

THE OTTOMAN CONQUEST OF THE BALKANS

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FOREWORD

The Ottoman conquest of the Balkans is one of the great upheavals in the history of Southeast Europe. Amazingly, it is rarely seen in context. Research is accordingly fragmented. The Bucharest conference of the *Association internationale d'études du Sud-Est européen* provided the appropriate framework for bundling recent research on this topic. Colleagues from Bosnia, Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania accepted the invitation. The contributors are grateful that the *Revue des études sud-est européennes* enables the publication of the most important contributions of this panel. The essays address several questions:

- 1) The question of space: how is the process of conquest to be placed in an European context? How did the Ottomans, as the new masters, structure the conquered space and what significance do Islamic religious foundations, which are the backbone of every Islamic dominated society, have?
- 2) What insight do actor-centered approaches offer? Structuralist research has long neglected agents and agencies. Now individuals reappear in research. In this vein, the regional nobility is examined, both the Muslim regional elites (uç beys) and the Christian (Orthodox and Catholic) nobility. It becomes clear how the conquest radically transformed an old world, but did not destroy all structures of the Balkan Christian societies: contacts existed across the conflict boundaries, even if these should not be confused with peaceful relationships. The conquest also triggered great waves of refugees and created a political diaspora in Catholic Europe. The role of Hungary has often been overlooked by research often focused on Italy and particularly Venice. Here it is analyzed in detail.
- 3) The final Ottoman conquest was usually preceded by decades of Ottoman raids. This turmoil affected large parts of the Balkans. The consequences of the deliberate destabilization of the Christian Balkan states on trade and the economy have rarely been examined. The analysis of the Balkan caravan trade reveals how much the Ottoman raids affected the hurtled regions in their economic development. The wearing down of the regional population is one of the explanations for the ultimate success of the Ottoman conquest.

Of course, these three approaches do not exhaust the wealth of questions on the topic. In their bundled form, however, they give the reader an impression of ongoing debates. Hopefully they will also give impetus to further research on an era that has profoundly transformed the Balkans.

Oliver Jens Schmitt

THE BELMUŽEVIĆ FAMILY. THE FATE OF A NOBLE FAMILY
IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE DURING THE TURBULENT PERIOD
OF THE OTTOMAN CONQUEST
(THE 15th AND FIRST HALF OF THE 16th CENTURIES)

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Voivode Miloš Belmužević was a significant figure in 15th century Serbian history. He was born to a noble family, whose members performed administrative duties in Zeta and northern Serbia during the reign of Despot Đurađ Branković (1427–1456). Shortly before the downfall of the Serbian medieval state, Belmužević supported the pro-Ottoman faction of Michael Angelović. Due to this fact, he fell into disgrace at the court and was deprived of his property in 1458. After the fall of Smederevo (1459) he entered into Ottoman military service and became a *sipahi*. In 1476/7, he held the market place of Jagodina in the Morava valley as a *timar*. He moved to Hungary most probably during the great Hungarian offensives against the Ottomans in northern Serbia in 1480 and 1481, when tens of thousands of Serbs were taken across the Sava and the Danube and resettled in southern Hungary, including Banat. After moving to Hungary, Belmužević fought the Ottomans along the border, but also on other battlefields, as the commander of a large detachment of light cavalry – *hussars*. He was wounded serving King Matthias Corvinus in Silesia in 1488, and he distinguished himself during the wars of King Wladislas II Jagello against Maximilian Habsburg and Jan Albrecht in western and northern Hungary (1490–1491). For his loyal service and military merits, Belmužević was rewarded by King Matthias on several occasions, starting from 1483, with estates in Timiș, Cenad and Bač counties. It is after one of these estates in the vicinity of Timișoara that he was given the noble appellation “of Saswar”. In 1496, King Wladislas II confirmed to Miloš Belmužević and his sons Vuk and Marko the earlier donations of Matthias Corvinus. However, the voivode lost both of his sons in the next few years: Marko died under unknown circumstances before 1498, while Vuk was killed in battle against the Ottomans in 1499 or 1500, during an Ottoman incursion into southern Hungary. In this conflict voivode Miloš was also wounded. Later, in order to avenge his son, he ravaged the surroundings of Smederevo. Left without a male heir, Belmužević left his estate to his mother Olivera, his wife Veronica and his underage daughter Milica. King Wladislas II confirmed the will of Belmužević, written in the Serbian language and preserved to the present day, after his death in the autumn of 1500. Veronica, who came from the noble family Arka of Densuș from Hunedoara County, remarried after her husband’s death to Stephen Bradacs of Lodormercz, a Hungarian nobleman of Croatian origin. With this marriage, the largest part of Belmužević’s property was transferred to Bradacs (the voivode left some possessions to his *familiares*). Becoming of age, Milica Belmužević started a series of legal processes in order to regain estates that were rightfully hers. Milica was married to Nicholas Kendeffy of Râu de Mori. This marriage strengthened Milica’s ties with the home region of her mother, the land of Hațeg in Hunedoara County. Her life can be traced

through a series of documents that span a period of six decades, outliving both her husband and son, John Kendeffy.

Keywords: Voivode Miloš Belmužević, Milica Belmužević, Serbian medieval nobility, Christian *sipahis*, hussars, Smederevo sancak, Banat.

The unusual life and prominent role of Voivode Miloš Belmužević in the history of Serbia and South East Europe in the second half of the 15th century have aroused the interest of historians for over a hundred years.¹ A large number of sources of different origins – Serbian, Ragusan, Ottoman, Hungarian and Venetian, including the unique testimony of the voivode himself, who summed up his own life in his will² – have made it possible to sketch out his biography. Belmužević began his career in the state of the Serbian despots, after its collapse he became an Ottoman *sipahi*, and he died, according to his own words, “serving the king of Hungary and the Holy Crown”. Yet, because of the fragmentary nature of these data, there have been areas of doubt and disagreement among historiographers concerning some of the most important moments in the life of this Serbian nobleman.

It is believed that Miloš Belmužević (Biomužević or Beomužević)³ came from a noble family whose two prominent members, brothers Đurađ and Vuk, were

