?), two still underage children from their common marriage, for whom they needed to find a suitable place in the *Bosnian royal family*.<sup>105</sup> They had to come to an agreement on who would ascend the Bosnian throne in the event of natural or sudden death or other circumstances. Tomaš had already unsuccessfully tried to marry his son Stjepan to Hedwig, the widow of the Croatian ban, in 1453/54, and thus legally secure him the possession and title of Croatian-Dalmatian ban.<sup>106</sup> After this failed attempt, the next opportunity arose unexpectedly in the Serbian Despotate, which had been left without a male heir. Namely, Despot Lazar Branković (1456-1458), an Ottoman and Hungarian

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<sup>104</sup> P. ČOŠKOVIĆ, *Crkva bosanska u XV. stoljeću*, pp. 128-129, 419.

<sup>105</sup> K. REGAN, *Bosanska kraljica Katarina*, pp. 65-76.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. footnote 21 and its reference.

vassal who had three daughters, died suddenly on 20 January 1458,<sup>107</sup> before Tomaš could make arrangements with him. Lazar's death impelled King Tomaš to new wars and conquests, predominantly along the Drina, where he quickly occupied 11 cities, including Srebrenica, Zvornik, and Teočak, and incorporated them into the Bosnian Kingdom.<sup>108</sup> However, all of this was not enough for him and he was already making preparations to conquer the southern regions of the ban's Croatia, as it too had been left without its ban in March 1457. Almost at the same time, the sudden incursion of the Turks in February 1458, who had recovered from their defeat at Belgrade in 1456, forced Tomaš to secure peace by paying 9,000 ducats to the sultan and soon after to reconcile with Duke Stjepan. Even before he died, the last Serbian despot Lazar had been arranging the succession in his Despotate with the Hungarian king and protector Matthias. King Matthias would have gladly accepted the offer if he was not being blackmailed by German Emperor Frederick III. After Lazar's sudden death, a regency council was formed in Smederevo, which was predominantly marked by a conflict between pro-Hungarian and pro-Ottoman factions within the Despotate.<sup>109</sup> After the marriage of the despot's daughter Mara (Jelena) to Prince Stjepan had been celebrated, the council was supposed to cede power to them. Although the Bosnian king and queen believed they had solved their family problems with the planned marriage, they very quickly realised that they had miscalculated and not sufficiently taken into account that the Despotate had been reduced to Smederevo itself, which had become the gateway to Wallachia, Hungary, Croatia, and Bosnia and was destined to be the next Ottoman prize. The sultan, not the Hungarian or Bosnian king, decided who would be the despot, that is, the lord of the last remnants of Serbia. Stjepan Tomašević arrived in Smederevo on 1 March 1459, and was solemnly married to the despot's daughter Mara on 1 April 1459. Although he became *de jure* the last Serbian despot through

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<sup>107</sup> STANOJE STOJANOVIĆ, *Stari srpski rodovi i letopisci*, Beograd – Sr. Karlovci, 1927, (Cyr.), p. 242.

<sup>108</sup> S. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.) p. 234; EMIR O. FILIPOVIĆ, *Bosansko Kraljevstvo i Osmansko Carstvo (1386-1463)*, Orijentalni institut Univerziteta, Sarajevo, 2019, p. 384.

<sup>109</sup> E. O. FILIPOVIĆ, *Bosansko Kraljevstvo i Osmansko Carstvo*, pp. 385-386.

this marriage and annexed the Despotate to the Bosnian Kingdom, he was unable to enjoy his good fortune. On the very day of the wedding, Ottoman detachments appeared before the city walls and began a siege to which the new despot could not offer any serious resistance. On 20 June 1459, the Despotate fell into Ottoman hands. Wishing to save himself and the young despotess, Stjepan surrendered the city to the Ottomans on the sole condition that he could freely return to Bosnia.<sup>110</sup> Having surrendered Smederevo to the Ottomans, with his father's assent of course, young Tomašević opened the gates to Sultan Mehmed for further Ottoman conquests. Tomaš and Katarina finally saw that their efforts had failed, and that the West would perceive their son and daughter-in-law's flight from Smederevo as deception or even betrayal. Although King Matthias was equally responsible for the loss of Smederevo, he adeptly justified himself to the West by placing all the blame on King Tomaš.<sup>111</sup>

Enea Silvio Piccolomini, then Pope Pius II (1458-1464), convened a council of Christian rulers in Mantua, in the Duchy of Gonzaga, on 1 June 1459.<sup>112</sup> The majority of rulers did not attend personally but sent their representatives. The Council was supposed to organise a strong resistance to the Ottoman conqueror. The Croatian delegation, led by Bishop Nicholas of Modruš, played a significant role at this rulers' council.<sup>113</sup> King Tomaš had already been branded a traitor by the

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<sup>110</sup> M. PEROJEVIĆ, "Stjepan Tomaš Ostojić", pp. 548-552; MOMČILO SPREMIĆ, *Despot Đurađ Branković i njegovo doba*, Banja Luka, 1999, (Cyr.), pp. 637-638; D. LOVRENOVIĆ, *Na klizištu povijesti*, p. 332; EDIN MUTAPČIĆ, "Pad srpske despotovine 1459", in: *Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta u Tuzli*, IV/2, Tuzla, 2018, pp. 31-43, here p. 35; E. O. FILIPOVIĆ, *Bosansko Kraljevstvo i Osmansko Carstvo*, pp. 392-393.

<sup>111</sup> L. THALLÓCZY, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens*, pp. 146-159; E. O. FILIPOVIĆ, *Bosansko Kraljevstvo i Osmansko Carstvo*, pp. 393-394.

<sup>112</sup> GIANMARCO COSSANDI, "La dieta di Mantova nei Registri Vaticani", in: *I Gonzaga e i Papi. Roma e le corti padane fra Umanesimo e Rinascimento (1418-1620). Atti del convegno Mantova – Roma 21-26 febbraio 2013*, a cura di RENATA SALVARINI, Città del Vaticano, 2013, pp. 139-157; TOMO VUKŠIĆ, "Papa Pio II. (1458.-1464.) i kralj Tomaš (1443.-1461.)", *Prilog proučavanju međuvjerskih odnosa u Bosni i Humu polovicom 15. st.*, in: *Vrhbosnensia*, VII, Sarajevo, 2003, pp. 371-407, here pp. 379-381.

<sup>113</sup> DANIELE FARLATI, *Illyricum sacrum*, IV, Venetiis, 1769, p. 108; SERAFIN HRKAČ, "Nikola Modruški", in: *Prilozi za istraživanje hrvatske filozofske*

Hungarians. He sent his delegation to the council in Mantua in July to vindicate himself from accusations, explain the circumstances under which Smederevo was lost, and request additional aid for the inevitable war with the Ottomans. Tomaš's delegation arrived in Mantua, but acted like a foreign body, which failed to engage successfully in the council's proceedings.<sup>114</sup> King Tomaš faced accusations and pressure from King Matthias, Hungarian nobles and prelates, who had convinced the pope and the West that the Bosnian king had betrayed the Christian cause with his son Stjepan's marriage plans: he not only surrendered Smederevo to the Ottomans but also sided with the Turks, broke the peace with Herzeg Stjepan, and brought the Turks into his lands, and therefore, he had to atone. Having finally realised that his justifications had not convinced the pope or the council participants, Tomaš decided to act more forcefully towards the followers of the Bosnian Church in the second half of 1459, presenting them with a choice: baptism or expulsion from the kingdom.

When Pope Piccolomini was describing these events, he had been influenced by negative reports from Hungary about Bosnia, the Bosnian Christians, and the Bosnian King Stjepan Tomaš. The quality of the royal policy was also reported somewhat later by the then current papal legate Nicholas of Modruš, who resided in Bosnia in 1461 and 1463. He reported that the "Manichean heretics" had been baptised against their will.<sup>115</sup> Pope Pius II mentioned King Tomaš for the first time in the third book of his *Commentaries* as "a man of a fickle

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*baštine*, 3-4, Zagreb, 1976, p. 146; LUKA ŠPOLJARIĆ, "Nikola Modruški avant la lettre: Društveno podrijetlo, akademski put i počeci crkvene karijere (uz prilog o slučaju živoga mrtvaca u Senju)", in: *Povijesni prilozi*, 46, Zagreb, 2014, pp. 69-92.

<sup>114</sup> Lovrenović rightly calls the handover of the Despotate, that is, Smederevo, to King Tomaš by the Treaty of Szeged in January 1459 "King Matthias's Danaean gift." The Hungarians preferred Bosnia as a buffer state between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. Cf. D. LOVRENOVIĆ, *Na klizištu povijesti*, p. 332.

