

The Institute of History Belgrade
Collection of Works, vol. 46

HUN-REN Research Centre for Humanities,
Institute of History, Budapest

**THE ETERNAL CYCLE:
NEIGHBOURS, ALLIES AND/OR RIVALS –
SERBO/HUNGARIAN RELATIONS
IN THE MIDDLE AGES (895–1541)**

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Belgrade 2025

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THE MEMBERS OF THE BRANKOVIĆ FAMILY AS HUNGARIAN NOBILITY IN LATE MEDIEVAL SLAVONIA

Abstract: In contrast to their role as landlords and fiefholders in southern Hungary, even after the fall of medieval Serbia in 1459, a topic that has been well researched in Serbian historiography, the role of the Branković despotal family as Hungarian nobles and property owners in the 15th-century Kingdom of Slavonia has never been the subject of a comprehensive study. This paper examines the activities of two members of the Branković family who acted as feudal lords in late 15th-century Slavonia. The first was Kantakuzina-Katherina (Serbian: Katarina) Branković, daughter of Despot Đurađ (George) Vuković Branković, and the last Countess of Celje (Cilli), who, after the murder of her husband Ulrich II, inherited his Slavonian estates and governed them from 1456 until 1461, when she finally sold her remaining possessions in Slavonia. The second was Kantakuzina's nephew, the titular Serbian despot Vuk Grgurević, who received numerous estates in Slavonia for his service to the Hungarian crown from 1464 until his death in 1485. He bequeathed most of his Slavonian estates to his wife, Barbara, née Frankapan.

Keywords: Branković family, Hungarian nobility, Kantakuzina-Katherina (Katarina) Branković of Celje (Cilli), Counts of Celje (Cilli), Vuk Grgurević Branković, titular Serbian despots, Kingdom of Slavonia, County of Zagreb, County of Križevci, District of Zagorje (County of Varaždin).

Introduction

The late Middle Ages in Southeastern Europe, particularly the 15th century, were marked by the gradual rise of the Turkish threat and the eventual conquest of several

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Byzantine and South Slavic states by the Ottoman Empire.¹ The prolonged nature of this process brought about changes in both international and regional relations and also triggered population movements, either under the pressure of war or as a result of the organisation of military frontiers.²

Serbia, after the fall of the Serbian Empire, found itself caught between the Ottomans and Hungary and came under strong influence from both powers. Although the state of the Lazarević family, established on much of the former Serbian lands prior to King Milutin's conquests, never became an integral part of Hungary nor entered into full vassalage before 1403/1404, its policies were significantly shaped from the outset of Prince Lazar's rule by the actions of King Louis I (Lajos, Lajoš) the Great of Hungary and by the nobles responsible for guarding Hungary's southern borders. Relations between Lazar's Serbia and King Louis and his successors ranged from hostile to allied.³ In the years leading up to the famous Battle of Kosovo (1389), the Serbian ruler even temporarily joined a coalition of Hungarian barons and Bosnia against King Sigismund, the husband of Queen Mary. Although relations were smoothed over before Lazar's death, and a marriage was arranged between his daughter and Sigismund's close ally Nicholas (Miklós) II Garai (Nikola II Gorjanski), Serbia soon again faced Hungarian attacks, partly because Lazar's successors were compelled to cooperate with the Turks after 1389.⁴

For more than a decade, Serbian prince Stefan (Stephen) Lazarević was repeatedly compelled to join the Ottoman military camp, playing a prominent role in wars against Hungary and its allies (for example, at Nicopolis in 1396). A new chapter in Serbian–Hungarian relations opened with Timur's (Tamerlane's) attack on the Ottoman Empire and the defeat and capture of Bayezid I at the Battle of Ankara in 1402.⁵ The ensuing ten-year civil war among Bayezid's sons followed, and, on his return from the battle, Stefan received the title of despot and entered into a vassal relationship with Hungary in 1403/1404, gaining Belgrade and a number of estates along Hungary's border with Serbia. Throughout his reign, Despot Stefan had to navigate between King Sigismund and the now-stabilized Ottoman Empire under Mehmed I (from 1413), managing to

¹ Tamás Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare 1389–1526*, Leiden – Boston 2018, 51–208.

² Сима Ћирковић, „Сеобе српског народа у краљевину Угарску у XIV и XV веку“, in: *Сеобе српског народа од XIV до XX века. Зборник радова посвећен тристогодишњици Велике сеоба Срба*, Београд 1990, 37–46.

³ Раде Милаљчић, *Лазар Хребељановић. Историја, култ, предање*, Београд 2001³, 29–132.

⁴ Миодраг Ал. Пурковић, *Кнез и деспот Стефан Лазаревић*, Београд 1978, 9–17, 31–32; Сима М. Ћирковић, „Старе и нове контроверзе о кнезу Лазару и Србији уочи Косовске битке“, *Зборник Матице српске за историју* 42 (1990) 9, 14–16; idem, „Косовска битка у међународном контексту“, *Глас Српске академије наука и уметности* 378 (1996) 53–54, 60–68.

⁵ М. А. Пурковић, *Кнез и деспот*, 33–63; Т. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 51–66.

maintain this position until his death in 1427.⁶ In addition to his possessions in the Hungarian–Serbian border region, Stefan also acquired numerous estates within the Realm of St Stephen, becoming one of the Hungarian barons. However, none of these estates were located in the Kingdom of Slavonia.⁷

After Stefan's death, his nephew and successor, Đurađ (George) Vuković Branković, pursued a similar political course. However, Ottoman pressure continued to intensify, and relations with Hungary grew increasingly complicated. Although Belgrade and its surroundings were taken from him as early as 1427, Đurađ appears to have retained all of his uncle's other Hungarian possessions (and possibly acquired more), along with the associated obligations toward the Hungarian court. In line with the policy of dual vassalage, he had to marry one daughter, Mara (Maria), to Sultan Murad II, and another, Kantakuzina, to Ulrich II of Celje (Cillei Ulrik II), an influential baron of the Realm of St Stephen.⁸ Through this latter marriage, a member of the Branković family came to indirectly possess estates in Slavonia, acting at times in her husband's name during his lifetime and certainly after his assassination in 1456.