¹ K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, translated and supplemented by J. Radonić, Beograd, 1952, vol. I, p. 376, 381, 407, 413; vol. II, p. 390–391; A. Ivić, *Istorija Srba u Ugarskoj od pada Smedereva do seobe pod Čarnojevićem (1459–1690)*, Zagreb, 1914, p. 7–8, 17, 23–24, 27–29; idem, *Istorija Srba u Vojvodini od najstarijih vremena do osnivanja potisko-pomoriške granice (1703)*, Novi Sad, 1929, p. 14, 18, 26, 28, 34, 36, 40–41, 60; Y. Radonitch, *Histoire des Serbes de Hongrie*, Paris, 1919, p. 65–66; D. Popović, “Vojvodina u tursko doba”, in idem (ed.), *Vojvodina I. Od najstarijih vremena do Velike seobe*, Novi Sad, 1939, p. 210–212; idem, *Srbi u Vojvodini*, vol. I, Novi Sad, 1957, p. 155–158; J. Kalić (ed.), *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. II, Beograd 1982, p. 377–382, 435, 444, 458–460; D. Mrđenović, A. Palavestra, D. Spasić, *Rodoslovne tablice i grbovi srpskih dinastija i vlastele*, Beograd, 1991², p. 218–220; N. Lemajić, “Porodica Belmužević”, *Istraživanja* 13, 1990, p. 73–80; idem, *Srpski narodni prvaci, glavari i starešine posle propasti srednjevekovnih država*, Novi Sad, 1999, p. 32–33, 55, 76, 153–155; idem, “O nekim nejasnim pitanjima iz istorije porodice Belmužević”, in S. Gavrilović (ed.), *Balkan i Panonija kroz istoriju*, Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference, Novi Sad, 2006, p. 115–123 (these works were reprinted in: N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita na prelomu epoha*, Sremska Mitrovica–Istočno Sarajevo, 2006); A. Krstić, “Novi podaci o vojvodi Milošu Belmuževiću i njegovoj porodici”, *Inicijal. Časopis za srednjovekovne studije* 1, 2013, p. 161–185; A. Magina, “Un nobil sârb în Banatul secolului al XV-lea: Miloš Belmužević”, *Analele Banatului, Serie nouă, Arheologie – istorie* 18, 2010, p. 135–142; idem, “Milica Belmužević: l’histoire d’une noble dame du XVIe siècle”, *Inicijal. Časopis za srednjovekovne studije* 2, 2014, p. 145–162; S. Iașin, *Familiile nobiliare sârbești din Banat în secolele al XV-lea și al XVI-lea*, Cluj-Napoca, 2015, p. 168–173; A. Ivanov, “Ratovanje vojvode Miloša Belmuževića u Šleziji”, *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 94, 2016, p. 21–27.

² A. Ivić, “Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika iz XVI i XVII veka”, *Vjesnik kraljevskoga hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskoga zemaljskoga arkiva* 15/2, 1913, p. 93–94 (reprinted in: N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 354, and S. Petrović, “Staranje o duši. Testament Miloša Belmuževića i epski modeli o poslednjoj volji junaka”, *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor* 71/1–4, 2005, p. 21–22).

³ The surname is recorded in different variants in the sources. For differences in pronunciation cf. A. Loma, “Zagorje Stefana Belmuževića – kuda je Janko bežao sa Kosova”, *Zbornik Istorijskog muzeja Srbije* 23, 1986, p. 18, 20, note 29. For practical reasons, we will use the widely accepted form of the surname – Belmužević.

in the service of Despot Đurađ Branković (1427–1456) in Zeta, in the littoral part of present-day Montenegro. In some recent biographical articles on the Belmuževićs, it is stated that Đurađ Belmužević was in the diplomatic service of Despot Đurađ during the war between Dubrovnik and the Bosnian magnate Duke Radoslav Pavlović over the territory of Konavli (1430–1432).⁴ This would be the earliest recorded mention of the activities of Đurađ Belmužević and any of the members of this family in general. During the first Ottoman occupation of the Serbian state (1439–1444) the brothers escaped from Zeta, and stayed with their families in Dubrovnik in 1443. Đurađ travelled from Dubrovnik to Hungary, probably to the despot who was in refuge there, and at the end of the same year the Ragusan authorities provided a ship to transport their wives to Shkoder.⁵ After the restoration of the Serbian state, the brothers returned to Zeta. In 1445 they were listed among witnesses present for a verdict given at the despot's voivode in Zeta. In this document Vuk and Đurađ Belmužević are recorded as "Serbian noblemen" unlike several other witnesses, local nobles, who are mentioned as "noblemen of Zeta".⁶ The following year, an envoy of Vuk Belmužević withdrew a deposit of funds which his master had previously left in Dubrovnik.⁷ A lawsuit from 1450 shows that Vuk Belmužević, together with the Orthodox Metropolitan of Zeta, administrated the district of Luštica in the southern part of the Bay of Kotor.⁸ Due to their close ties with Dubrovnik, the brothers were granted Ragusan citizenship in 1454.⁹ Vuk Belmužević is not given further mention in sources while Đurađ, titled voivode, acquired weapons (maces and crossbow strings) in Dubrovnik at the beginning of March 1455.¹⁰ From May 1455, this nobleman of the Serbian despot is also no longer mentioned in historical sources.¹¹

⁴ S. Ćirković, "Vuk Belmužević/Biomužević", in Č. Popov (ed.), *Srpski biografski rečnik (=SBR)*, vol. II, Novi Sad, 2006, p. 391; N. Lemajić, "Đurađ Belmužević/Biomužević", in *SBR*, vol. III, Novi Sad, 2007, p. 617. The authors have not cited a source for their claim. Despot Đurađ Branković supported Dubrovnik and intervened in its favour before Duke Radoslav Pavlović and other political factors in the region, including sending his envoy to Sultan Murad II: M. Spremić, *Despot Đurađ Branković i njegovo doba*, Beograd, 1994, 149–153, where sources and previous relevant literature are quoted.

⁵ Državni Arhiv u Dubrovniku (=DAD), *Acta Minoris Consilii*, 9, fol. 161; *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, 8, fol. 223, 259v; K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. II, p. 389–390; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 197–198; idem, "Đurađ Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 617; S. Ćirković, "Vuk Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 391.

⁶ A. Soloviev, "Zetska presuda iz 1445. godine", *Arhiv za pravne i društvene nauke* XXIII 1–2, Beograd 1931, p. 42–43, 45; I. Božić, *Nemirno Pomorje XV veka*, Beograd, 1979, p. 187–188; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 198; idem, "Đurađ Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 617–618; S. Ćirković, "Vuk Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 391.

⁷ DAD, *Diversa Notariae*, 30, fol. 58; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 198.

⁸ DAD, *Diversa Cancellariae* 62, fol. 25; K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. II, p. 389–390, n. 70; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 198; S. Ćirković, "Vuk Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 391.

⁹ DAD, *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, 14, fol. 74v; K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. II, p. 389–390; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 198; idem, "Đurađ Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 618; S. Ćirković, "Vuk Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 391.

¹⁰ DAD, *Acta Minoris Consilii* 13, fol. 258v; A. Veselinović, *Dubrovačko Malo veće o Srbiji (1415–1460)*, Beograd, 1997, p. 599; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 197–198.

¹¹ On May 6, 1455, the Ragusan authorities rejected some of his requests: DAD, *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, 14, fol. 159v; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 198; idem, "Đurađ Belmužević/Biomužević", p. 618.