<sup>115</sup> NIKOLA ŽIC, "Modruški biskup Nikola i propast Bosne", in: *Napredak, hrvatski narodni kalendar*, Sarajevo, 1938, pp. 52-56; FRANJO ŠANJEK, "Heterodoksno kršćanstvo u našim krajevima u Kapistranovo doba", in: *Croatia Christiana periodica*, 19, Zagreb, 1987, p. 84; L. ŠPOLJARIĆ, "Nikola Modruški avant la lettre", pp. 69-92.

and inconstant spirit."<sup>116</sup> In another passage describing his measures against Bosnian Christians, whom the Pope always referred to as Manicheans, he cited two possible reasons for these measures: first, as an attempt to atone for the surrender of Smederevo to the Ottomans and to demonstrate his loyalty to the Catholic faith, or, as many others thought, he solely wanted to satisfy his greed and give the Bosnian Christians (Manicheans), who were numerous in his kingdom, the choice to accept Christ's baptism or leave Bosnia and all their possessions behind in the kingdom.<sup>117</sup> The consequence was, as Pope Pius II noted, that approximately *two* (or *twelve*) thousand were baptised, while more than forty (or *forty thousand*) persistent in their error, fled to the Bosnian Duke Stjepan, an accomplice in the perfidious heresy of the Bosnian Church.<sup>118</sup> This only applied to Bosnian Christians in the royal lands. In the lands of Herzeg Stjepan and

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<sup>116</sup> *Ita et Bosnienses suos reges appellauerunt Stephano: quorum qui legatos Mantuas misit uaffer homo fuit et inconstantis animi*, ENEA SILVIO PICCOLOMINI (PIUS II.), *Commentarii rerum memorabilium, quae temporibus suis contigerunt*, Roma, 1584, III, p. 115; ADRIANO VAN HECK (ed.), *Pii II Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae temporibus suis contigerunt, Studi e testi*, 312, vol. I, Città del Vaticano, 1984, p. 181; LUIGI TORTARO, (a cura). *Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Papa Pio II, I Commentarii*, I, Gli Adelphi, Milano, 2008, p. 446.

<sup>117</sup> *Rex Bossinae (Bosnae) sub idem fere tempus, ut piaculum traditae Turcis Synderoviae (Smederevo) purgaret ac suae religionis fidem facerat-sive, quod multi crediderunt, avaritiae obtentu-Manichaeos, qui erant in regno suo quamplurimi, nisi baptismum Christi acciperent, e Regno migrare coegit substantia relicta*. E. S. PICCOLOMINI, *Commentarii*, V, p. 227; A. V. HECK, *Pii II Commentarii*, I, pp. 316-317; L. TORTARO, E. S. Piccolomini, *Commentarii*, pp. 880-882.

<sup>118</sup> *Duo circiter milia baptizati sunt, quadraginta aut paulo plures, pertinaciter errantes, ad Stephanum Bosnae ducem perfidiae socium confugere*. E. S. PICCOLOMINI (Pius II.), *Commentarii*, V, p. 227; A. V. HECK, *Pii II Commentarii*, I, pp. 316-317; L. TORTARO, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini*, p. 882; D. MANDIĆ, *Bogomilska crkva*, 1979, p. 506; F. ŠANJEK, "'Krstjani' crkve bosanske", pp. 423-429, here pp. 428-429; PEJO ČOŠKOVIĆ, "Tomašev progon sljedbenika Crkve bosanske 1459.", pp. 43-48, here p. 45; T. VUKŠIĆ, "Papa Pio II. (1458.-1464.) i kralj Tomaš (1443.-1461.)", pp. 382-384; LUKA ŠPOLJARIĆ, "The Renaissance Papacy and Catholicisation of Manichean Heretics. Rethinking the 1459 purge of the Bosnian Kingdom", in: NICHOLAS TERPSTR (ed.) *Global Reformations: Transforming Early Modern Religions, Societies, and Cultures*, Routledge, 2019, p. 154, note 24.

the Pavlović family lands, Bosnian Christians were neither counted nor persecuted.

There is no unified consensus among researchers about the number of converted and expelled. At first glance, the classical reading seems the most logical, i.e., that 2,000 converted to Christianity and 40,000 or more fled or were expelled to the lands of Herzeg Stjepan. Here it is necessary to underscore that the forty (40) or so expelled Christians in the second reading would hardly be worth mentioning. Only if someone from the Bosnian Kingdom wanted to boast before the pope about their zeal for converting Bosnian Christians can the number forty be understood. The king needed praise and reward first to atone, and the Franciscans, without whom King Tomaš could not have succeeded, needed the same to emphasise their zeal for God's cause. In this case, two thousand or even 12 thousand converts were clear evidence of royal zeal and Franciscan missionary fervour. However, these numbers still seem too low compared to earlier claims and apologies, which mentioned a large number of heretics. Forty, a very insignificant number of expelled Christians to the Herzeg's lands, can be interpreted as consideration, leniency, and benevolence on the part of both the king and Franciscan missionaries. On the other hand, just as the phrase *duo circiter milia* or *duodecim circiter millia* places *milia* (thousand) after the approximate number in the first part of the sentence, the Latin sentence structure of the enumeration similarly implies the word *milia* after *quadraginta* (forty thousand). Thus, it was not necessary to repeat the word *milia* in the manuscript.

The numbers in both readings were not invented by Pope Pius II: he had heard them from the envoys of the Bosnian king, who had come to Rome in the spring of 1460. Pope Pius II or his scribe transcribed them into the Commentaries. We must allow that one or the other could have made a mistake in copying! *Errare humanum est!* We can ask ourselves who would have gained the most prestige in the Pope's eyes with the maximum number of converts and the minimum number of expelled, or conversely, with a smaller number of converts and the maximum number of expelled Bosnian Christians? Without a doubt, King Tomaš and the Franciscan missionaries. Both the king and the Franciscans were exposed to pressure from the Hungarian king and episcopate, as well as from Rome, and, in any case, they

had to clear their name by reporting numerous conversions or numerous persecutions.<sup>119</sup> Despite Pope Pius II's negative opinion of the Bosnian king, he nevertheless ordered his legate Tommasini to investigate the actual situation in the Bosnian Kingdom. Although not ideal, the situation was acceptable, and Tommasini recommended sending the king's embassy to the Pope in Rome.<sup>120</sup> The Hungarian king, upon learning of the departure of the Bosnian embassy for Rome, feared that the pope would establish new bishoprics in the Bosnian Kingdom and grant King Tomaš a papal crown (*concendendos illo Regno Episcopos, dandamque Tomi Rege coronam*). Although the pope denied any such intention in his response, it seems he did believe the royal envoys who had successfully justified the king, and he began to seriously consider Tomaš's wish to establish new bishoprics and to grant him a papal crown.<sup>121</sup> In order to further prove his devotion to the pope and the Catholic Church, King Tomaš decided on another move. In the early spring of 1461, he sent three prominent Bosnian Christians – Đuro Kučinić, Stojšan Tvrtković,

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<sup>119</sup> This is evident from Pius II's letter of 7 June 1460, in which he informed the Hungarian King Matthias that the envoys of the Bosnian king had tried to prove that the accusations about the surrender of Smederevo were unfounded and that the king had demonstrated goodwill in advocating the true faith and in expelling the pernicious Patarenes from his entire territory (*quod perniciosam Patarenorum gente ex omni ditioni sua expulerat*). Here, too, one should wonder why Pope Pius II reported on the persecution of Bosnian Christians from the king's entire territory in Bosnia in his letter to King Matthias! Could this be confirmation of the forty thousand from his Commentaries? Cf. A. THEINER, *Monumenta historica Hungariam*, II, p. 358; PEJO ČOŠKOVIĆ, "Tomašev progon sljedbenika Crkve bosanske", in: NUSRET ŠEHIĆ (ed.), *Migracije i Bosna i Hercegovina* [Migrations and Bosnia and Herzegovina], Institut za istoriju, Sarajevo, 1990, p. 45. Fermendžin incorrectly cites Theiner as p. 258 instead of p. 358. Cf. E. FERMENDŽIN, *Acta Bosnae*, p. 241. Anyone wishing to learn more about Piccolomini's humanist pedantry, polemics, and acrimony should read the useful book: GLAUCO MARIA CATARELLA, *Pedanterie umanistiche e battute polemiche in un passo dei Commentarii di Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe umanistica e filosofica*, Serie III, vol. IV, Pisa, 1976.

<sup>120</sup> D. FARLATI, *Illyricum sacrum*, IV, p. 263; E. FERMENDŽIN, *Acta Bosnae*, pp. 240-241; T. VUKŠIĆ, "Papa Pio II. (1458.-1464.) i kralj Tomaš (1443.-1461.)", pp. 385-386.

<sup>121</sup> A. THEINER, *Monumenta historica Hungariam*, II, p. 358; Cf. V. KLAJČ, *Povijest Hrvata*, IV, pp. 43-45.



and Radmilo Voćinić – to Rome with the new papal delegate and bishop of Nin, Natale Zorzi.<sup>122</sup> In the old Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome, before the Pope and numerous witnesses, all three solemnly renounced their "Manichean heresies" on 14 May 1461. They were interrogated by the famous Dominican theologian, inquisitor, and cardinal, Juan de Torquemada.<sup>123</sup> Unfortunately, King Tomaš did not live to see the fruits of his devotion or of his church and diplomatic mission. On 10 July 1461, he met a sudden death under unexplained circumstances.<sup>124</sup>

We know that Katarina spent her childhood and youth surrounded by Bosnian Christians at the court of her father Stjepan, who, although perhaps not always a committed Bosnian Christian, was their strongest and most important protector. Katarina perceived Bosnian Christians as household members (*famigliari*). At the same time, the *djed* of the Bosnian Church resided in Moštre near Visoko or later in Janjići, always in the vicinity of the royal residence in Mile, and was an important dignitary and factor in the Bosnian Kingdom. His advice was followed by many nobles, including King Tomaš and Queen Katarina.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, it seems implausible that the *djed* of the Bosnian Church – perhaps named Ratko II, if we accept the list of Bosnian *djeds* from the third list of Batalo's Gospel as reliable,<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> E. S. PICCOLOMINI, *Commentarii*, V, p. 27; F. ŠANJEK, *Bosansko-humski krstjani u povijesnim vrelima*, p. 132; SAME, "Krstjani' crkve bosanske", p. 428.