During the first period of Ottoman rule in the Serbian Despotate (1439–1444), Despot Đurađ endured the tragic blinding of his two sons – Grgur (Gregory), his heir at the time, and Stefan (Stephen). Although he restored the Despotate with Hungarian help, he chose not to join King Vladislaus (Ulászló, Vladislav) I's campaign, which ended with the Battle of Varna and a catastrophic defeat for the Christian coalition. By abstaining, he avoided Turkish reprisals, but this decision led to prolonged and troubled relations with the Hunyadi (Corvinus) family, rivals of the house of Celje (Celjski) to whom he was related by marriage.⁹ Much has been written about the dynamic relations between Despot Đurađ and John (János) Hunyadi, as well as John's brother-

⁶ М. А. Пурковић, *Кнез и деспот*, 63–106; Момчило Спремић, *Деспот Ђурађ Бранковић и његово доба*, Београд 1994, 50–63; Dimitris Kastiris, *The Sons of Bayezid. Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402–13*, Leiden – Boston 2007; Ненад Обрадовић, „Нови подаци о успостављању вазалних односа између деспота Стефана и краља Жигмунда“, *Београдски историјски гласник* 12 (2021) 37–55.

⁷ Frigyes Pesty, *Brankovics György rácz despota birtokviszonyai Magyarországon és a rácz despota cím*, Budapest 1877; Ђорђе Бубало, „Поседи српских деспота у одбрамбеним плановима Краљевине Угарске 1458. и 1459. године“, in: *Пад Српске деспотовине 1459. године: зборник радова са научног скупа одржаног 12–14. новембра 2009. године*, ed. Момчило Спремић, Београд 2011, 229–243; Александар Крстић, „Документи о угарским поседима деспота Ђурађа датим у залог Јовану Хуњадију 1444. године“, *Мешовита грађа–Miscellanea* 32 (2011) 125–156; idem, „Повеља деспота Ђурађа Бранковића о давању у залог посета у Угарској Јовану Хуњадију“, *Стари српски архив* 11 (2012) 151–174; Nenad Obradović, „Szerb despoták birtokai Magyarországon (áttekintés)“, in: *Micae Mediaevales X. Fiatal történészek dolgozatai a középkori Magyarországról és Európáról*, Budapest 2022, 61–75.

⁸ М. Спремић, *Деспот Ђурађ*, 89–124, 158–159, 177–180, 191–196. On the estates of the Serbian despots in Hungary between 1427 and 1459, see: Ђ. Бубало, „Поседи“, 230–240; А. Крстић, „Документи“, 125–130, 132–155; idem, „Краљ Жигмунд у Борчи, или када је и како Београд предат Угрима 1427. године?“, *Историјски часопис* 61 (2012) 115–127.

⁹ М. Спремић, *Деспот Ђурађ*, 234–351.

in-law Michael (Mihály) Szilágyi. An attempt at general reconciliation through the betrothal of Elizabeth (Erzsébet, Jelisaveta), daughter of Ulrich II of Celje and Kantakuzina, to one of Hunyadi's sons (first Ladislaus, then Matthias) was thwarted by Elizabeth's untimely death shortly after her marriage to Matthias.¹⁰

Although the almost simultaneous deaths of John Hunyadi, Ulrich II of Celje, and Despot Đurađ, together with the events that followed, suggested a looming crisis, the death of King Ladislaus (László) V the Posthumous of Habsburg ultimately secured the victory of the Hunyadi faction and the rise of King Matthias Corvinus (Hunyadi Mátyás) to the Hungarian throne in 1458.¹¹ Matthias's ascent accelerated the downfall of the Celjski family, whose sole heir by 1456 was Ulrich's widow, Kantakuzina-Katherina, as all of their children had predeceased Ulrich.

Meanwhile, the final Ottoman conquest of the Serbian Despotate in 1459 created an opportunity for members of the Branković family to acquire estates in the Kingdom of Hungary by other means – crossing over with their followers and becoming Hungarian nobles and barons in the military service of Matthias Corvinus, both along the Ottoman border and in other theatres of war. The first representative of the former Serbian ruling dynasty to move from the Ottoman to the Hungarian side, around 1464/65, was Vuk Grgurević, the illegitimate son of Grgur, Đurađ Branković's blinded son. Unlike his aunt Kantakuzina, who acquired her Slavonian estates through marriage and inheritance from her husband, Vuk obtained his estates through military service to the Hungarian king, mainly in campaigns against the Czechs, Poles, and Austrians. For his efforts in the border wars against the Turks, he received estates in southern Hungary, in the Srem (Szerém, Syrmia) and Vukovo (Valkó) counties.¹²

In the decades that followed, many Serbian nobles, along with segments of the population, crossed into Hungary and entered the service of King Matthias. Eventually, the descendants of Đurađ's other blinded son, Stefan, did so as well, succeeding Vuk Grgurević in the titular role of despot, a title confirmed to him by the Hungarian king around 1471.¹³

¹⁰ М. Спремић, *Деспот Ђурађ*, 335–346, 364–367, 453–455, 473–474.

¹¹ М. Спремић, *Деспот Ђурађ*, 477–533; Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen. A History of Medieval Hungary 895–1526*, London–New York 2001, 288–300.