As most of the information on the Belmužević family prior to 1455 is connected to Zeta, it is believed that this family originated from that region. Nevertheless, there are some data which connect the Belmužević family with the vicinity of the town of Valjevo in north-western Serbia, where a village named Beomužević still exists. A contemporary from the 15th century, Konstantin Mihailović of Ostrovica states in his work *The Memory of the Janissary* that John Hunyadi was captured in the region of Zagorje in 1448 while fleeing Kosovo, and that he was brought before Stefan Belmužević, the lord of that area, who delivered him to Despot Đurađ.¹² *Zagorje (Zagor)* was the other name for the Valjevo *nahiye* in some Ottoman *defters* from the end of the 15th to the first decades of the 16th centuries.¹³ Genealogical relations between Stefan Belmužević and brothers Vuk and Đurađ Belmužević cannot be determined today. Nevertheless, having in mind that it was a very rare surname, it is almost certain that they were all members of the same noble family. The surname Belmužević could have originated from the words *beli muž* (“white man”), but also from *belmuž*, a kind of shepherd’s meal made from cheese and flour.¹⁴

Based on the fact that his elder son was also called Vuk, Miloš could have been the son of Vuk Belmužević. In Serbian historiography he is mostly considered to be identical to Voivode Miloš, the last commander of Despot Đurađ in Zeta prior to the Ottoman conquest (1452–1456),¹⁵ as well as to the despot’s voivode of the same name in Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia, who carried out that duty in 1457.¹⁶ We have previously expressed our reservations towards such identifications¹⁷ since

¹² Konstantin Mihailović iz Ostrovice, *Janičareve uspomene ili turska hronika*, ed. Đ. Živanović, *Spomenik SANU* 107, 1959, p. 31; Konstantin Mihailović, *Memoires of a Janissary*, trans. B. Stolz, *Ann Arbor*, 1975, p. 84–85; A. Loma, “Zagorje Stefana Belmuževića”, p. 17–18; M. Spremić, *Despot Đurađ*, p. 343–344; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 199.

¹³ “Valyeva nām-ı diğēr Zagor”: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, İstanbul (=BOA), *Tapu tahrir defterleri (=TD)* no 144, p. 189–266; D. Bojanić, *Turski zakoni i zakonski propisi iz XV i XVI veka za smederevsku, kruševačku i vidinsku oblast*, Beograd, 1974, p. 28, 93, 176. On “Zagorje”, which corresponds to the present-day Podgorina region around Valjevo, see: A. Loma, “Zagorje Stefana Belmuževića”, p. 18–22; S. Ćirković, “‘Crna Gora’ i problem srpsko-ugarskog graničnog područja”, in S. Branković (ed.), *Valjevo – postanak i uspon gradskog središta*, Valjevo, 1994, p. 59–61.

¹⁴ *Rečnik srpskohrvatskog književnog i narodnog jezika*, vol. I, Beograd, 1959, p. 446; A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 165.

¹⁵ K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. I, p. 376, 381; I. Božić, “Zeta u Despotovini”, in *Istorija Crne Gore*, vol II/2, Titograd, 1970, p. 229–230; idem, *Nemirno Pomorje*, p. 191; S. Ćirković, “Srpska vlastela u borbi za obnovu Despotovine”, in J. Kalić (ed.), *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. II, Beograd, 1982, p. 377; M. Spremić, *Despot Đurađ*, p. 412, 463, 724.

¹⁶ Lj. Stojanović, *Stare srpske povelje i pisma*, vol. I–2, Beograd–Sremski Karlovci, 1934, p. 431–433; K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. II, p. 390; M. Spremić, *Despot Đurađ*, p. 724; S. Mišić, “Posedi velikog logoteta Stefana Ratkovića”, in idem (ed.), *Moravska Srbija: istorija, književnost, umetnost*, Kruševac, 2007, p. 13, 18. N. Lemajić had reservations regarding this identification (*Srpska elita*, p. 199–200, note 19), and it seems that several other historians were of the same opinion: M. Dinić, *Za istoriju rudarstva u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji i Bosni*, vol. I, Beograd, 1955, p. 84, 93; S. Ćirković, “Srpska vlastela”, p. 377; D. Kovačević-Kojčić, *Srednjovekovna Srebrenica (XIV–XV vijek)*, Beograd, 2010, p. 125.

¹⁷ A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 166.

the mother of Miloš Belmužević was still alive and active half a century later, in 1503,¹⁸ and also because he had an underage daughter at that same time.¹⁹ This means that Belmužević was still very young in the mid-15th century, and the responsible duties of the despot's voivode in Zeta and Srebrenica at that turbulent time required someone with more military and managerial experience. On the other hand, the fact is that Miloš Belmužević was politically active at the start of 1458. He supported the pro-Ottoman fraction in the regency formed in Smederevo after the sudden death of Despot Lazar Branković (1456–1458), led by Grand Voivode Mihailo Angelović, brother to Grand Vizier Mahmud Pasha. After the upheaval in Smederevo and Angelović's fall from power on March 31, 1458, his supporters lost their possessions which were given to members of the winning side.²⁰ Among those who were deprived of their possessions was also Miloš Belmužević, who lost at least one village in Usora, in the part of eastern Bosnia under the rule of the Serbian despots.²¹ This is the first unambiguous information on Miloš Belmužević and his activities.

It is not known what happened to Miloš Belmužević during the turbulent months that followed, nor where he was at the time of the final fall of the Serbian state to Ottoman rule at the end of June 1459 and after. In August 1464, during the Ottoman-Hungarian fighting in Bosnia, the Ragusan authorities granted Voivode Miloš Belmužević permission to settle with his family in the territory of Dubrovnik.²²

When the constant raids of the *akincis* in the areas of southern Hungary began, accompanied by devastation and depopulation, King Matthias Corvinus, as part of the reorganisation of the border defence system, actively began to settle Serbs into his realm and to encourage the Serbian nobility to enter his service. Brothers Stefan and Dmitar Jakšić, the sons or stepsons of Voivode Jakša Breščić, crossed over to the Hungarian side, probably in 1464. In the second half of that year King Matthias gave them the town of Nagylak (Nădlac) with its villages in the

¹⁸ Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, Budapest, Diplomatikai levéltár (=MNL-OL, DL) 26662; C. Feneşan, *Diplomatarium Banaticum*, vol. I, Cluj-Napoca, 2016, p. 228–231. More about which further on.

¹⁹ L. Thallóczy, A. Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia közti összeköttetések oklevéltára 1198–1526. Magyarország mellékartományainak oklevéltára II*, Budapest, 1907, p. 297–298; A. Magina, “Un nobile sârb”, p. 142.

²⁰ M. Spremić, “Propast srednjovekovne države”, in J. Kalić (ed.), *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. II, Beograd, 1982, p. 306; B. Ferjančić, “Vizantinci u Srbiji prve polovine XV veka”, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 26, 1987, p. 207–211; M. Spremić, *Despot Đurađ*, p. 515–517, 520, 523, 528, 532, 537, 762; idem, “Borbe za Smederevo 1458–1459”, in idem (ed.), *Pad Srpske despotovine 1459. godine*, Zbornik radova SANU, Beograd, 2011, p. 215–216; idem, “Mihailo Anđelović”, in Č. Popov (ed.), *Srpski biografski rečnik*, vol. VI, Novi Sad, 2014, p. 839–840.