<sup>123</sup> E. S. PICCOLOMINI, *Commentarii*, V, p. 227; DRAGUTIN KAMBER, "Kardinal Torquemada i tri bosanska bogumila", in: *Croatia sacra*, III, Zagreb, 1932, pp. 27-93; P. ČOŠKOVIĆ, "Tomašev progon", pp. 45-46; LUKA ŠPOLJARIĆ, "The Renaissance Papacy and Catholicisation of Manichean Heretics. Rethinking the 1459 purge of the Bosnian Kingdom", pp. 153-175, here pp. 156-161.

<sup>124</sup> In his later works, Klaić did not believe Tomaš's sudden death was due to a family conspiracy involving his older brother Radivoje and his son Stjepan. V. KLAJČ, *Povijest Hrvata*, IV, pp. 45-46. Without doubt, Tomaš had a large number of bitter enemies at the time. Besides the two potential conspirators from his family circle mentioned above, one could also add Sultan Mehmed II, the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus, his father-in-law Herzeg Stjepan Kosača, Croatian ban Šperančić and several embittered Bosnian noblemen from the ranks of the Bosnian Christians.

<sup>125</sup> F. ŠANJEK, *Bosansko-humski krstjani u povijesnim vrelima*, pp. 118-120.

<sup>126</sup> ĐORĐE SP. RADOJČIĆ, "Odlomak bogomilskog jevanđelja bosanskog tepačije Batala iz 1393 godine", *Izvestija na Instituta za balgarska istorija* 14-15, BAN,

– had to leave the royal lands and the neighbourhood of King Tomaš and Queen Katarina no later than 1459, and seek refuge in Hum with Herzeg Stjepan. This was how the myth or legend arose, advocated by Serbian historians such as Kovačević<sup>127</sup> and Dragojlović.<sup>128</sup> Commenting on the response of Ecumenical Patriarch Gennadius Scholarius II to the inquiry of the Sinai monks, they not only transformed the *djed* of the Bosnian Church into Metropolitan David of Mileševa,<sup>129</sup> but also into a Serb who had converted to Orthodoxy.<sup>130</sup> In this case, *djed* Ratko II would come into consideration, as he, according to Batalo's Gospel, served as the *djed* of the Bosnian Church from 1450 to 1465.<sup>131</sup> This contradicts Gennadius's letter, if it was dated 1454/1456. The persecution of Bosnian Christians, if there had been any persecution at all, occurred in 1459/1460!

The role of Queen Katarina in the conversion of Bosnian Christians should be re-examined, as should the role of her spiritual advisors, two Franciscan chaplains, however, this is archivally impossible today. Who were they? How often were they rotated in their service? Were they Queen Katarina's only spiritual advisors or were they investigators and persecutors of Bosnian Christians? Likewise, the role of Friar Anđeo Zavidović in Milodraž should also be explored. There seem to be similarities with the already mentioned controversial Byzantine theologian Georgij Scholarius, later monk and Patriarch Gennadius II. Scholarius, who had been forced to unite the Greeks in

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Sofija, 1964, pp. 495-509; F. ŠANJEK, *Bosansko-humski krstjani u povijesnim vrelima*, pp. 356-358.

<sup>127</sup> LJUBOMIR KOVAČEVIĆ, "Nekoliko priloga za crkvenu i političku istoriju južnih Slovena, I-V", in: *Glasnik srpskog učenog društva*, 63, Beograd, 1895, (Cyr.), pp. 1-40, here pp. 11-18.

<sup>128</sup> DRAGOLJUB DRAGOJLOVIĆ, *Krstjani i jeretička crkva bosanska*, Beograd, 1987, (Cyr.), pp. 136-137.

<sup>129</sup> We know very little about Metropolitan David. From available sources, we only know that he was a writer, a witness, and one of the executors of the will of Duke Stjepan Kosača from 1466. Cf. LJ. STOJANOVIĆ, *Povelje i pisma*, II, (Cyr.), pp. 87-92; S. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan*, (Cyr.), p. 267.

<sup>130</sup> *Oevres completes de Gennade Scholarios*, pp. 200-201; A. PAVLOVIĆ, "Katolici i pravoslavni u našim krajevima", pp. 95-97; F. ŠANJEK, "'Krstjani' crkve bosanske", pp. 426-427.

<sup>131</sup> Đ. SP. RADOJČIĆ, "Odlomak bogumilskog jevanđelja", pp. 495-509.

the Ottoman Empire in 1454 on the basis of their common religious identity. However, he quickly faced strong internal opposition and had to withdraw. All his personal successes and failures seem to be connected to his complex personality. As patriarch, he tried to act as an uncompromising Orthodox and Greek, although simultaneously neither he nor his opponents could forget his recent ties with Western Latin representatives and his advocacy for the reconciliation and reunification of the Roman and Greek Churches at the Council of Florence (1438-1439). The fact is that Gennadius did not personally seek Sultan Mehmed nor did he spontaneously offer his cooperation and request protection for his Church and his Greek people. He was found by Ottoman spies and brought before the Sultan, who made him the head (Εθνάρχης) of the Rumelian millet (Greek people) and the patriarch of the Rumelian (Greek) Church. For Sultan Mehmed, it was far more important that Gennadius was, or presented himself as, an opponent of Rome, the West, and the union of the two Churches. Gennadius, under pressure from his compatriots, even resigned from this position twice and withdrew to a monastery but was reinstated by the Sultan.<sup>132</sup>

What happened to Friar Anđeo Zvizdović,<sup>133</sup> who, according to legend, appeared almost at the same moment (28 May 1463?), allegedly three days after Stjepan's execution, when Queen Mother Katarina had to flee to Dubrovnik without the young queen and without her two young children? Did Friar Anđeo appear voluntarily before the sultan or had he been forced, brought before the sultan by his spies? Did he even meet Sultan Mehmed as the *Ahdnama* has no year of issue? In 1941, Petar Grgec hastily declared Zvizdović a giant of

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<sup>132</sup> JOSEPH GILL, "George Scholarius", in: J. GILL, *Personalities of the Council of Florence and other Essays*, Oxford, 1964, pp. 79-94; C. J. G. TURNER, "The career of Georgios Gennadios Scholarios", in: *Byzantion*, 39 (1969), pp. 420-55; V. LAURANT, "Les premiers patriarches de Constantinople sous la domination turque 1454-1476. Succession et chronologie d'après une catalogue inédite", in: *Revue des études byzantines*, 26 (1968), pp. 229-263, here pp. 243-244; STEVEN RUNCIMAN, *The Great Church in Captivity: A Study of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from the Eve of the Turkish Conquest to the Greek War of Independence*, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 168-170, 182-185.

<sup>133</sup> MIRO VRGOČ, "Fra Anđeo Zvizdović (1420./?-1498.)", in: MIRO VRGOČ, *Duhovni stupovi Bosne Srebrene*, Sarajevo – Zagreb, 2007, pp. 7-40.

*Croatian history*, not knowing much about him.<sup>134</sup> What drove Friar Andeo to take this step? If he was the custos of the Bosnian Custody, as is generally asserted, then he must have been known to the local spies and to the Ottoman spies from Hodidjed in Vrhbosnia. If he was the custos, he was responsible for his fellows and the Catholic folk. This would mean that he had been morally forced to accept *fait accompli* and recognise the new conquering force and its authority in order to preserve the Catholic Church, the Franciscan community, the Faith and the people in the area of the dying Bosnian Kingdom and its Bosnian Franciscan Custody and Bosnian Franciscan Vicariate. Did he recognise and seize this unique, pivotal moment (καιρός) for the Catholic Church in the Bosnian Kingdom? His actions would be easier for us to understand if we could prove that Friar Andeo had known about the agreement between the Genoese Catholic colony in *Pera* (today's *Galata* district in Istanbul) and Sultan Mehmed, which had been concluded at dawn on 29 May 1453. Pera, later known as the *Magnifica Communità di Pera* (Magnificent Community of Pera), was located between the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus, opposite Byzantine Constantinople, and it was predominantly populated by Europeans, particularly by Amalfitans, Genoese, and Venetians.<sup>135</sup> According to the agreement, the Catholics, represented by powerful Genoese merchants and sailors, received a kind of *Ahdnama* – the sultan's protection – which preserved their lives, freedom, faith, and property, because they had surrendered the keys to the city of Pera to the sultan and renounced armed conflict against the Ottoman army to the detriment of the Greeks during the siege of Constantinople. Consequently, the Catholics in Pera enjoyed the highest degree of freedom compared to other Catholics in the Ottoman Empire, a privilege shared by all Rumelian Orthodox, Jews, and Armenians.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> PETAR GRGEC, "Franjevačka suradnja u svetoj Hrvatskoj", in: *Kalendar sv. Ante*, Sarajevo, 1941, p. 174; VJERAN KURSAR, "Franjevci i katoličanstvo u Osmanskoj Bosni i Turskoj Hrvatskoj u predmodernu doba (15-18. stoljeće)", in: *Hrvatska revija*, 2, Zagreb, 2015, pp. 46-56.