¹² The latest findings on this topic: Александар Крстић, *Чланови династија југоисточне Европе у средњовековној Угарској* (докторска дисертација, Филозофски факултет Нови Сад, 2014); idem, „Which Realm Will You Opt for? – the Serbian Nobility between the Ottomans and the Hungarians in the 15th Century”, in: *State and Society in the Balkans before and after Establishment of Ottoman Rule*, eds. Srđan Rudić & Selim Aslantaş, Belgrade 2017, 129–163; idem, *Благоверна господа и славне госпође. Студије о брачној политици, друштвеном положају и поседима српске елите у Угарској (XV–XVI век)*. I део: Бранковићи, Јакшићи, Белмужевићи, Београд 2025; Ненад Обрадовић, *Срби и краљ Матија Корвин (политика угарског краља према српским политичким чиниоцима)* (докторска дисертација, Филозофски факултет Београд, 2021); idem, *Szerbek Magyarországon a XIV. század végétől a XVI. század elejéig (1389–1526)* (doctoral dissertation, University of Szeged, 2023).

¹³ Dušanka Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići”, *Istraživanja* 4 (1975) 5–44; А. Крстић, *Благоверна господа*, 41–114.

This paper will examine two case studies involving the aforementioned members of the Branković family as Hungarian nobles and landowners in the Kingdom of Slavonia: Kantakuzina-Katherina, who acquired her estates through marriage and inheritance, and Vuk Grgurević, who earned his estates through military service. Both Brankovići held their estates as Hungarian nobles, not as foreigners. Their foreign origin manifested only in their adherence to the Orthodox faith and in the presence of Serbs in their surroundings, as officials, courtiers, clerics, or soldiers.

The Case Study of Kantakuzina-Katherina Branković

In her long life, Kantakuzina-Katherina (Serbian: Katarina) Branković of Celje (Cilli) must have been a proud noblewoman, as she was certainly a talented ruler and politician, a tenacious defender of her family's heritage (both by birth and by marriage), and a pious and generous benefactress. Contemporary narrative sources describe her as *beautiful and honest* ("alioquin facie et moribus honestam"); her portrait-miniature in her father's charter to the Esphigmenou Monastery (1429) depicts an elegant young aristocrat.¹⁴ The blinding of her two brothers, the deaths of her children and husband, the deaths of her father, mother, and a third brother within a short interval, and a hard life in foreign lands (Hungary and Turkey) that at times brought her close to vagrancy made her into a tragic figure. Some researchers of Kantakuzina's life and work have allowed the men around her – such as her father, Despot Đurađ (George) Vuković Branković, or her husband, Count Ulrich II of Celje – to overshadow her, but there is enough surviving source material to let Kantakuzina speak in her own voice, rather than to become a mere echo of the great men of her time.

The Countess of Celje was born ca. 1418/1419 as Kantakuzina, the fourth child and second daughter of the future Serbian despot Đurađ Vuković and his wife Irene (Serbian: Jerina, Greek: Eirene) Kantakouzene. Baptized with her mother's family name – a family that had produced imperial officers and emperors in Byzantium – she received the name Katherina upon her marriage.¹⁵ Seeking the support of Sigismund (Zsigmond, Žigmund) of Luxemburg, King of Hungary and Holy Roman Emperor, in his struggle against the Ottomans, Despot Đurađ decided to marry his daughter to Sigismund's relative, Ulrich II of Celje. Her betrothal to Ulrich is attested before March 1433, and the wedding took place on 20 April 1434, at a time when both the bridegroom's father, Friedrich II, and grandfather, Hermann II, were still alive.¹⁶ The Counts of Celje were powerful magnates in both the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary (i.e., the Lands of the Hungarian *Holy Crown*). Through marriage they were related to the Hungarian House of Anjou, and in Germany they

¹⁴ Момчило Спремић, „Кантакузина (Катарина) Бранковић“, *Mons Aureus. Часопис за књижевност, уметност и друштвена питања* 30 (Смедерево 2010) 82–84.

¹⁵ М. Спремић, *Деспот Ђурађ*, 68.

¹⁶ М. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 84–85.

initially supported the House of Habsburg. The House of Celje reached its pinnacle after Hermann II, grandfather of Katherina's husband, allied himself closely with King Sigismund of Luxemburg, to whom he married his daughter Barbara (Borbála). Sigismund soon made Hermann Ban of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia and later elevated his descendants to *princes* of the Holy Roman Empire. This allowed the Counts of Celje, whose ancestral patrimony lay in the Duchy of Styria in the Holy Roman Empire, to acquire new estates in Slavonia, Zagorje, and Međimurje, thus becoming feudal lords in the Kingdom of Hungary as well. They also received from Sigismund numerous possessions in Carinthia and Carniola.¹⁷ With this, the strong ambitions of the House of Celje to form their own (informal) principality were coming to fruition. Being related to the Bosnian king Tvrtko II Tvrtković (Count Hermann I of Celje married Catherine, daughter of Bosnian ban Stjepan II Kotromanić, in 1361), the Counts of Celje also expected to inherit the Bosnian throne upon the death of the childless King Tvrtko, but these aspirations ultimately proved unsuccessful.¹⁸

All the ambitions of the House of Celje were cut short with the murder of Count Ulrich II in November 1456. By taking part in the struggles for the Hungarian throne after the death of King-Emperor Sigismund (1437), Kantakuzina's husband incurred the hatred of the Hungarian noble Hunyadi family, which led to his death at the hands of John Hunyadi's elder son, Ladislaus (László), in Belgrade.¹⁹ All of the children whom Kantakuzina bore to Ulrich II predeceased their father. Their eldest son and heir, Hermann, named after his paternal great-grandfather, died at the age of twelve in 1451, while the younger son, Georg (George), named after his maternal grandfather, was born in 1445 and died in infancy. Ulrich and Kantakuzina's daughter Elizabeth was promised in marriage as a child – serving as a peace pledge between the House of Branković and the House of Celje on one side, and the House of Hunyadi on the other – first to Ladislaus Hunyadi, and then to his brother Matthias Corvinus. The young princess, however, died at the Hunyadi court shortly after the marriage.²⁰ After Kantakuzina buried her husband with all the ceremonies befitting his station – including a solemn church service held on the thirtieth day following the funeral, when the Celjski family crest was symbolically broken and a knight in full armour cried out three times that *the counts of Celje were today and nevermore* ("Heind graffen von Cilli und nyemermer") – the Dowager Countess was left as the last and sole heiress of the once-powerful House of Celje.²¹

The family tragedy of the last Countess of Celje did not end with her husband's murder; in the following two years she lost her father, Despot Đurađ, then her

¹⁷ Ibidem, 83; Robert Kurelić, „Pregled povijesti grofova Celjskih“, *Historijski zbornik* 59 (2006) 206–208.