²¹ F. Rački, “Prilozi za sbirku srbskih i bosanskih listina”, *Rad JAZU* 1, 1867, p. 157; K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. II, p. 390–391; M. Spremić, *Despot Đurađ*, p. 516–517, 520, 537, 724; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 199–200; S. Mišić, “Posedi velikog logoteta”, p. 7, 13; J. Mrgić, *Severna Bosna (13–16. vek)*, Beograd, 2008, p. 126–127; A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 165.

²² DAD, *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, 18, fol. 84; K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. II, p. 390; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 198–199.

valley of the River Mureş. In subsequent years the Jakšić brothers gained numerous estates spread across Transylvania, Banat and Western Srem.²³ At the same time, with King Matthias having achieved success in Bosnia, managing to halt the Ottoman incursions into Srem and Banat, the king's former opponent, Vuk Grgurević also entered his service. Vuk Grgurević, the illegitimate grandson of Despot Đurađ, was included in the line of Hungarian barons and received land in the southern parts of Hungary, King Matthias officially recognising or confirming his title of despot.²⁴

Historians believed for a long time that Miloš Belmužević moved to Hungary via Dubrovnik at the same time as Vuk Grgurević and the Jakšić brothers, in 1464.²⁵ However, his story was somewhat different. He was recorded as holder of a *timar* in the first preserved *mufasal defter* of the Smederevo sancak from 1477, with the *timar* yielding revenues from the market place (*pazar*) of Jagodina in the Morava valley, totalling 8,583 *akçes*.²⁶ Therefore, Belmužević joined Ottoman military service probably soon after the fall of Smederevo (1459) and became a *sipahi*. His request for refuge in Dubrovnik was probably the result of his temporary vacillation at the time of the tumultuous hostilities in Bosnia in 1464.

There were many Christian *sipahis* in the Ottoman border regions towards Hungary in the second half of the 15th century. During the 1470s, almost one half of all *timar* holders in the Smederevo sancak were Christians. However, the income

²³ L. Thallóczy, A. Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, p. 258–259, 390; J. Radonić, “Prilozi za istoriju braće Jakšića”, *Spomenik Srpske kraljevske akademije* 59, 1923, p. 63–73; S. Borovszky, “A nagylaki uradalom története”, *Értekezések a történeti tudományok köréből* 18, Budapest, 1900, p. 16–19; A. Ivić, *Istorija Srba*, p. 16, 26–28, 348–349; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 88–89; M. Spremić, “Porodica Jakšić u Banatu”, in M. Maticki and V. Jović (eds.), *Banat kroz vekove. Slojevi kultura Banata*, Beograd, 2010, p. 34–40; S. Iašin, *Familiile nobiliare sârbești*, p. 132–135; S. Božanić, M. Kisić, “O prvog generaciji Jakšića na tlu južne Ugarske – Stefanu i Dmitru u delu ‘Rerum Hungaricarum Decades’”, *Godišnjak Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu* XLI–2, 2016, p. 119–129.

²⁴ V. Fraknoi, *Matyás király levelei*, vol. I, Budapest, 1893, p. 78. For different opinions about the origin of Vuk's despot title cf.: A. Ivić, *Istorija Srba*, p. 16–17; B. Ferjančić, *Despoti u Vizantiji i južnoslovenskim zemljama*, Beograd, 1960, p. 198–199; A. Veselinović, *Država srpskih despota*, Beograd, 2006, p. 93; S. Ćirković, “O despotu Vuku Grgureviću”, *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti Matice srpske* 6, 1971, p. 286–287; idem, “Postvizantijski despoti”, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 38, 1999–2000, p. 399–400; D. Dinić-Knežević, “Sremski Brankovići”, *Istraživanja* 4, 1975, p. 7–8; K. Mitrović, “Vuk Grgurević između Mehmeda II i Matije Korvina”, *Braničevski glasnik* 2, 2004, p. 24–30; M. Spremić, “Srpski despoti u Sremu”, in M. Maticki (ed.), *Srem kroz vekove: slojevi kultura Fruške gore i Srema*, Beograd–Beočin, 2007, p. 48.

²⁵ K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. II, p. 390; S. Ćirković, “Srpska vlastela”, p. 377–378, note 14; M. Spremić, *Despot Đurađ*, p. 724. Jireček also wrote, probably erroneously, that Belmužević moved to Hungary in 1469 (*Istorija Srba*, vol. I, p. 407, note 95). This statement was later included in the works of some other historians: Y. Radonitch, *Histoire*, p. 65; A. Ivić, *Istorija Srba*, p. 18; D. Popović, “Vojvodina u tursko doba”, p. 210. Cf. N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 201, note 25.

²⁶ BOA, TD, no 16, p. 223–224; B. Đurđev, “Hrišćani spahije u severnoj Srbiji u XV veku”, *Godišnjak društva istoričara Bosne i Hercegovine* 4, 1952, p. 167; E. Miljković, “Hrišćani spahije u Smederevskom sandžaku u drugoj polovini XV veka”, in S. Mišić (ed.), *Moravska Srbija: istorija, književnost, umetnost*, Kruševac, 2007, p. 87, 91; A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 168; idem, “Which Realm Will You Opt for? – Serbian Nobility between the Ottomans and the Hungarians in the 15th Century”, in S. Rudić and S. Aslantaş (eds.), *State and Society in the Balkans before and after Establishment of Ottoman Rule*, Belgrade, 2017, p. 153.

of their *timars* was fairly low, and ranged between 200 and nearly 20.000 *akçes*. Only 10% of the *timars* in the hands of Christians brought an income greater than 10.000 *akçes*.²⁷ With revenues of 8,583 *akçes*, Miloš Belmužević was one of the most significant Christian *sipahis* in the Smederevo sancak in 1477. This census was conducted immediately after the Ottoman-Hungarian fighting of 1476, when King Matthias captured Šabac in February, and Despot Vuk and Wallachian Voivode Vlad Țepeș burned and plundered the towns of Srebrenica, Kučlat and Zvornik in eastern Bosnia. In the summer of the same year, the Serbian despot and several other Hungarian commanders, including Dmitar Jakšić, defeated the Smederevo *sancakbeyi* Mihaloğlu Ali-bey at Požežena on the Danube while returning from the *akin* to Banat. After this battle, in the fall of 1476, the Serbian captains and their warriors participated in the Hungarian blockade of Smederevo, which was broken by Sultan Mehmed II in December.²⁸ The fact that Miloš Belmužević was one of the most prominent *timar* holders in northern Serbia after these clashes means that he dutifully fulfilled his military obligations to the sultan.

However, Voivode Miloš Belmužević did not remain in Ottoman military service long after 1477. The exact circumstances and time of his transition to Hungary cannot be ascertained. In his will, Belmužević mentions that he passed from the “pagans” to the Hungarian *arszag* (ország, state) with guarantees provided by King Matthias and the Estates.²⁹ He most probably crossed over to Hungary in 1480 or 1481,³⁰ during the considerable Hungarian campaigns in northern Serbia, followed by leading a large number of the Serbian population across the Sava and the Danube.³¹ In the second half of the 15th century the Serbian population in Hungary was constantly increasing, due to the organised and spontaneous migration from Ottoman to Hungarian territory. There could be several reasons for transition from the Ottoman to the Hungarian side. Motives of a religious and ideological

²⁷ E. Miljković, “Hrišćani spahije”, p. 87; eadem, “The Christian Sipahis in the Serbian Lands in the Second Half of the 15th century”, *Beogradski istorijski glasnik* 1, 2010, p. 113.