<sup>135</sup> MATTIA CERACCHI, "La comunità latino-cattolica di Istanbul nella prima età ottomana (1453-1696). Spazi sacri, luoghi di culto", in: *EuroStudium*, 38, gennaio/marzo 2016, pp. 3-160.

<sup>136</sup> GEORG HOFMANN, *Il Vicariato Apostolico di Costantinopoli: 1453-1830. Documenti con introduzione, 7 illustrazioni ed indici dei luoghi e delle*

Certainly, at an "encounter or appointment" with Sultan Mehmed at least "ten years later" and with the issuance of the *Ahdnama* on 28 May of an unspecified year, Friar Anđeo or the Franciscans in general were promised privileges that would only later be confirmed in writing.<sup>137</sup>

Although we do not know if Friar Anđeo knew about the agreement between Mehmed II and the residents of Pera, the *Ahdnama of Milodraž* of 28 May – if we may call it this – is, without a doubt, a very important document, which must exclusively be considered together with the firman of Sultan Bayezid II from 1483. These privileges were primarily granted to the Bosnian Franciscans for their protection and the protection of their Catholic faithful but were significantly less than the privileges granted to the Orthodox Church and its clergy in Constantinople and throughout the Empire, and also significantly less than the privileges granted to the Catholic residents

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*persone*, Istituto Pontificio di Studi Orientali, Roma, 1935, pp. 20-22; STEVEN RUNCIMAN, *The Fall of Constantinople*, Cambridge University Press, 1965, pp. 109-110; GEO PISTARINO, "La caduta di Constantinopol: da Pera genovese a Galata turca", in: GEO PISTARINO, *Genovesi d'Oriente*, Genova, 1990, pp. 281-382; LAURA BALLETO, "Battista di Felizzano e Domenico di Novara fra Genova e il Vicino Oriente a notà del Quattrocento", in: *Estudios Nilda Guglielmi*, Buenos Aires, 2005, pp. 35-54; VJERAN KURSAR, "Bosanski franjevci i njihovi predstavnici na osmanskoj Porti", in: *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju*, 60, Sarajevo, 2011, pp. 371-408, here p. 372.

<sup>137</sup> ĆIRO TRUHELKA, "Pravni položaj kršćana turskoj carevini", in: *Obzor*, 152, Zagreb, 5. VII. 1931., pp. 2-3; HAZIM ŠABANOVIĆ, "Turski dokumenti u Bosni iz druge polovine XV stoljeća", in: *Istorisko-pravni zbornik*, 2, Sarajevo, 1949, pp. 177-208; DOMINIK MANDIĆ, "Autentičnost Ahd-name Mehmeda II B.H. franjevcima", in: *Radovi Hrvatskog povijesnog instituta u Rimu*, 3-4, Rim, 1971, pp. 61-90; VANKO BOŠKOV, "Pitanje autentičnosti fojničke *ahdname* Mehmeda II iz 1463 godine", in: *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Bosne i Hercegovine*, 28-30, Sarajevo, 1977-1979, pp. 87-105; MARKO ORŠOLIĆ, "Ahdnama-standardno pravo ili neponovljiv privilegij", in: MARKO KARAMATIĆ (ed.), *Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa u povodu obljetnice smrti fra Anđela Zvizdovića*, Sarajevo 16. i 17. listopada 1998, Sarajevo – Fojnica, 2000, pp. 145-149; DŽENANA ČAUŠEVIĆ, "Život i pravni položaj franjevaca u Bosni Srebrenoj prema turskim dokumentima", in: MARKO KARAMATIĆ (ed.), *Zbornik radova o fra Anđelu Zvizdoviću*, Sarajevo 16. i 17. listopada 1998, Sarajevo – Fojnica, 2000, pp. 285-300; MICHAEL URSINUS, "Jedno osmansko jamstvo zaštite u korist franjevačkih redovnika Srebrenice iz godine 1462", in: *Bosna franciscana*, 47, Sarajevo, 2017, pp. 195-204.

of Pera in Constantinople. Since the Bosnian Kingdom had no high Catholic clergy, bishops and archbishops, unlike the Orthodox clergy in Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia, the privileges granted to the Franciscans were similar to those granted to Orthodox monks (καλόγηρος): exemption from jizya and various Sharia taxes. Therefore, the competencies of the Franciscans were more or less symbolic and could not be compared with the competencies of Orthodox dignitaries, but they were certainly of great benefit to the Catholic people who dared to remain in Bosnia and Hum. We must not forget here that the centre of Catholicism was located in Rome, outside the borders of the Ottoman state, and this also conditioned the lower legal and actual status of Catholics compared to the status of Orthodox Christians and Jews.<sup>138</sup> Scholarly criticism has not yet reached a final verdict on whether the *Ahdnama* in its preserved form is authentic. Despite the almost impossible conditions, Friar Andeo, through his actions and abilities, achieved something which would become the foundation of Catholic presence and the Franciscan establishment, not only in Bosnia and Hum, but also in the western part of the Ottoman Empire, from Dubrovnik and Boka Kotorska to the Carpathians and from Kvarner to the Black Sea.<sup>139</sup> As Christians, Catholics and the Orthodox formed the majority in South-Eastern Europe in the Ottoman Empire and deep down did not recognise Ottoman rule as the legal authority, they created a new governing Christian reality in their subconscious as a replacement for the lost rule of bans, kings or despots: a "monacocracy," the rule of monks. The monacocracy was

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<sup>138</sup> SREĆKO M. DŽAJA, *Katolici u Bosni i Zapadnoj Hercegovini na prijelazu iz 18. u 19. stoljeće. Doba fra Grge Ilijića Varešanina (1783-1813)*, Zagreb, 1971, p. 26.

<sup>139</sup> FRANJO EMANUEL HOŠKO, "Djelovanje franjevac Bosne Srebrene u Slavoniji, Srijemu, Ugarskoj i Transilvaniji tijekom XVI. i XVII. stoljeća", in: *Povijesno-teološki simpozij u povodu 500. obljetnice smrti bosanske kraljice Katarine (Sarajevo 24. i 25. listopada 1978.)*, Sarajevo, 1979, pp. 103-115; ISTVÁN GYÖRGY TÓTH, "Franjevci Bosne Srebrene u osmanskoj Mađarskoj i Transilvaniji od 16. do 18. stoljeća", in: *Bosna franciscana*, 22, Sarajevo, 2005, pp. 16-41; SREĆKO M. DŽAJA, "Fojnička ahdnama u zrcalu paleografije, pravne povijesti i politike", in: *Bosna franciscana*, 31, Sarajevo, 2009, pp. 103-128; ANTAL MOLNÁR, *Le Saint-Siège, Raguse et les missions catholiques de la Hongrie Ottomane 1572-1647*, Rome – Budapest, 2007, pp. 58-105.

not led by metropolitans or bishops or by secular priests but almost exclusively by Orthodox monks and Catholic friars, Franciscans.<sup>140</sup>

Let us return once again to Queen Katarina and her milieu in another very important field. Without a doubt, she was a *mulier fortis, mulier politica et religiosa* – a strong, politically astute and devout woman. We can be certain that she was an important political advisor to her husband Tomaš and that she played a significant role in his initial and prudent policies towards the Ottoman Empire and the Church of Bosnian Christians. In the beginning, unlike his father-in-law Herzeg Stjepan and his two often uncontrollable sons, Vladislav and Vlatko, Tomaš acted shrewdly towards the Turks: he regularly paid his annual tribute and did not provoke them. He avoided conflict with them but waged war against the Serbian despot, with his father-in-law Stjepan, and with the Croatian bans. The moment Tomaš married his son Stjepan to the despot's daughter and made him the despot of Serbia, that is, he *de jure* annexed the Despotate to Bosnia and *de facto* immediately lost it, the Turks became his immediate neighbours, opponents who were too powerful, too dangerous and undesirable for his kingdom. Therefore, it is justified to ask: did Queen Katarina, who also ardently desired to secure the Bosnian royal crown for her still underage son Sigismund, sometimes rashly push her husband Tomaš into political ventures to seek something equivalent to the royal crown in the Despotate for his first son Stjepan? In the end, all of Tomaš and Katarina's family, marriage and conquest plans led to the loss of the Despotate, to the flight of the newlyweds from Smederevo to Bosnia, to the distrust of the West, to the persecution of Bosnian Christians, to the sudden and still unexplained death of King Tomaš,<sup>141</sup> to Stjepan's coronation with the papal crown, to Katarina's honorary elevation to the honour of queen mother, to the collapse of the Bosnian Kingdom, to Stjepan's martyr's

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<sup>140</sup> This issue has not been investigated yet. The references listed here only hint at traces of the issue. Cf. MITJA VELIKONJA, *Bosanski religijski mozaiki: religije in nacionalne mitologije v zgodovini Bosne in Hercegovine*, Znanstveno in publicistično središče, Ljubljana, 1998, pp. 95-103; NEBOJŠA ŠAHVIJA-VALHA, "Religijski identiteti i društvena struktura Bosne i Hercegovine", in: *Migracijske i etničke teme*, 1-2, Zagreb, 2009, pp. 54-62.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. footnote 124 and its reference.

death and his uncle Radivoje's execution, to captivity, conversions to Islam, to the permanent loss of Katarina's children and her departure for Rome, to the flight of the last queen Mara to her mother in Hungary or to her Islamized aunts Mara and Katarina in the Ottoman Empire! Indubitably, Queen Katarina must have assumed some co-responsibility for all these events, and the burden of this co-responsibility must have certainly weighed on her to the end of her life.