¹⁸ М. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 83–84, 86.

¹⁹ Ibidem, 86–87, 89–91.

²⁰ Ibidem, 89–91.

²¹ Franz Krones, *Freien von Saneck und ihre Chronik als Grafen von Cilli II*, Graz 1883, 128–129; Nada Klaić, *Zadnji knezi celjski v deželah Sv. krone*, Celje 1982, 105; М. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 92

mother, Despotess Jerina, and finally her youngest brother Lazar, the new despot of Serbia.²² Undoubtedly devastated, the Dowager Countess Kantakuzina also had to face challenges to her inheritance during this period, the most formidable of which came from the Holy Roman Emperor and Austrian Archduke, Friedrich III of Habsburg. The ancestral Styrian estates of her husband's family, including Celje as their seat of power, were fiefs of the Holy Roman Empire, and as a woman and widow, Kantakuzina could not inherit them. Emperor Friedrich therefore contested her hold over Celje and other fiefs in Styria, Carinthia, and Carniola, advancing his own claim on the basis of a contract signed with the Counts of Celje in 1443, which stipulated that the House of Habsburg should receive all the fiefs of the House of Celje upon the death of the last male heir.²³ Certainly before 10 March 1458 Kantakuzina left Celje and settled in Varaždin (Varasd) in Slavonia, where on that date she issued a charter to Friedrich of Habsburg, surrendering and granting to him all of her husband's fiefs in the Holy Roman Empire. In return she was compensated with money and property rights over a single fortress – Krško (Gurckfeld) in Carniola. She also received from the Emperor an annual allowance of 2,000 ducats to be paid for the rest of her life, as recorded in her second charter to the Emperor, issued on 13 May 1459 in Varaždin.²⁴

Initially, the towns and forts belonging to the Slavonian estates of the House of Celje remained loyal to the Dowager Countess. The counts of Celje had acquired these estates in Hungary, in the Kingdom of Slavonia, not only as fiefs but also by purchase or by lien, and as such Kantakuzina could inherit them as the widow of the last male scion of the family, since all of their children had predeceased them.²⁵ At the height of their power, the House of Celje held twenty-two forts in Slavonia, most of them located in the County of Varaždin and its associated district of Zagorje (the so-called *comitatus Zagoriensis*): Varaždin, Vinica, Vrbovec, Krapina (Korpona), Lobar, Oštrc, Belec, Trakošćan (Trakostyán), Lepograva, Kostel, and Cesargrad (Császárvár).²⁶ In the County of Križevci (Körös) their possessions included Rakovec (Rakolnok), Veliki Kalnik (Nagykémlek), Stari grad – Kamengrad (Kővár) near Koprivnica (Kapronca), and Đurđevac (Szentgyörgyvár); in the County of Zagreb (Zágráb) they possessed Medvedgrad (Medvevár), Samobor (Szamobor), Stupnik, Hrastovica, Steničnjak (Sztenicsnyák), Bužim, and Krupa. They also acted as de facto overlords of Turopolje

²² M. Spremiš, „Кантакузина“, 92–93.

²³ N. Klaić, *Zadnji knezi celjski*, 105; M. Spremiš, „Кантакузина“, 92, 95.

²⁴ Алекса Ивић, „Нови подаци о грофици Катарини Цељској“, *Летопис Матице српске* 268 (1910) 45–46; M. Spremiš, „Кантакузина“, 95.

²⁵ N. Klaić, *Zadnji knezi celjski*, 105; M. Spremiš, „Кантакузина“, 92–93.

²⁶ Nada Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba I: Zagreb u srednjem vijeku*, Zagreb 1982, 138; eadem, *Medvedgrad i njegovi gospodari*, Zagreb 1987, 124; Suzana Miljan, „Grofovi Celjski, njihovi službenici njemačkog porijekla i Zagorsko kneštvo (comitatus Zagoriensis) krajem srednjeg vijeka (1397.–1456.)“, *Godišnjak Njemačke zajednice. DG Jahrbuch* 19 (2012) 99–101; eadem, „Grofovi Celjski i Nijemci, službenici njihovih utvrda u Zagrebačkoj i Križevačkoj županiji u kasnom srednjem vijeku (1385.–1456.)“, *Godišnjak Njemačke zajednice. DG Jahrbuch* 20 (2013) 12.