²⁸ L. Thallóczy, A. Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, p. 265–270, 389; Lj. Stojanović, *Stari srpski rodoslovi i letopisi*, Sremski Karlovci, 1927, p. 250–251; V. Fraknói, *Matyás király levelei*, vol. I, p. 356, 359; A. Bonfini, *Rerum Hungaricarum Decades, quatuor cum dimidia*, Lipsiae, 1771, p. 593–595, 598; A. Ivić, *Istorija Srba*, p. 20–22; S. Ćirković, “Srednji vek”, in S. Filipović (ed.), *Šabac u prošlosti*, vol. I, Šabac, 1970, p. 98–102; O. Zirojević, “Smederevski sandžakbeg Ali-beg Mihaloglu”, *Zbornik za istoriju Matice srpske* 3, 1971, p. 17–18; D. Dinić-Knežević, “Sremski Brankovići”, p. 10–12; S. Ćirković, “Srpska vlastela”, p. 384–385; M. Spremić, “Srpski despoti u Sremu”, p. 50–51; T. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526*, Leiden–Boston, 2018, p. 243–260.

²⁹ A. Ivić, “Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika”, p. 93.

³⁰ N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 38, 201–202; A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 169–170.

³¹ V. Fraknói, *Matyás király levelei*, vol. II, p. 65–69, 76–80, 91–92, 158, 185, 190, 196–197, 388–390; Lj. Stojanović, *Stari srpski rodoslovi i letopisi*, p. 253, 296; K. Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. I, p. 412; O. Zirojević, “Smederevski sandžakbeg”, p. 19–20; S. Ćirković, “Srpska vlastela”, p. 385–387; J. Kalić-Mijušković, *Beograd u srednjem veku*, Beograd 1967, p. 198–199; M. Spremić, “Srpski despoti u Sremu”, p. 52; E. Miljković, A. Krstić, *Braničevo u XV veku. Istorijско-geografska studija*, Požarevac, 2007, p. 40; M. Ivanović, N. Isailović, “The Danube in Serbian-Hungarian relations in the 14th and 15th centuries”, *Tibiscum* 5, 2015, p. 386–387; T. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, p. 275–276.

nature (which were, for example, evidenced in the will of Miloš Belmužević)³² were often merged with practical ones, which implied striving for a better position and social advancement. An individual's decision to move to a Christian country (albeit not an orthodox one) could receive strong impetus in light of the fact that advancement in the Ottoman military service was limited for Christians.³³

Crossing from the Ottoman to the Hungarian state, Miloš Belmužević faithfully served King Matthias Corvinus and his successor Wladislas II Jagiełło. Like Despot Vuk (who died in 1485) and his cousins and successors Despots Đorđe and Jovan Branković, as well as the Jakšić brothers, Miloš Belmužević distinguished himself fighting at the head of a detachment of light cavalrymen (*hussars*). The Serbs in Hungary represented a substantially militarised social group. Serbian nobles and other warriors served as hussars, then as crew in the river flotilla (*nazadistae*, *šajkaši*), or in the border fortresses, including Belgrade.³⁴ Some of the Serbian noblemen in Hungary were directly in the king's service, while others appeared as the *familiares* and officials of Serbian aristocrats. Thus, Damjan Belmužević, apparently a relative of Voivode Miloš Belmužević, was castellan to Despots Đorđe and Jovan Branković in Jarak (Arky) in Srem in 1497.³⁵ In his will of 1500, Voivode Miloš mentions the "servants" (*sluge*, i. e. the *familiares*), to whom he left some of his possessions: Marko Radanović, Stefan Pribenović and a certain Jova.³⁶

The Hungarian kings not only engaged the despots and other Serbian warriors in the struggle with the Ottomans, they also sent them to other battlefields. According to contemporary Ragusan writer Ludovik Crijević Tuberon, Despot Đorđe Branković and his brother Jovan rode to war against the Poles in 1491 with 600, the sons of Stefan and Dmitar Jakšić with 300, and Miloš Belmužević with 1000 hussars.³⁷ A decree from 1498, which defined the military obligations of barons and counties, also mentions the Serbian despot, who was obliged to equip 1000 horsemen for war, Stefan Jakšić of Nagylak (the Younger) and Miloš Belmužević, who was to mobilise all his hussars.³⁸ In his will, Voivode Miloš

³² A. Ivić, "Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika", p. 93.

³³ A. Krstić, "Which Realm", p. 155–156.

³⁴ S. Ćirković, "Srpski živalj na novim ognjištima", in J. Kalić (ed.), *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. II, p. 436–438; idem, "Počeci šajkaša", in V. Čubrilović (ed.), *Plovidba na Dunavu i njegovim pritokama kroz vekove*, Beograd, 1983, p. 129–137; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 61–70.

³⁵ MNL-OL, DL 20598; A. Krstić, "Akt sremskih županijskih vlasti o istrazi protiv despota Đorđa i Jovana Brankovića i njihovih familijara (Vrdnik, 22. avgust 1497)", *Inicijal. Časopis za srednjovekovne studije* 5, 2017, p. 159, 167–168, 175–176; idem, "Which Realm", p. 156. The surname of the castellan of Jarak was transcribed "Velmožović" in earlier Serbian historiography.

³⁶ A. Ivić, "Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika", p. 93; A. Krstić, "Which Realm", p. 155–156.

³⁷ Ludovici Tuberonis Dalmatae Abbatis, *Commentarii de temporibus suis*, ed. V. Rezar, Zagreb, 2001, p. 73.

³⁸ *Corpus juris Hungarici. Magyar törvénytár 1000–1526. évi törvényczikkek*, Budapest, 1899, p. 606, 608; J. Bak, *Online Decreta Regni Mediaevalis Hungariae. The Laws of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary. All Complete Monographs*, 4, 2019, p. 928–929, 955–956, https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/lib_mono/4; A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 170; idem, "Which Realm", p. 155.