### 3.4. Two Hypothetical Questions for Queen Katarina and Readers

Although this may seem fantastical, we wish to pose here two, albeit hypothetical, but existential questions for the Bosnian Kingdom to Queen Katarina<sup>142</sup> and to all of us, present and future readers, the benevolent and less benevolent; questions which are the bitter result of historical-political and ethical-human reflection. The first would be: should Katarina, in her feminine and maternal capacity as queen mother and also stepmother, have not done everything in her power to persuade her stepson, the young king Stjepan Tomašević, not to refuse to pay the exorbitant tribute to Sultan Mehmed II on 3 June 1462?<sup>143</sup> Only in this way could she have prevented the fall of the

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<sup>142</sup> The history of mankind and civilisation provides abundant examples of brave and fierce women, mothers, virgins and rulers, queens, empresses and nuns who were capable of defending but also sacrificing their children, even dying for their children, their people, their kingdoms and their religious communities. Let us recall the Old Testament examples of brave women: Rahaba, Deborah and Jael, Delilah, Esther and the mother in Maccabees. Let us not forget the secular rulers and heroines: Cleopatra of Egypt, Aethelfled of Mercia, Matilda of Canossa, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Joan of Arc, etc. Cf. JOANNA ARMAN, *The Warrior Queen. The Life and Legend of Aethelflaed, Daughter of Alfred the Great*. Amberley, Stroud, 2017; JÖRG ROGGE, "Mächtige Frauen? Königinnen und Fürstinnen im europäischen Mittelalter (11.-14. Jahrhundert) - Zusammenfassung", in: CLAUDIA ZEY (ed.), *Mächtige Frauen? Königinnen und Fürstinnen im europäischen Mittelalter (11.-14. Jahrhundert)*, Jan Thorbecke Verlag, Ostfildern, 2015, pp. 437-457; CHRISTINE REINLE, "Was bedeutet Macht im Mittelalter?" in: C. ZEY (ed.), *Mächtige Frauen*, pp. 35-72. SIGRID HIRBODIAN, "Weibliche Herrschaft zwischen Kirche und Welt. Geistliche Fürstinnen im 11.-14. Jahrhundert", in: C. ZEY (ed.), *Mächtige Frauen*, pp. 411-435.

<sup>143</sup> Klaić does not mention 3 June 1462 as the date the tribute to the Turks was terminated. V. KLAJČ, *Povijest Hrvata*, IV, p. 52.



kingdom, preserved the lives of the king and queen, her own life and the lives of her children, and prevented Bosnia from falling in a whisper, or as Marin Držić, the famous Ragusan author, wrote in his *Dundo Maroje*: Bosnia perished in a whisper, this whisper is not dear to me (*Šaptom Bosna poginu, šaptom mi óni nije drag*). Today we do not know why she failed to do so: she could not, she dared not, or she did not sense the historical moment, the opportune *kairós*, to stand up and tell her stepson and king: *You must not do this, son and king! This must not happen, son and king!* And then she could have told him the story of her great-grandmother Jelena Lazarević, a story we can only briefly cover here. In 1408, the Venetians issued a warrant for Jelena Balšić and her son Balša III, with a reward of 500 gold ducats to anyone who would betray or deliver the ruler of Zeta or his mother alive. When the rulers of Scutari and Albanian Venice saw that the warrant was unsuccessful, they raised the reward to 2,000 ducats. Princess Jelena then boarded a ship and went to Venice in the spring of 1409, not to collect the reward and betray her son but to negotiate. She negotiated for a full three months with Doge Michele Steno. In October 1409, they signed a truce which stipulated that everyone could keep in their possession what they held under their control at the moment of Jelena's arrival in Venice.<sup>144</sup>

The other important, still hypothetical, question arises from what has already been recounted above: since there was no male, politically-strategically strong and far-sighted person in Bosnia and Hum in the spring of 1463, neither on the throne nor among the nobility, should not Queen Mother Katarina, like her once visionary great-grandmother Jelena Lazarević-Balša-Hranić, have risen and gone with her entourage to Bobovac and at the gates of this most significant royal seat in Bosnia, welcomed and hosted Sultan Mehmed II, requested a truce, and assured that the promised tribute, now certainly much heftier, would be paid on time? Perhaps she could have achieved much more than her still politically inexperienced and immature stepson, King Stjepan, or her perpetually warring and quarrelsome father Stjepan with his sons? We, present-day and future readers, would be interested to see what would have happened had

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<sup>144</sup> IVAN BOŽIĆ, *Prvi skadarski rat. Istorija Crne Gore*, 2/2, Titograd, 1970, p. 99.

this come to pass: how would the self-assured Sultan Mehmed II el Fatih, six years younger than Katarina and who did not hate women and mothers, have experienced and digested it all? In the answer or non-answer, we would surely find the answer to the question: who was to blame for Bosnia "falling in a whisper"?

## **4. The Path to Her New Homeland**

### **4.1. The Refugee Road**

When the Bosnian Kingdom fell, Queen Katarina's refugee journey (1463-1467) began, which would take her from Kozograd, a kind of *Catherine Castle* near Fojnica, through Konjic, Drijeva, Ston, Lopud to Dubrovnik, Split, Šibenik, Ancona to Rome. At the end of the summer of 1463, a rumour began circulating about the reconciliation of Herzeg Stjepan with his sons and about their progress in the battle for and conquest of lost territories. Thus, Katarina decided to leave Dubrovnik in the autumn of 1463 and head through Slano to her brother Vladislav's estates in Western Hum. There, she certainly waited for the victory of the Kosačas and the return of their lost territories, and of course, for the return of at least a part of the lost Bosnian Kingdom. This hope was fuelled by news of imminent military aid from the West. In the meantime, the last Bosnian queen, Mara (Jelena), wife of the murdered King Stjepan Tomašević, had also arrived in Dubrovnik.<sup>145</sup> Queen Mara had not been able to fully adapt to the new reality and had not fused with the Bosnian Kingdom. Although she also spent some time in Dubrovnik and unsuccessfully sought her share of the royal deposits, she decided to seek her future and happiness with her influential relatives either in Hungary or in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>146</sup> From that

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<sup>145</sup> The flight of one of the two Bosnian queens from Bosnia across the Glamoč and Livno fields, and her arrival in Vrlika in the Cetina region, and her subsequent sojourn in Dubrovnik, can only be attributed to Queen Mara (Jelena), the wife of the executed King Stjepan Tomašević and the last Bosnian queen. Cf. MARKO ŠUNJIĆ, "Trogirski izvještaji o turskom osvojenju Bosne (1463)", in: *Glasnik arhiva i Društva arhivskih radnika Bosne i Hercegovine*, 29, Sarajevo, 1989, pp. 139-157.

<sup>146</sup> ĐURO TOŠIĆ, "Posljednja bosanska kraljica Mara (Jelena)", in: MILORAD EKMEČIĆ, (ed.), *Zbornik za istoriju Bosne i Hercegovine*, Beograd, 2002, (Cyr.), pp. 29-60, here pp. 50-51; RUŽA ČUK, "Carica Mara", in: *Istorijski časopis*, XXV-XXVI, Beograd, 1978-1979, (Cyr.), pp. 53-95. It seems feasible that Queen

moment on, Queen Katarina felt she was once again the heiress and regent of the Bosnian Kingdom, although no one had entrusted her with this role: neither King Matthias Corvinus nor Sultan Mehmed II. Pope Pius II, who had become the leader of Western military aid, might have entrusted her with this role had he not died suddenly in Ancona on 14 August 1464.<sup>147</sup> Aid from the West had been stopped; Europe was divided, as was often the case in medieval and modern history! Although Katarina did not lose hope, she had to increasingly reconcile herself to the fact that the Bosnian Kingdom would not be liberated as quickly or as easily as she had initially thought. The Dubrovnik government, not wanting to have difficulties with the Ottomans, monitored her and helped her discreetly. Thus, in September 1465, it ordered its merchants in Drijevo to be at her disposal.<sup>148</sup> She spent the following years moving between Hum, Split, Šibenik, and the island of Krpanj. Her father Stjepan died on 22 May 1466. Her brother Vladislav lost his estates in the western regions of Hum and moved to the island of Šipan in 1466 and then to Hungary in February 1467, eventually reaching donated estates in Kalnik, Croatia. Only her brother Duke Vlatko and his underage half-brother Stjepan remained on the scene. Vlatko continued to fight with dwindling fortune for the remains of the Duchy of Hum and made plans to marry the niece of the Neapolitan King Ferdinand.<sup>149</sup>

## 4.2. Attempts to Ransom Her Children from Captivity

In addition to the loss of her husband in 1461, the Kingdom in 1463, and her father Stjepan in 1466, Katarina bore a fourth and greater loss,

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Mara had the Church of Saint Margaret built during her stay in Dubrovnik. Cf. SENJA MAHINIĆ, "Životni put posljednje bosanske kraljice Mare nakon propasti Bosanskog kraljevstva", in: *Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta u Sarajevu (Historija, Historija umjetnosti, Arheologija)*, XVII/3, Sarajevo, 2014, pp. 211-224, here pp. 213-215.