(*Campus Zagradiensis*, the commune of lesser nobles) in their capacity as lords of Medvedgrad, and since 1433 they were in possession of Gradec (the free royal town of Zagreb), although they had nominally obtained this right much earlier.²⁷ In 1405 the Counts of Celje also acquired the fort of Čakovec (Csáktornya) and its surrounding region of Međimurje, in the County of Zala, neighbouring Slavonia (see the map).²⁸ Their rule in Slavonia was consolidated when King Sigismund – as already mentioned – appointed his father-in-law Hermann II of Celje as ban of Croatia-Dalmatia and ban of Slavonia, as well as administrator (*gubernator*) of the Bishopric of Zagreb in 1405/1406. The Counts of Celje thereafter regarded these offices as hereditary, since both Hermann's son Friedrich II and his grandson Ulrich II managed to hold them.²⁹

During the period in which Friedrich II and Ulrich II of Celje held the offices of ban – that is to say, even before she became a widow – Kantakuzina took part in governing and judicial affairs. A letter sent by the Hungarian king Vladislaus I Jagiellon on 19 April 1441 to the Counts of Celje, concerning the reconciliation between the king and the House of Celje, records that Count Ulrich II and and *Ulrich's wife* had been disturbing and causing damage to the citizens of Gradec near Zagreb, and that the king demanded of Ulrich and “the said lady wife” that they desist at once.³⁰ This confirms Kantakuzina's involvement in the family's affairs in Slavonia. Several years later, in 1445, we find Kantakuzina independently deciding on the composition of the court of appeals in Gradec,³¹ and on 15 August 1451 she ordered the city authorities and judges of Kalnik to bring before her a certain lawsuit,³² thus asserting her judicial prerogatives. On New Year's Day 1453, she issued a charter in Varaždin confirming that she had received the annual tribute from the representatives of the town of Gradec.³³ At that time, Kantakuzina's husband Ulrich was absent from Slavonia, while her father-in-law Friedrich was preoccupied with the affairs of the banate and judicial

²⁷ N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 138–140; eadem, *Medvedgrad*, 124–125; Suzana Miljan, „Nijemci u Turropolju u kasnom srednjem vijeku“, *Godišnjak Njemačke zajednice. DG Jahrbuch* 18 (2011) 32–33, 41; eadem, „Grofovi Celjski i Nijemci“, 15–19.

²⁸ N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 138.

²⁹ N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 138; eadem, *Medvedgrad*, 124; S. Miljan, „Grofovi Celjski i Nijemci“, 12–13.

³⁰ Ivan Krstitelj Tkalčić, *Monumenta historica liberae regiae civitatis Zagrabiae* II, Zagreb 1894, 183–184, no. 130; N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 147–148; M. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 87.

³¹ Ivan Krstitelj Tkalčić, *Monumenta historica liberae regiae civitatis Zagrabiae* VI, Zagreb 1900, 421–422; N. Klaić, *Medvedgrad*, 140.

³² Zagreb (Croatia), Hrvatski državni arhiv, Plemenita općina Sv. Jelena Koruška (=HR-HDA-54), no. 47; Budapest (Hungary), Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (=MNL OL), Diplomatikai Fényképgyűjtemény (=DF) 286113; Emilij Laszowski, „Listine općine sv. Jelene Koruške kod Križevaca“, *Vjesnik Kr. hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskoga zemaljskoga arkiva* 7 (1905), 11–12, no. 47.

³³ Zagreb (Croatia), Arhiv Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti, Zbirka latinskih isprava (=HR-AHAZU-70), D-XII-26; MNL OL, DF 231314; *Monumenta historica Zagrabiae* II, 230, no. 167; N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 154.

duties, as shown by his charter concerning a lawsuit in Gradec, issued later in January 1453,³⁴ a few weeks after Kantakuzina had received the tribute from Gradec, all of which demonstrates that Friedrich entrusted the governance of the estates to his daughter-in-law.

But with all the male members of the House of Celje gone, the Dowager Countess Kantakuzina soon faced challenges to her authority in Slavonia as well. In the first week of January 1457, while in Celje, Kantakuzina once again received the emissaries of the town of Gradec, and on 8 January she wrote to the city authorities, informing them that she had given oral replies to the emissaries concerning certain matters brought before her. This demonstrates that the Dowager Countess regarded Gradec as her property, and that the citizens of Gradec acknowledged her as their mistress.³⁵ At the same time, the emissaries probably also delivered the annual tribute (customarily due on New Year's Day).³⁶ However, in May 1457, the canons of the Zagreb Chapter petitioned the Hungarian king Ladislaus V the Posthumous of Habsburg for the return of a tower in Gradec (Popov turen), which they claimed had been taken from them by the city authorities during the rule of the House of Celje.³⁷ The king granted their request and, on 24 May, wrote to Kantakuzina, ordering her to return the said tower to the Zagreb Chapter, as well as the Međimurje tithes, which had likewise been seized by the counts of Celje,³⁸ who had held Međimurje since it was granted to them by King Sigismund in 1405.³⁹ On the following day King Ladislaus issued a charter confirming possession of Popov turen to the canons, and on 1 June he wrote directly to the citizens of Gradec, ordering them to restore Popov turen to the canons, thus ignoring and setting aside any authority that Kantakuzina had held over Gradec.⁴⁰ In fact, the Dowager Countess was not mentioned even once in the King's charter to the canons as the current possessor; instead, only her husband and father-in-law were identified as the chief perpetrators of the injustice done to the canons of Zagreb.⁴¹ A few months later, King Ladislaus wrote to the newly appointed ban of Slavonia, John (János, Jan) Vitovec, informing him that the Dowager Countess Kantakuzina was to surrender the castle in Gradec to its citizens.⁴² As Gradec was officially

³⁴ *Monumenta historica Zagrabiae* II, 231, no. 168; N. Klaić, *Medvedgrad*, 144–145.

³⁵ HR-AHAZU-70, D-XIII-3; MNL OL, DF 231385; *Monumenta historica Zagrabiae* II, 249, no. 186; N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 155; eadem, *Medvedgrad*, 144–145.

³⁶ N. Klaić, *Medvedgrad*, 145.

³⁷ N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 157; eadem, *Medvedgrad*, 145.

³⁸ Andrija Lukinović, *Povijesni spomenici Zagrebačke biskupije* VII, Zagreb 2004, 315–316, no. 296.

³⁹ Cf. note 28.