Belmužević mentions that he was wounded serving King Matthias in Silesia.³⁹ It was revealed only recently that this statement refers to the Głogów War fought between King Matthias Corvinus and his Silesian vassal, John II of Sagan, Duke of Głogów in Lower Silesia, Poland, in 1488. Due to the participation of the Serbian warriors in this conflict, local people called it “the Serbian war”. Despot Đorđe Branković and his detachment also participated in fighting in Silesia in 1489.⁴⁰ Belmužević’s wartime exploits in the vicinity of Székesfehérvár during the conflict between Wladislas II Jagiełło and Maximilian Habsburg (1490–1491) were well known. He also participated in fighting against the troops of Polish Prince Jan Olbracht at Košice in December 1491.⁴¹

Initially, Belmužević’s position in the new environment was relatively modest. The first possession he was gifted from King Matthias for his military service against the Turks consisted of just one village and one *praedium* (uninhabited land) in the vicinity of Timișoara (1483).⁴² However, due to his military abilities, the Voivode quickly rose to the very top of Serbian society in Hungary, becoming very close in rank to the despots from the Branković family and the Jakšićs. The Hungarian monarchs generously rewarded Belmužević for his military merits on several occasions.⁴³ Before his death, Voivode Miloš boasted 22 properties, three of which were in Bács County (today Bačka in Serbia), two in Cened and 17 in Timiș County (in the territory of present-day Romanian Banat and the Mureș valley).⁴⁴ Miloš Belmužević retained the noble title of “Saswar” carried by a property located in the vicinity of Timișoara, which he was given by King Matthias after the Silesian War (1488/1489).⁴⁵ King Wladislas II confirmed to Miloš Belmužević and his sons Vuk and Marko previous donations from Matthias Corvinus in 1496.⁴⁶ The significant presence of Serbs on former properties of Belmužević in the years and decades that followed his death indicates that he, as

³⁹ A. Ivić, “Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika”, p. 93.

⁴⁰ J. Cureus, *Gentis Silesiae annales*, Witebergae, 1571, p. 339–357; A. Ivanov, “Ratovanje vojvode Miloša Belmuževića u Šleziji”, p. 21–27; A. Krstić, “Which Realm”, p. 153.

⁴¹ Ludovici Tuberonis *Commentarii*, p. 66, 73; N. Istvanffy, *Regni Hungarici historia post obitum gloriosissimi Mathiae Corvini regis*, Coloniae Agrippinae, 1724, p. 10; A. Ivić, *Istorija Srba*, p. 34; S. Božanić, “Srpski velikaši u političkim previranjima oko izbora Vladislava II za kralja Ugarske”, *Istraživanja* 24, 2013, p. 154, 160–161; A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 170; idem, “Which Realm”, p. 154.

⁴² King Matthias donated to *Mylos Belmosewyth* the possession *Maysa* and the *praedium Paznad* in Timiș County on December 21, 1483: MNL-OL, DL 26646; L. Thallóczy, A. Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, p. 276–277; A. Magina, “Un nobil sârb”, p. 138–139; C. Feneșan, *Diplomatarium Banaticum*, vol. I, p. 180–181.

⁴³ Miloš Belmužević received donations from King Matthias on at least four different occasions, but only the first charter (from 1483) has been preserved. Others are documented in Belmužević’s will and in the confirmation charter of King Wladislas II of 1496: A. Ivić, “Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika”, p. 93–94; MNL-OL, DL 26655; A. Magina, “Un nobil sârb”, p. 139; A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 182–183.

⁴⁴ On these properties in detail, see: A. Magina, “Un nobil sârb”, p. 136–142; A. Krstić, “Novi podaci”, p. 169, 171, 179, 182–183. See also the map of Belmužević’s properties in this article.

⁴⁵ A. Ivić, “Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika”, p. 93; MNL-OL, DL 26655, 36849, 20476, 29022, 26662; L. Thallóczy, A. Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, p. 299; A. Magina, “Un nobil sârb”, p. 140, 142.

⁴⁶ MNL-OL, DL 26655; A. Magina, “Un nobil sârb”, p. 139.

well as the Jakšić family and other Serbian noblemen, played an important role in colonising the Serbian refugees from the Ottoman Empire in Banat.⁴⁷

Miloš Belmužević was well integrated into the environment of the Hungarian noblemen and carried out the usual activities of county nobility. For example, in 1496 he was one of two deputy counts of Bač County and presided at the law court of the county.⁴⁸ He was married to Veronica, daughter of Ladislaus Arka of Densuş, a nobleman of Romanian origin from Hunedoara (Hunyad) County in Transylvania.⁴⁹ This marriage was certainly concluded after Belmužević crossed over to Hungary. Voivode Miloš was not young when he began his service to the Hungarian king instead of the sultan, so it can be assumed that he had previously already been married. The Voivode had three children: sons Vuk and Marko and a daughter Milica, but only she has been confirmed by sources as Veronica's child. Milica was still underage in 1501⁵⁰ which means that she was not born before 1489, probably only a couple of years before her father's death. Namely, according to Hungarian legal custom, girls were considered adults when they turned 12 years old.⁵¹ Vuk was presumably named after his grandfather, Despot Đurađ's nobleman Vuk Belmužević. However, the Voivode lost both his sons in the span of just a few years: Marko died in unknown circumstances between 1496 and 1498, while Vuk was murdered during a clash with the Turks. This happened at Easter, most probably in 1499 or 1500, during an intrusion by Ottoman warriors from the Smederevo sancak into the territory of southern Hungary. In this conflict Voivode Miloš was also wounded. In order to avenge his son, Belmužević ravaged the surroundings of Smederevo in the summer of 1500 and died several months later.⁵²

Left without a male heir, Belmužević obtained permission from King Wladislas II to leave his estate to his mother Olivera,⁵³ his wife Veronica and his underage daughter Milica. Miloš Belmužević's will, made out on September 8, 1500,⁵⁴ contains many details about his family and social relationships, as well as

⁴⁷ A. Magina, "Un nobil sârb", p. 137.

⁴⁸ MNL-OL, DF 250334, DL 20476; N. C. Tóth, R. Horváth, T. Neumann, T. Pálosfalvi, A. W. Kovács, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1458–1526. II. Megyék*, Budapest, 2017, p. 39.

⁴⁹ Biblioteca Academiei Române, filiala Cluj-Napoca (=BAC), colecția Kemény József, mss. KJ 288/D, Appendix diplomatarii Transilvanici, vol. 8, f. 14; A. Magina, "Un nobil sârb", p. 142; A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 175–178; A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 146–147. About the Arka family, see also: A. A. Rusu, I. A. Pop, "Familia nobiliară românească Arca din Țara Hațegului (sfârșitul sec. XV – începutul sec. XVI)", *Acta Musei Napocensis* 21, 1984, p. 211–225.

⁵⁰ MNL-OL, DL 32552; L. Thallóczy, A. Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, 297–298.

⁵¹ J. Holub, "Az életkor szerepe a középkori jogunkban és az 'időlátott levelek'" 1–2, *Századok* 55, 1921, p. 32–37, 212–235; A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 166, 178; A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 146–147.

⁵² Ludovici Tuberonis *Commentarii*, p. 134–136; M. Sanuto, *I diarii*, vol. III, Venezia, 1880, col. 669–670; A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 171–174.

⁵³ The older Serbian historiography erroneously believed that Olivera was Voivode Miloš's wife, cf: A. Ivić, *Istorija Srba u Ugarskoj*, p. 27–28; idem, *Istorija Srba u Vojvodini*, p. 40–41, 60; D. Popović, "Vojvodina u tursko doba", p. 210; idem, *Srbi u Vojvodini*, p. 156; D. Mrđenović, A. Palavestra, D. Spasić, *Rodoslovne tablice*, p. 218, 220; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 203–205.