<sup>147</sup> T. VUKŠIĆ, "Papa Pio II. (1458.-1464.) i kralj Tomaš (1443.-1461.)", pp. 373-374.

<sup>148</sup> ĐURO TOŠIĆ, *Trg Drijeva u srednjem vijeku*, Sarajevo, 1987, (Cyr.), p. 175; SAME, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", (Cyr.), p. 92; K. REGAN, *Bosanska kraljica Katarina*, p. 56; L. ŠPOLJARIĆ, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", p. 72.

<sup>149</sup> V. ATANASOVSKI, *Pad Hercegovine*, pp. 23-25, 34-37, 167-169; P. VRANKIĆ, "Stjepan/Ahmed-paša Hercegović", pp. 33-34; L. ŠPOLJARIĆ, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", p. 72.

which weighed on her increasingly as a woman and mother. The loss of her two children, Sigismund and Katarina, and their brutal abduction into Ottoman captivity likely contributed significantly to her increasing depression. During her stay at the Monastery of St. Stjepan in Split, Katarina met the contemporary Italian humanist Leonardo Montagna,<sup>150</sup> secretary to the archbishop of Split, Zani(us), who dedicated an epigram to her in the autumn of 1466, in which he advised her to go to Pope Paul II in Rome.<sup>151</sup> And indeed, when she had exhaustively analysed all possible and impossible plans, she set out, most likely at the end of the summer of 1467, across the sea to Ancona, and from there she headed to Rome.<sup>152</sup> In the Eternal City, she rented a house from a Roman citizen, Jakov Mantebone, not far from the Croatian hostel of St. Jerome, where she remained until 1 October 1469.<sup>153</sup> As of 29 October 1467, Katarina began receiving generous monthly aid from Pope Paul II to the sum 100 gold ducats, plus an additional 20 gold ducats for the monthly rent of the house.<sup>154</sup> During the pontificate of Sixtus IV, this aid was increased to 130 ducats.<sup>155</sup> From 1 October 1469 until her death, Katarina lived with her courtiers in the elegant Pigna district of the city, near today's Church of St. Mark and the Palazzo Venezia. Pope Paul II, formerly Cardinal Barbo, a native Venetian and

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<sup>150</sup> LEONARDO MONTAGNA, *Epigrammatum liber III*, VALERIO SANZOTTA (ed.), Roma, 2010, pp. LVII-LVIII. [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/leonardo-montagna\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/leonardo-montagna_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/) (10. 2. 2025).

<sup>151</sup> RUNJE PETAR, "Tri hrvatske plemkinje franjevačke trećoredice", in: *Kačić*, Split, 1997, pp. 67-82, here p. 80.

<sup>152</sup> Speculation and differing opinions persist on when Queen Katarina arrived, which is evident in sources from Orbini and Lukarić through to the latest scholarship.

<sup>153</sup> GAVRO A. ŠKRIVANIĆ, "Davanje u najam jedne lađe presvetle kraljice Bosne", in: *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Bosne i Hercegovine*, vol. 11, Sarajevo, 1961, pp. 269-271; B. PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić-Kosača", p. 19; Đ. TOŠIĆ, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", (Cyr.), pp. 92-94; K. REGAN, *Bosanska kraljica Katarina*, pp. 54-65; LUKA ŠPOLJARIĆ, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", pp. 69-72.

<sup>154</sup> ADOLF GOTTLÖB, *Aus der Camera Apostolica des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Innsbruck, 1889, p. 292; LUDVIG VON PASTOR, *Geschichte der Päpste im Zeitalter der Renaissance*, II, Freiburg in B. 1925, p. 447; B. PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić-Kosača", p. 19.

<sup>155</sup> L. THALLÓCZY, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens*, p. 111; B. PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić-Kosača", p. 19.

cardinal-nephew of Pope Eugene IV, a great supporter of King Tomaš and Queen Katarina, was familiar with the political situation in the former Bosnian Kingdom and was a staunch friend and benefactor of the distinguished royal refugee.

Through papal offices, Katarina established a connection with the Milanese duke and humanist Galeazzo Maria Sforza (1466-1476), and through her envoys, she tried to accomplish the impossible once again on 23 July 1470: to ransom her children from Ottoman captivity.<sup>156</sup> The Milanese duke was known for his private and political contacts with the East, with people trusted by Sultan Mehmed II.<sup>157</sup> Although Duke Sforza had promised to help if the undertaking was viable, Katarina never received a written response.<sup>158</sup> In 1474, when Katarina learned from another source that Sultan Mehmed was willing to release her son Sigismund, she also tried to appeal to Duke Sforza in Milan for the new mission by letter on 11 February. In the letter, she declared she was willing to go to the Ottoman border herself to receive and ransom her son. However, she needed substantial funds for the ransom, the journey, and her additional expenses and debts, which she was unable to raise or borrow.<sup>159</sup> As she did not get any funds from Duke Sforza or from any other nobleman, the matter fell through.<sup>160</sup> Perhaps the sultan would have been courteous and

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<sup>156</sup> L. THALLÓCZY, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens*, p. 115, note. 1.

<sup>157</sup> GEO PISTARINO, "La politica sforzesca nel Mediterraneo orientale", in: *Gli Sforza a Milano e in Lombardia e i loro rapporti con gli stati italiani ed europei, Atti del Convegno internazionale (Milano 18-21 maggio 1981)*, Milano, 1982, pp. 335-368, here p. 354; ANNAMARIA CORONGIU, "Gli ultimi anni di Maometto II il Conquistatore nel carteggio Sforzesco", in: *Itinerari di ricerca storica*, 20-21 (2006-2007), pp. 179-211, here pp. 184-185.

<sup>158</sup> L. THALLÓCZY, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens*, p. 111.

<sup>159</sup> *Same*, pp. 116-118.

<sup>160</sup> The claims of several well-intentioned and romantic authors that Katarina's half-brother Stjepan Hercegović sent her the information on the sultan's alleged willingness to release her children from captivity for a hefty sum, or that he was even willing to help his half-sister Queen Katarina seem highly unlikely. In November 1473, all trace of Duke Stjepan Hercegović, the future Ahmed-pasha Hercegović, was lost in Herceg Novi. Until then, Stjepan had been co-signing all the accounts related to his father's, Herzeg Stjepan's, legacy with his brother Herzeg Vlatko, which have been preserved in the Dubrovnik Archive. Thus, it can be presumed that he left Hum towards the end of 1473. It

kind to the queen mother on some other matter, but when it came to ducats, his avarice knew no bounds. Katarina had difficulty understanding that great changes had occurred in Italy and Rome. The once powerful Duke Sforza no longer had an ear for such things and had to fight against warlike neighbours and internal rivals and was assassinated during Christmas festivities in 1476.<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, the new pope, Sixtus IV (1471-1484), a Conventual Franciscan, who was very learned but overly preoccupied with the nepotistic desires of his numerous nephews,<sup>162</sup> refused to burden himself too much with his predecessor's old problems.<sup>163</sup> On the other hand, we must also take into account the fact that in 1474, Katarina's son Sigismund must have already turned 25 and had long since become a grown man,

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would be logical that on his journey, he first visited his captive niece Katarina in Skopje, and then continued to Constantinople, where he could meet with his nephew Sigismund, who could have recommended Stjepan to Sultan Mehmed II. It seems implausible that Stjepan would have advocated the ransom of Queen Katarina's children. Let us not forget that Stjepan was a true Kosača like his father Stjepan and brothers Vladislav and Vlatko, and they all loved money above all. Had he wanted to help his half-sister, Queen Katarina, he could have done so with his brother Herzeg Vlatko because they were joint executors of the late Herzeg Stjepan's legacy which contained sufficient ducats. This raises another important question: would the Dubrovnik government have approved such a large outflow of gold coins from its treasury to the Sultan's court just to ransom two already Islamised children who had no more future in Bosnia or Hum and who could only have caused additional political and security difficulties for Dubrovnik in the future?! Cf. DADU, *Cons. Rog.*, XXII., fol. 77v, on 22. 11. 1473; L. THALLÓCZY, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens*, pp. 118, 217; V. ATANASOVSKI, *Pad Hercegovine*, p. 96; P. VRANKIĆ, "Stjepan/Ahmet-paša Hercegović", pp. 36-37.

<sup>161</sup> FRANCESCA M. VAGLIENTI, "Anatomia di una congiura. Sulle tracce dell'assassinio del duca Galeazzo Maria Sforza tra scienza e storia", in: *Rendiconti – Classe di Lettere e Scienze Morali e storiche*, Istituto lombardo - Accademia di Scienze e Lettere di Milano, vol. 136 (2002), fasc. 2, Milano, 2004, pp. 237-273.

<sup>162</sup> PIERRE IMBART DE LA TOUR, *Les origines de la Réforme*, vol. 2: *L'Eglise catholique, la Crise et la Renaissance*, Hachette, Paris, 1909, p. 70; ROGER AUBENAS – ROBERT RICARD, *La Chiesa del Rinascimento (1449-1517)*, PAOLO PRODI (ed.), *Storia della Chiesa*, vol. XV, Editrice S.A.I.E., Torino, 1972, pp. 100-101; CHRISTINE SHAW, "A pope and his nipote. Sixtus IV and Giuliano della Rovere", in: *Atti e memorie. Società Savonese di storia Patria, Nova serie*, vol. XXIV, Savona, 1988, pp. 233-250.