⁴⁰ *Monumenta historica Zagrabiae* II, 249–251, no. 187–188; N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 157; eadem, *Medvedgrad*, 145; *Povijesni spomenici Zagrebačke biskupije* VII, 316–317, no. 297.

⁴¹ *Monumenta historica Zagrabiae* II, 249–250, no. 187; N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 157; eadem, *Medvedgrad*, 145; М. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 94.

⁴² *Monumenta historica Zagrabiae* II, 252–253, no. 190; N. Klaić, *Medvedgrad*, 146–147; М. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 94.

a free royal town, the king was exercising his regal prerogatives and restoring governance to the citizens, while Kantakuzina was obliged to demolish the castle. Should she refuse, the citizens themselves were to carry out the demolition with the assistance of the Ban.⁴³ King Ladislaus was determined to dispossess Kantakuzina, but his orders went unheeded, since the citizens of Gradec did not dare to obey him or to recognise his direct authority, knowing that the neighbouring castellans (of Medvedgrad, Stupnik, Rakovec) and the *župans* of Turopolje still remained loyal to Kantakuzina.⁴⁴

After the death of King Ladislaus and the election of Matthias Corvinus, who had once been Kantakuzina's son-in-law, the policy of the Crown towards the Dowager Countess of Celje did not change. Matthias' uncle and regent of the realm, Michael Szilágyi, likewise wrote to Kantakuzina, ordering her to return the Međimurje tithes to the Zagreb Chapter.⁴⁵ On the same day (30 January 1458), Szilágyi also wrote to Ban John Vitovec, instructing him to protect the citizens of Gradec (Zagreb) and to "care for the city",⁴⁶ which in practice meant dispossessing Kantakuzina. The King and Regent thus sought to set John Vitovec against Kantakuzina and to persuade him to abandon any sense of loyalty or gratitude towards the widow of his late benefactor.⁴⁷ For it had been Ulrich II's support and patronage that enabled Vitovec, an impoverished Czech nobleman, to rise in the Hungarian political and social hierarchy.⁴⁸ Vitovec acquired estates in return for his military services to the House of Celje, and he was appointed vice-ban of Slavonia under Ulrich II. After Ulrich's murder, he fought against Emperor Friedrich III of Habsburg in defense of Kantakuzina's interests and estates. In the subsequent conflict between Friedrich and Matthias Corvinus, Vitovec at first allied himself with Corvinus, which earned him the office of ban of Slavonia. However, in 1459 he defected to Emperor Friedrich, who rewarded him with new

⁴³ N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 155, 157–158; eadem, *Medvedgrad*, 146–147; М. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 94.

⁴⁴ N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 155–157; М. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 94.

⁴⁵ *Povijesni spomenici Zagrebačke biskupije* VII, 331, no. 309. Since Szilágyi had to issue this order to Kantakuzina, it is evident that she paid no heed to the earlier command of the late King Ladislaus to return the tithes to the canons (cf. note 38). The question of the Međimurje tithes was still unresolved in September 1458, when King Matthias Corvinus instructed the Pécs Chapter to notify Kantakuzina that she was to relinquish the tithes to the canons of Zagreb, after which the canons were to be formally invested with them. In October, King Matthias once again had to order Vitovec to compel Kantakuzina and her castellans to restore the tithes to the Zagreb Chapter, cf. *Povijesni spomenici Zagrebačke biskupije* VII, 347–350, 356, no. 327, 330, 335. Since King Sigismund had granted Međimurje to the House of Celje, Kantakuzina clearly considered herself, rather than the Zagreb Chapter, entitled to the said tithes, and the castellans of Čakovec and Štrigovo (Johann and Friedrich Lamberger, and a certain "Wnfardus") carried out the Countess's will in this matter.

⁴⁶ *Monumenta historica Zagrabiae* II, 261, no. 198; N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 158; eadem, *Medvedgrad*, 151.

⁴⁷ N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 158.

⁴⁸ N. Klaić, *Medvedgrad*, 150.

properties and, in 1460, the title of Count of Zagorje.⁴⁹ This, too, constituted an undermining of Kantakuzina's rights, since she held the title of Countess of Zagorje as Ulrich II's widow ("Katherina... Zagorieque comitissa relicta").

The Crown's attempts to undermine Kantakuzina in Slavonia must have become quite apparent to the local actors, for they soon sought to do the same. In 1457 and 1458, officers from Kantakuzina's estates who remained loyal to her came under joint attack by both the Crown and local actors, which indirectly weakened Kantakuzina's position as well. In 1457, King Ladislaus convicted Sebold Mayer-Fischer, Kantakuzina's long-time attendant and then captain of Gradec, on charges of treason for joining the party of Emperor Friedrich of Habsburg. He was deprived of his properties in Gradec, which were granted to *magister* John, a notary of Gradec, who had originally brought the charges against Mayer.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Mayer remained loyal to Kantakuzina and continued in her service, later becoming her castellan at Rakovec.⁵¹ Bogavec Milaković, Kantakuzina's castellan of Medvedgrad and *župan (ispán)* of Turopolje, was accused in 1458 by the citizens of Gradec of committing numerous robberies, thefts, and assaults together with his "Rascians" (Serbs). However, the charges appear to have been either false or, at the very least, greatly exaggerated.⁵² The actions of another of Kantakuzina's officers, Hans Apprehar, castellan of Samobor, likewise brought the Dowager Countess under the scrutiny of the Crown's officials. In 1459, Kantakuzina herself was charged before the bans John Vitovec and Nicholas of Ilok (Újlaki Miklós) by Lord Hening of Susjed and his wife Dora, from whom Apprehar had seized certain properties (Orešje, Strmec, Novake, and Rakitje).⁵³

It seems that the attacks on Kantakuzina and her officials arose from several causes: perceived opportunities to oust the Dowager Countess and seize her properties, personal animosities toward her and her men, and even hostility on the grounds of their ethnic, and by extension, religious identity. The counts of Celje employed men of diverse backgrounds: Sebold Mayer and Hans Apprehar were evidently Germans; John Vitovec, as already noted, was a Bohemian, i.e., a Czech; Bogavac Milaković was a Serb; and Kantakuzina herself was a Serbian princess. Yet, as Nada Klaić has observed, during the zenith of the House of Celje in Slavonia, their

⁴⁹ Bogo Grafenauer, „Vitovec grof Zagorski, Jan (?–1468)“, in: *Slovenski biografski leksikon* 13, eds. Alfonz Gspan, Jože Munda & Fran Petre, Ljubljana 1982, 493–494 (viewed via *Slovenska biografija*. Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti: <http://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi793428/#slovenski-biografski-leksikon>, date of access 14.3.2024).