⁵⁴ About the problem of dating of Belmužević's will, see: A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 172–174.

the mentality of the Serbian noble environment. It mentions several otherwise unknown Serbian noblemen from Hungary. The presence of some members of the Jakšić family as witnesses to Belmužević's will testifies to the close relations among the two Serbian noble families. Belmužević's will also suggests that his mother assumed the principal role in the family after his death. The Voivode specified that she should prepare the goods to be donated for "the salvation of his soul" (horses; silver; horse equipment).⁵⁵ In 1503, Stephen and Marko Jakšić and Olivera Belmužević represented together the interests of her family before the authorities as plaintiffs in a litigation with their neighbours who had plundered the Belmužević's properties in the Mureş valley.⁵⁶ This shows that Olivera did indeed take over the leading role in the family after her son's death and had to do so in her old age, since the Voivode's widow, Veronica, remarried a Hungarian nobleman of Croatian origin, Stephen Bradacs of Lodormercz. She gave birth to his daughter before 1504.⁵⁷ Although King Wladislas II put the young Milica under his royal protection and confirmed the will of her father in 1501,⁵⁸ Veronica brought to her second husband not only her, but also Milica's part of Belmužević's estate as a dowry. This later led to litigation over the estate between mother and daughter, which started in 1519 and lasted seven years.⁵⁹ In the same year (1519), Milica is mentioned as being married to Nicolas Kendeffy of Malomviz (Râu de Mori, Hunedoara County), a member of another distinguished noble family of Romanian origin from Transylvania. During a litigation between the relatives of the Kendeffy and the Kenderessi families, representatives of the Alba Chapter and the Transylvanian Voivode were sent to the Kendeffy estates in Râu de Mori and Colţ castle (Kolcvár), where they met with the female side of the family, Margaret and Milica, as their husbands were not at home.⁶⁰ It is the first mention of Belmužević's daughter as an adult, after almost two decades in which we know nothing of her private life. After a decade and a half of marriage, Milica was registered as a widow. Her husband died sometime between 1532 and 1537.⁶¹ As a married woman and then a widow, she fought hard to keep the family estates together. In 1532 a certain nobleman from present-day Banat, Gaspar Margay, was

⁵⁵ A. Ivić, "Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika", p. 93–94; A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 176, 181–182.

⁵⁶ MNL-OL, DL 26662; C. Feneşan, *Diplomatarij Banaticum*, vol. I, p. 228–231; A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 176.

⁵⁷ MNL-OL, DL 29590; A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 176–177; A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 147.

⁵⁸ MNL-OL, DL 32552; L. Thallóczy, A. Áldásy, *Magyarország és Szerbia*, p. 297–298.

⁵⁹ Slovenský národný archív, Bratislava (=SNA), Rodu Révay, škat. 90, Doc. ad diversas familias, fasc. IV, no 17; Rodu Révay, škat. 87, Doc. Fam. Kende, fasc. II, no 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 147–150, 153–156.

⁶⁰ "... ad possessionem Malomwyz, consequenterque domum et curiam quoque nobilitarem eorundem Ladislai, nec non Nicolai et Michaelis Kendeffy in eadem Malomwyz ac Kolch subtus castrum similiter Kolch vocatum (...) dominarum Margarethe eiusdem Ladislai et Mylycza dicti Nicolai Kendeffy consortum"; MNL-OL, DL 30553.

⁶¹ SNA, Rodu Révay, škat. 87, Doc. Fam. Kende, fasc. II, no 16, 19; A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 151, 158–161.

gifted the estates of the disloyal John Bradach of Sasvar, Milica's stepbrother. She opposed this donation since these estates were a part of an inheritance from her mother's side.⁶² Almost exactly the same situation was repeated in 1538, when Milica (registered as a widow), in the name of her son John, was involved in disputes with Wolfgang Bethlen over three estates in Hunedoara County.⁶³

Sometime in the 1540s, Milica's only son John married Margaret (Mary), daughter of Pavle Bakić, the last Serbian despot in Hungary,⁶⁴ and the young couple was blessed with a daughter named Anna. John Kendeffy was loyal to King Ferdinand I Habsburg, for which supporters of Queen Isabella attacked his castle, Colț, in Hunedoara County and captured his mother, wife and children in 1551. John's family was soon released from captivity but this was not the end of the problems the elderly Belmužević woman faced.⁶⁵ Her son died in late 1553 or early 1554 and Milica Belmužević once again became the head of the family. In November 1554, at the request of Margaret Bakić, King Ferdinand confirmed that the assets belonging to her late husband John, retained by his mother Milica (*apud manus generosae dominae Mylyczae genitrix ipsius condam Ioannis Kendeffy*) belonged to her and her daughter Anna (*ex eodem condam Ioanne Kendeffy progenitae*).⁶⁶ Soon after (in early 1555), Margaret remarried, to Thomas Oláh, nephew to well-known humanist Nicholas Oláh,⁶⁷ but she continued to maintain relations with her mother-in-law. In 1557, although in her old age, Milica fought again with her relatives from the Kendeffy family to preserve the estates of the young granddaughter Anna.⁶⁸ Milica most probably lived on the Kendeffy estates in Râu de Mori and at Colț castle during the last years of her life. At the beginning of 1562, the lady Belmužević was still alive, mentioned in the will of Paul the Literate of Sighet (Sziget, Maramureș County in northern Romania) alongside her granddaughter. Paul left a debt of 25 florins to the old lady because she had taken

⁶² "Domina Mylliche vocata, consors Nicolai Kendeffy (...) publice contradixisset (...) bona et iura ipsa possessionaria neminem alium preterquam ex legitime datione et inscriptione condam genitricem sue ex divisione superinde facta concernere": MNL-OL, F 4 Cista comitatum, comitatus Hunyadiensis, cista 1-ma, fasc. 7, no. 40. The same document in Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale Cluj (= SJAN), fond Gál de Hilib, nr. 14, f. 5r.

⁶³ MNL-OL, F 4 Cista comitatum, comitatus Hunyadiensis, cista 2-da, fasc. 5, no. 31.

⁶⁴ A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 151–152. On Pavle Bakić and his family, see: N. Lemajić, *Bakići: porodica poslednjeg srpskog despota*, Novi Sad, 1995 (= idem, *Srpska elita*, p. 209–336).