<sup>163</sup> L. VON PASTOR, *Geschichte der Päpste im Zeitalter der Renaissance*, II, pp. 451-710.

who had converted to Islam and embarked on a successful career in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>164</sup> As of 1473/74, their young uncle, Katarina's half-brother Stjepan, the future Ahmet-Pasha Hercegović, had also joined them.<sup>165</sup> All other contemporaries most likely knew what was happening with Sigismund and Katarina; only their mother Katarina could not accept that her captive children had been forced to choose another path in their lives.

However, despite her loss and pain, Katarina's presence and fate in Rome acted as a living reminder of what could befall a person, a people, or the Church. With her attitude and life, she constantly encouraged the popes, especially Paul II and Sixtus IV, to launch a new crusade for the liberation of Bosnia and Hum.<sup>166</sup> Unfortunately, she failed: the mutual quarrels and divisions of Italian and European rulers outweighed all her efforts. Katarina remained aware of her royal calling and dignity until the end of her life. In 1471, Hungarian King Matthias appointed the powerful Hungarian-Slavonian nobleman, Nikola of Ilok, *Újlaki Miklós*, (1410.-1477.), as the last Hungarian vassal king in Bosnia (1471-1477), who eagerly styled himself king of Bosnia and Walachia (*Bosniae et Valaciae rex*).<sup>167</sup> Immediately after his appointment, the new king Nikola established a mint in Ilok and endeavoured to add *de jure* royal rights and dignity to Bosnia to his wealth. Therefore, in the spring of the Holy and Jubilee Year of 1475, he went to Rome and visited Pope Sixtus IV, stayed in the Vatican and tried to persuade Queen Katarina to transfer the legal royal rights to

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<sup>164</sup> L. THALLÓCZY, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens*, p. 114; M. PEROJEVIĆ, "Stjepan Tomašević", pp. 591-592; K. DRAGANOVIĆ, *Katarina Kosača*, pp. 40-41; B. PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić Kosača", p. 21.

<sup>165</sup> L. THALLÓCZY, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens*, p. 118; P. VRANKIĆ, "Stjepan/Ahmed paša Hercegović", pp. 33-34.

<sup>166</sup> L. VON PASTOR, *Geschichte der Päpste im Zeitalter der Renaissance*, pp. 355-364, 465-471, 568-571; R. AUBENAS – R. RICARD, *La Chiesa del Rinascimento (1449-1517)*, pp. 109-111; B. PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić Kosača", p. 22.

<sup>167</sup> L. THALLÓCZY, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens*, pp. 118-119; FLORIO BANFI, "Romei ungheresi del Giubileo del 1475", in: *Archivio di scienze, lettere ed arti della società italo-ungherese Mattia Corvino*, Anno III, fasc. II, 1941, pp. 63-76, here p. 73; ANDRÁS KUBINY, "Die Frage des bosnischen Königtums, von Nikolaus Ujlaky", in: *Studia Slavica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* (SSASH), Budapest, 1958, p. 378; Đ. TOŠIĆ, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", pp. 100-101.

Bosnia to him, which she very decisively and angrily refused.<sup>168</sup> She looked like a "sharp sword," Nikola of Ilok reported.<sup>169</sup> Queen Katarina was the sole member of the ruling Bosnian Kotromanić dynasty at liberty, and as such, had a justifiable claim to the Bosnian throne. However, her response, although logical, was a significant historical and political misstep.<sup>170</sup> On 23 November 1477, eleven months before the death of Queen Katarina, King Nikola died, and therefore this alleged meeting could not have taken place in Rome in 1478, as some authors claim.<sup>171</sup>

### 4.3. Spiritual Maturity and Death in the Eternal City

In Rome, in the city of numerous churches and church events, Katarina's life was not all as dark and sorrowful as some have portrayed it.<sup>172</sup> During her 11-year residence in Rome (1467-1478), Katarina also experienced many beautiful and joyous moments worth mentioning.

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<sup>168</sup> ANTUN KNEŽEVIĆ, "Katarina, predposljednja kraljica bosanska", in: *Vienac*, 30, Zagreb, 1873, pp. 475-478, here p. 478; Đ. TOŠIĆ, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", pp. 100-101.

<sup>169</sup> D. LOVRENOVIĆ, *Na klizištu povijesti*, p. 382; K. REGAN, *Bosanska kraljica*, p. 71.

<sup>170</sup> That no agreement was reached between King Nikola and Queen Katarina was a significant political and historical misstep. Nikola was a wealthy man and could have ransomed Katarina's children from captivity if her children and Sultan Mehmed II still wanted to do so. Nikola was in good standing with Pope Sixtus IV, who commissioned a portrait of his meeting with the Bosnian king in Rome. This artwork, located in the Holy Spirit Hospital near Saint Peter's, can still be viewed today. However, Queen Katarina would have had to offer something to win over King Nikola and convince him of their successful future cooperation for the good of the Bosnian Kingdom. A possible offer could have been the hand of her daughter, Princess Katarina, hand to Nikola's son Lovro (1459-1524). Katarina most likely had no more high cards to play in political poker with Nikola of Ilok. Cf. F. BANFI, "Romei ungheresi del Giubileo del 1475", pp. 63-64.

<sup>171</sup> MORIZ WERTNER, "Nikolaus von Ilok (Ujlak), König von Bosnien und seine Familie", in: *Vjesnik Kr. hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskoga zemaljskoga arkiva*, 8, Zagreb, 1906, pp. 250-273; DAVOR SALIHOVIĆ, "Nonnulla documenta pertinentia ad Nicolaum de Wylak, regem ultimum Regni Bosnae", in: *Scrinia Slavonica*, 17, Slavonski Brod, 2017, pp. 403-417; Đ. TOŠIĆ, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", pp. 100-101.

<sup>172</sup> M. PEROJEVIĆ, "Stjepan Tomašević", p. 587.



In 1471, she attended the proxy wedding of Zoe (Sophia) Palaiologos, the first cousin of Despotess Mara Branković, the last Bosnian Queen Mara and Katarina's daughter-in-law, to the Russian Grand Duke Ivan III the Great, in old St. Peter's Basilica.<sup>173</sup> In 1472, Katarina participated in the translation of the physical remains of the popular Franciscan, Saint Bernardine of Siena, to the newly built church dedicated to him, today the basilica in Aquila, Abruzzo. In 1457, while they were still living and ruling in Bosnia, King Tomaš had made a valuable contribution to the construction of this beautiful church.<sup>174</sup> Her arrival in Aquila, dressed in black, accompanied by five women and two courtiers with shoulder-length blond hair, caught the eye of contemporaries.<sup>175</sup>

Katarina and all her courtiers attended the opening, celebration, and attainment of numerous indulgences in the Holy and Jubilee Year of 1475 which had been proclaimed by Pope Sixtus IV.<sup>176</sup> When Rome and its vicinity were threatened by terrible storms, floods, and plague in 1475 and 1476, the pope and other high Roman dignitaries left the Eternal City indefinitely. Queen Katarina, however, refused to be flummoxed: she remained firm in faith and hope, and in her home the entire time. The Jubilee Year saw many European dignitaries coming to Rome on pilgrimage, including: the king of Naples,

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<sup>173</sup> PAUL PIERLING, "La Russie e l'Orient: Le mariage d'un tsar au Vatican, Ivan III et Zoé Paléologue", in: *Revue des questions historiques*, 42 (1887), pp. 353-396; L. THALLÓCZY, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens*, pp. 111-113; B. PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić-Kosača", p. 20.

<sup>174</sup> B. PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić Kosača", p. 20.

<sup>175</sup> DIONISIO LASIĆ, *De vita et operibus S. Iacobi de Marchia. Studium et recensio quorundam textum*, Falconara Maritima, 1974; B. PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić Kosača", p. 20.

<sup>176</sup> Pope Paul II reorganised the celebration of the Jubilee Year with his bull *Ineffabilis providentia Summi Patris* of 19 April 1470, and ordered it be celebrated every 25 years, starting from 1475. His aim was to provide every new generation of the faithful with a great opportunity for conversion, penance, and grace. Pope Sixtus IV confirmed his predecessor's decision and on 29 August 1473, proclaimed the opening of the new Jubilee Year on Christmas Eve 1474. <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/it/giubileo-2025/giubilei-nella-storia.html> (6. 4. 2025); HERIBERT SMOLINSKY, "Jubeljahr II/1", in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (hereinafter: TRE), XXII, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin – New York, 1988, pp. 282-283.

Ferdinand I (Ferrante),<sup>177</sup> an old acquaintance of Hum, Bosnia and Croatia; the large delegation of the Croatian-Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus, the feudal lord of Bosnia, led by Bishop Albert Vetési of Veszprém and the former Croatian Ban Ivan Thuz of Laka;<sup>178</sup> then the Danish-Norwegian King Christian I, well-known in Europe at the time;<sup>179</sup> and the Hungarian and vassal king of Bosnia, Nikola of Ilok.<sup>180</sup> As noted above, Queen Katarina met with King Nikola of Ilok, however, we do not know if she met with the Neapolitan and Danish kings, or with the delegation of the Hungarian king and whether she supplicated them for assistance to ransom her already adult children from Ottoman captivity.<sup>181</sup>

As of 1447, Katarina had had two Franciscans as chaplains, companions, and spiritual advisors in Bosnia, by permission of Pope Nicholas V. Thus, she had become acquainted with many worthy Franciscan monks. Upon arriving in Rome, especially after moving to the new Pigna district, she found herself near the Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli. Since 1250, this beautiful church and its monastery had been entrusted to Franciscans. The church soon became a gathering

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<sup>177</sup> STEFANO INFESSURA, *Diario della città di Roma di Stefano Infessura scribasenato*, edited by ORESTE TOMMASINI, Istituto Storico Italiano, Roma, 1890, p. 79.