⁵⁰ N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 152–153, 158; eadem, *Medvedgrad*, 147–150; M. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 94–95.

⁵¹ N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 154; M. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 93–94.

⁵² N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 155; eadem, *Medvedgrad*, 147–150; M. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 93–94.

⁵³ HR-AHAZU-70, D-XIII-45; MNL OL, DF 231427; Jakov Stipišić & Miljen Šamšalović, „Isprave u Arhivu Jugoslavenske akademije (Nastavak – do smrti kralja Matije Korvina)“, *Zbornik Historijskog instituta Jugoslavenske akademije* 3 (1960) 591, no. 2426; N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 62; M. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 95.

subjects appear not to have been troubled by the ethnicity of their officials, nor by that of their countess and “gracious mistress”. When the fortunes of the House of Celje declined, however, ethnic origin suddenly became a convenient pretext for attacking the Countess and, in particular, her Serbian attendants.⁵⁴ An illustrative example is a forged document from Turopolje, supposedly sent by King Ladislaus V of Habsburg to Ban John Vitovec in 1457. In it, the Serbs (“Rasciani”) from Medvedgrad, Rakovec, Veliki Kalnik, Mali Kalnik, and Koprivnica are accused of harassing and troubling the local Slavonian nobles; naturally, the Ban was instructed to extend his protection to the nobles.⁵⁵ The question of ethnic and religious prejudice against Kantakuzina’s Serbian officials becomes even more complex when we consider the contradictory reports regarding her own religious identity. She had certainly been raised as an Orthodox Christian. Enea Silvio Piccolomini (later Pope Pius II) claimed that the Countess of Celje was “tainted by Greek perfidy”, while the author of the *Chronicle of Celje* wrote that she “was not of our but of the Greek faith, and she lived in that faith, having priests and chaplains of her faith, and she seldom went to our mass and Lord’s service”.⁵⁶ In 1453/1454, she had a *Praksapostol* (an Orthodox liturgical book) copied for her in Varaždin, and she herself embroidered a mitre for the Orthodox Metropolitan of Belgrade.⁵⁷ All this would seem to confirm that she remained of the Orthodox faith, were it not for a report from 1458 mentioning Sigismund, Archdeacon of Varaždin and co-canon of Zagreb, as chaplain to “lady countess” (i.e., Kantakuzina),⁵⁸ which would suggest that she converted to Roman Catholicism. These conflicting accounts prevent us from reaching a definite conclusion regarding Kantakuzina’s faith.⁵⁹

Through all the hardships of the years following Ulrich II’s murder, Kantakuzina could rely on her loyal officers in Slavonia. Alongside Sebold Mayer, Hans Apprehar, and Bogavac Milaković, these included Smolyk, castellan of Stupnik, and Ivan Čudorović, who succeeded Mayer as captain of Gradec while also serving as *župan* of Turopolje.⁶⁰ Their support for the Dowager Countess must have stemmed at least in part from gratitude toward her late husband, through whose favour they had obtained their positions, properties, and social standing. Sebold Mayer, for example,

⁵⁴ N. Klaić, *Medvedgrad*, 150.

⁵⁵ Ibidem.

⁵⁶ F. Krones, *Freien von Saneck* II, 93; N. Klaić, *Medvedgrad*, 150; M. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 86.

⁵⁷ M. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 90–91, 107.

⁵⁸ N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 155; eadem, *Medvedgrad*, 148; M. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 86, n. 27.

⁵⁹ Perhaps we may assume that, in matters of faith, Kantakuzina and Ulrich reached some sort of compromise: she was required to convert to Catholicism but was allowed to maintain her ties with Eastern Orthodoxy. This seems supported by the fact that Ulrich appears to have permitted their daughter, though baptized as a Roman Catholic, to be raised at her maternal grandfather’s court in Smederevo, i.e., at the court of Despot Đurađ, as an Orthodox Christian, cf. M. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 89–91.

⁶⁰ N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 154–155; M. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 93.

acted as *župan* of Turopolje in 1439, and in 1441 he is recorded as Kantakuzina's courtier, her *master of the kitchen*. In September 1460, still serving as Kantakuzina's castellan of Rakovec, he donated the hamlet of Novak near Jakuševac to the Cistercians of Zagreb, explicitly noting that the hamlet had once been granted to him by "his gracious master", i.e., Ulrich II of Celje.⁶¹ Mayer went on to acquire numerous other properties through purchase and even obtained the status of citizen of Gradec, achievements he certainly owed to the patronage of the counts of Celje.⁶²