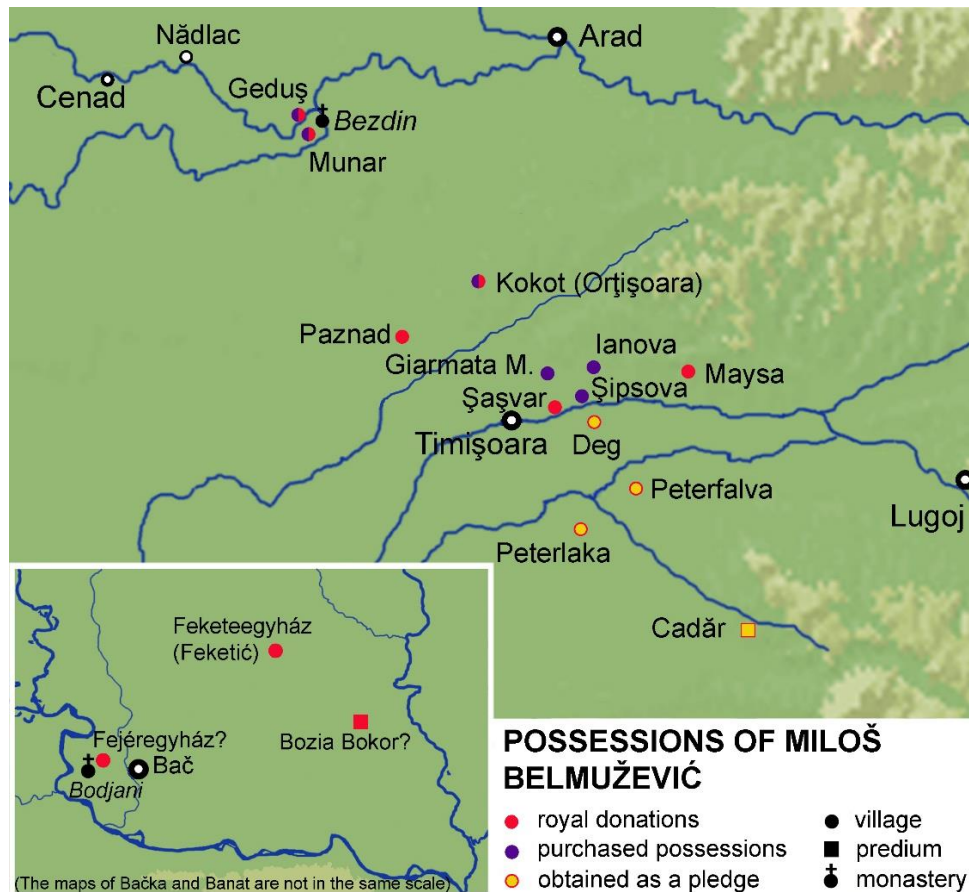
⁶⁵ A. Ivić, *Istoriја Srba*, p. 420–421; A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 152; C. Feneșan, "Ioan Kendeffi, Ioan Glesán și Nikola Crepović – fideles pragmatici în lupta pentru stăpânirea Transilvaniei și Banatului (mijlocul secolului al XVI-lea)", *Banatica* 26/2, 2016, p. 309–336.

⁶⁶ SJAN Sibiu, Episcopia bisericii Evanghelice C.A din Transilvania, colecția de documente episcopale, nr. 157. See also: A. Ivić, *Istoriја Srba*, p. 420–421.

⁶⁷ "Dominam Margaretham Bakyth, egregii quondam domini Ioannis Kendeffy relictam, secundum ritum et legem sancte Romane ac universalis ecclesiae in uxorem despondimus": L. Magina, "Nuptialia festa agebantur: invitația de nuntă, sursă primară pentru istoria socială a Transilvaniei princiare", *Banatica* 28, 2018, p. 560. On the Oláh family, see: Șt. Bezdechi, "Familia lui Nicolae Olahus", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională* 5, 1928–1930, p. 63–85.

⁶⁸ A. Magina, "Milica Belmužević", p. 152–153.

care of his beloved daughter for more than two years.⁶⁹ Milica was the last member of the family who carried the name of Belmužević. She most likely passed away not long after this last mention. Her granddaughter Anna also died a few years later and the Belmužević estates were alienated for ever,⁷⁰ but that is another story.



In the second half of the 15th century the Serbian nobility in Hungary still maintained the traditions of the fallen Serbian state and had strong connections

⁶⁹ “Domine Mylycze Belmosowyth, relicte condam Nicolai Kendeffy de Malomwyz, que filiulam meam plusque duobus annis aluit et modo quoque alit debitum 25 florenorum, quos ad emptionem porcorum dederum remitto. Domine Anne Kendeffy, consorti domini Ioannis Kendi, mastecani ex pellibus mardurinis factam lego”: SJAN Cluj, fond familial Bálintitt, seria 1: Documente medievale, nr. 29 (February 12, 1562).

⁷⁰ “Ioannis Kendi consequenterque pueri Ioannis, filii et puella Anna, filiae suorum ex generosa olim domina Anna, filia egregii condam Ioannis Kendeffy, consorte sua procreatorum”: SJAN Cluj, fond familial Bánffy, seria 2, register 1a, no. 4 (1577). Their properties were confiscated by Stephen Báthory for disloyalty.

with the Orthodox Church. This can be seen in the last will of Voivode Miloš. For the salvation of his soul Belmužević bequeathed 100 florins to his clergyman, the Athonite monk Timotheos, who was to convey the funds to Mont Athos. He and Deacon Marko, who probably wrote Belmužević's will, were also listed among the witnesses to this document.⁷¹ There are also some indications of the endowments of this nobleman and his family. Tuberon mentions a church dedicated to the Mother of God in the Tisza valley, in the vicinity of Belmužević's home, where the Voivode and his men were celebrating Easter when the Turks attacked them. Based on Tuberon's account, it can be assumed that this church was an endowment of Voivode Miloš.⁷² Two Serbian Orthodox monasteries – Bođani in Bačka and Bezdin in the Mureş valley in Romania, known from the 16th century, were erected on Belmužević's lands. It is traditionally considered that the Jakšić brothers were the founders of both monasteries, but it is possible that the original churches were built by Miloš Belmužević. Interestingly, both monasteries are dedicated to the same holiday –The Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple.⁷³

Miloš Belmužević's high rank in Serbian society in Hungary was also recollected by the Hungarians even a quarter of a century after the Voivode's death. Expecting the crossing of Pavle Bakić from the Ottoman Empire to Hungary at the end of 1525, Paul Tomori, Archbishop of Kalocsa and commander of defence of the southern parts of the kingdom wrote: "If he goes over, he would be a great person as the late Belmužević was, or as the masters Jakšić are now".⁷⁴ However, unlike the despots from the Branković family or the Jakšićs, the memory of Miloš Belmužević did not endure among Serbs over subsequent centuries. Thanks to the fact that enough information about his personality and deeds has been preserved in various sources, modern historiography has been able to rediscover him.

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⁷¹ A. Ivić, "Nekoliko ćirilskih spomenika", p. 93–94.

⁷² Ludovici Tuberonis *Commentarii*, p. 134; A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 171–172, 180–181; R. Grujić, "Duhovni život", in D. Popović (ed.), *Vojvodina I. Od najstarijih vremena do Velike seobe*, Novi Sad, 1939, p. 366, believed that this refers to the former monastery Drenovac between Zrenjanin and Ečka in the Serbian Banat.

⁷³ A. Krstić, "Novi podaci", p. 179–180, where previous relevant historiographical literature on these monasteries is listed.

⁷⁴ V. Fraknói, "Tomori Pál kiadatlan levelei", *Történelmi tár* 1882, p. 88; N. Lemajić, *Srpska elita*, p. 226.

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