<sup>178</sup> F. BANFI, *Romei ungheresi del Giubileo del 1475*, p. 64. King Matthias did not dare leave his kingdom in uncertain hands and expose it to Turkish threats.

<sup>179</sup> L. VON PASTOR, *Geschichte der Päpste im Zeitalter der Renaissance*, II, pp. 497-500; R. AUBENAS – R. RICARD, *La Chiesa del Rinascimento (1449-1517)*, p. 113.

<sup>180</sup> F. BANFI, *Romei ungheresi del Giubileo del 1475*, p. 68.

<sup>181</sup> In this historical context, we should also emphasize a fact of general cultural and economic importance. The Jubilee Year of 1475 was the first Holy Year in which the achievements of the recently invented printing press in Mainz, Germany, were utilised in Rome. The bull of Sixtus V of 29 August 1473, whereby he proclaimed the Jubilee Year of 1475, was printed and not in manuscript form. The first private printing press had already been opened in Rome in 1467, having been relocated from the Benedictine monastery in Subiaco. Thus, Queen Katarina and her entourage could avail themselves of the first secular and liturgical books printed in Italy in Rome. Cf. GABRIELE PAOLO CAROSI, *Da Magonza a Subiaco. L'introduzione della stampa in Italia*, Bramante Editrice, Busto Arsizio, 1982; ARNOLD ESCH, "La prima generazione dei tipografi tedeschi a Roma (1465-1480). Nuovi dati dai registri di Paolo II e Sisto IV", in: *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo*, vol. 109, no. 1, 2007, pp. 401-418.

place for the combative Roman commoners and lower Roman nobility, who frequently gathered around the nearby Senate on Capitoline Hill. The Church and Monastery of Santa Maria in Aracoeli became the centre of the Third Order of St. Francis, particularly for laypeople. According to the writings of Franciscan historian Friar Marijan of Florence from 1523, Katarina was mentioned as a long-time member of the Third Order of St. Francis and wore the habit in public. This beautiful and pious information about Queen Katarina was also adopted by numerous other Franciscan historians from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1638, she was finally included in the Franciscan Martyrology as a Blessed of the Order.<sup>182</sup>

Queen Katarina lived an exemplary and modest life in Rome and prepared well for eternity, for the final journey of her life. Members of the Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of which Queen Katarina was also a member, gathered in the church and monastery of Aracoeli. Among other things, the society devoted its attention and care to the sick in St. Albert's hospital. The members of this society valued Queen Katarina and, in her memory, had a Holy Mass celebrated every year for the repose of her soul – *per la serenissima donna Madonna Catherina regina de Bosna* (for the most serene lady Madame Catherine, Queen of Bosnia).<sup>183</sup> In Rome, Queen Katarina had her last will and testament drawn up, which was drafted by the public notary and priest of the Split Archdiocese, Ante Jurina, then in the service of the Holy See. She signed it on 20 October 1478. In her will, written five days before her death, she left her kingdom to Pope Sixtus IV and his legitimate successors, requesting them to fully cede it to her son Sigismund if he returned to the Catholic faith, or to her

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<sup>182</sup> ARTURUS MONASTERIUM, *Martirologium Franciscanum*, Parisiis, 1638, p. 491. Fra Marijan of Florence's work is lost, but a short summary was found and published in 1911: COMPENDIUM CHRONICARUM FRATRUM MINORUM, in: *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, I-IV, Quaracchi-Firenze, 1911.

<sup>183</sup> B. PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić Kosača", p. 22. In the extant catalogues of medieval hospitals in Rome, there is no mention of any hospital by the name of St. Albert. It should be further investigated whether chroniclers and authors confused the name of the alleged St. Albert's hospital with another name, for example, with St. Bartholomew's on Tiber Island, which is located not far from the church and monastery of St. Mary in Aracoeli or if St. Albert's hospital simply did not survive the Middle Ages?!

daughter Katarina if she reconverted to Christianity. If her children did not return to the Catholic faith, her kingdom was to be left to the Holy See to administer according to its wisdom.<sup>184</sup> Five days later, on 25 October 1478, she died a blessed death. She was buried in the altar area of the Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli. Everywhere, Katarina left the impression of a very intelligent, vigilant, educated, dignified, balanced, humble, and pious woman and person, which she primarily owed to two Jelenas, her mother and great-grandmother, but also to the wholesomeness of the Roman spiritual atmosphere and the spiritual companionship of the Franciscans.<sup>185</sup>

### **In Lieu of a Conclusion**

At the end of this paper, it seems useful and instructive to paraphrase Marko Perojević, a very significant and prolific author of papers on Bosnian rulers in the Middle Ages, especially on Stjepan Tomaš Ostojić and Stjepan Tomašević.<sup>186</sup> Perojević, relying on older authors like Orbini and Thallóczy, attributes no responsibility for the fall of Bosnia to King Tomaš and his son King Stjepan Tomašević. He asserted that the Bosnian nobles were entirely to blame, as they had never developed the Bosnian state but instead perpetually undermined its foundations for their own advantage. The king was a puppet in their hands. They placed kings on the throne and removed them. None of the kings could conduct independent state policy, nor could they strengthen the state either internally or externally. There was no central state authority in Bosnia. For many Bosnian and Hum nobles, the Ottomans were better friends than the king himself. The nobles called on the Turks either to help them or to judge them. The people were just like the nobles. Turkish promises to improve peasant relations seemed to have lulled the national soul's

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<sup>184</sup> ARCHIVIO APOSTOLICO VATICANO (AAV), MISC. ARM, XV. vol., 1, ff. 266v-268r; A. THEINER, *Vetera monumenta Slavorum Meridionalium*, I, pp. 509-511.

<sup>185</sup> K. DRAGANOVIĆ, *Katarina Kosača*, pp. 34-41; B. PANDŽIĆ, "Katarina Vukčić Kosača", pp. 18-23; Đ. TOŠIĆ, "Bosanska kraljica Katarina", (Cyr.), pp. 89-94; K. REGAN, *Bosanska kraljica Katarina*, pp. 65-76.

<sup>186</sup> M. PEROJEVIĆ, "Stjepan Tomaš Ostojić", pp. 505-554; Same, "Stjepan Tomašević", pp. 555-592.

sense of freedom and the independence of the Bosnian Kingdom. This was perhaps the strongest weapon with which the Ottomans overcame and conquered Bosnia.<sup>187</sup> At the same time, Perojević forgot to add that the Bosnian kings, especially the last two, were also often pawns in the hands of neighbouring powers – Hungary, Venice, the Kingdom of Naples, the Despotate, the Ottoman Empire, and the Papacy. Nor was Queen Katarina spared from participating in all these games, pretensions, blackmail, and humiliations while she reigned. Likewise, Perojević forgets to mention the Bosnian rulers' drive and violence towards the lands and estates of domestic lords and neighbours in the north and south, east and west, their drive for expansion, subjugation, and oppression of others. Queen Katarina inherited this "Bosnian-Hum virus," which had global dimensions, from the Kosača family, but she also found it in a very developed stage in the Kotromanić, Ostojić, Tomašević, and Vojsalić families and she would later encounter it in an even higher degree of avarice in the Ottoman, Hungarian and Venetian conquerors.

If we seriously accept Marko Perojević's theses from the 1940s, and if we do not want to remain only lauders or slanderers of the past, *laudatores* or *difamatores temporis acti* (Cf. Horace, *Ars poetica*, 173), we must confirm that the Bosnian-Hum nobility and the Bosnian kings were equally to blame for the ruin of Bosnia and Hum. We, the present-day heirs of our fifteenth-century ancestors from Bosnia and Hum, we sons and daughters of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we Bosnians, Croats, Serbs, Yugoslavs, Jews, and newcomers must ask ourselves: are we better guardians and greater lovers of our homeland and stauncher respecters of our neighbours than our distant ancestors from the 15<sup>th</sup> century were? Does the biblical wisdom also apply here: *Perditio tua ex te, Israel* – Your destruction comes from yourself, Israel? (Cf. Hosea 13:9 - *Vulgate*), or in other words: *Perditio tua ex te, Bosnia et Chulmia* – Your destruction comes from yourself, Bosnia and Hum.

Although she inevitably lived in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of the aforementioned general and prevailing Bosnian-Hum medievalism, its mentality and milieu, Queen Katarina largely

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<sup>187</sup> M. PEROJEVIĆ, "Stjepan Tomašević", pp. 583-584.

transcended and ennobled it, thanks to her personally developed spiritual and humane greatness, and has become and remained for it and for us to this day an indispensable example of supra-confessional and supra-national humanity and piety in Bosnia and Hum, if we may and can think in these categories when discussing and writing about an important person of the setting Bosnian-Hum medievalism.