But gratitude to her late husband was not enough to secure the lasting loyalty of these men, and Kantakuzina herself had to act as a gracious mistress by bestowing new gifts and confirming privileges. One such instance is recorded in her charter of 18 December 1457, issued in Celje, by which her chamberlain Jacob, in recognition of his loyal service, received as a gift the village of Lavrečan, belonging to the fort of Vinica in the district of Zagorje.⁶³ At the same time, in her capacity as mistress of the Slavonian estates of the House of Celje, Kantakuzina confirmed earlier donations. Her charter issued in Varaždin on 9 May 1458 confirmed a grant made by John, Bishop of Zagreb, to Margaret, widow of Luke, castellan of Kamengrad.⁶⁴ A few weeks later, on 21 May in Varaždin, she again confirmed this donation, as well as Margaret's grant to the Pauline monks of Streza, in response to a petition from Prior John of Lepoglava.⁶⁵ At that moment, the Pauline monks clearly recognised Kantakuzina as the lady of the estate on which the donated properties lay, while she in turn looked after their interests. This is further evident from her charter of 15 June 1459, issued in Varaždin, by which she ordered the payment of annual tribute to the Pauline monks of Remete.⁶⁶ Her charters also reveal that in 1460 Kantakuzina was exercising her rights in Rakovec. In a charter of 12 May, issued in Varaždin, she granted the inhabitants of Rakovec the right to feed their pigs on acorns in the forests of Radoviška and Vranja (i.e. Jasenovac).⁶⁷ Later that year, on 14 September, also in Varaždin, she confirmed

⁶¹ N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 151–152; M. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 87, 93–94.

⁶² N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba* I, 151–152.

⁶³ Budapest (Hungary), Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (=MNL OL), Diplomatikai Levéltár – Mohács Előtti Gyűjtemény (=DL) 49424. The charter was published in: Ненад Обрадовић, „Повеља цељске грофице Катарине (Кантакузине Бранковић) коморнику Јакову“, *Стари српски архив* 21 (2022) 93–102, albeit with incorrect conclusion that the seal is identical with the seal from the Countess's charter to the Emperor Friedrich in 1460. The seals, in fact, are not identical, since they differ both in size and inscriptions, cf. Бењамин Хекић, „Печати Кантакузине-Катарине Бранковић Цељске“, *Мешовита грађа–Miscellanea* 43 (2022) 16–18.

⁶⁴ Zagreb (Croatia), Hrvatski državni arhiv, Pavlinski samostan Streza (=HR-HDA-656), fasc. 3, no. 29; MNL OL, DL 34810.

⁶⁵ HR-HDA-656, fasc. 3, no. 30; MNL OL, DL 34811.

⁶⁶ Zagreb (Croatia), Hrvatski državni arhiv, Pavlinski samostan Remete (=HR-HDA-653), fasc. 3, no. 10; MNL OL, DL 34478.

⁶⁷ HR-AHAZU-70, D-XIII-53; MNL OL, DF 231435. J. Stipišić & M. Šamšalović, „Isprave u Arhivu Jugoslavenske akademije“, 593, no. 2440.

the property rights of the local nobles Anthony and Michael Pučić to equal shares of the Forest of Rakovec.⁶⁸

However, Kantakuzina must soon have realized that no amount of support could help her to retain her estates in Slavonia, for she was coming under pressure on all sides – by the ambitious rulers in Buda and Vienna, as well as by the Slavonian bans and local nobles whose territorial appetites were steadily increasing. Her position became even more difficult to maintain after the fall of the Despotate of Serbia to the Ottoman Turks in 1459, when her brother, the exiled and blind Despot Stefan (Stephen) Branković, came to live with her in Slavonia, a burden that must have strained her finances. Together they planned to travel to Dubrovnik (Ragusa), and the city authorities granted them permission to enter in early 1460. Yet in the end Stefan made the journey alone, and from Dubrovnik he continued on to Albania, where he married.⁶⁹

During her brother's absence, Kantakuzina sought to sell her Slavonian estates. On 10 March 1460, in Vienna, she issued a charter to Emperor Friedrich of Habsburg, by which she sold him her possessions in Hungary, i.e. the Kingdom of Slavonia – namely Medvedgrad, Rakovec, Koprivnica, Veliki Kalnik, Mali Kalnik, Đurđevac, Čakovec, Štrigovo (Stridóvár), and Varaždin – in exchange for 29,000 gulden and the property rights over a single fort, Postojna (Adelsberg) in Carniola. If he so wished, the Emperor could later also purchase the castle of Turnlein for 3,000 gulden, while Andreas Baumkircher received the fort of Samobor for his services.⁷⁰ On the same day, the Emperor issued a charter confirming the purchase of Medvedgrad, Rakovec, Koprivnica, and both Kalniks, as well as acquiring half of the revenues from Đurđevac, Čakovec, Štrigovo, and Varaždin.⁷¹ Then, on 3 June, he issued another charter, giving in lien all these properties to Andreas Baumkircher and Ulrich of Grafenegg, under the condition that they pay 17,000 gulden to him and 29,000 gulden to the Dowager Countess Kantakuzina. Only Medvedgrad was excluded from the list of forts pledged to Baumkircher and Grafenegg, since the Emperor already considered the castle to have been given to John Vitovec.⁷² None of these transactions, however, were carried out, as we later find Kantakuzina selling these same estates once again.⁷³ By a charter issued on 8 May 1461 in Zagreb – sealed by both the Countess and her attendant

⁶⁸ Zagreb (Croatia), Hrvatski državni arhiv, Pavlinski samostan Križevci (=HR-HDA-649), fasc. 3. no. 3; MNL OL, DL 35627.

⁶⁹ М. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 96–97.

⁷⁰ Vienna (Austria), Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (=OeStA), Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (=HHStA), Urkundenreichen (=UR), Allgemeine Urkundenreihe (=AUR), 1460 III 10; MNL OL, DF 258251; Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, „Događaji Medvedgrada“, *Arhiv za povjestnicu jugoslavensku* 3 (1854) 45–46, 97–98, no. 20; А. Ивић, „Нови подаци“, 47–48, бр. 1; М. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 95; S. Miljan, „Grofovi Celjski i Nijemci“, 17.

⁷¹ MNL OL, DL 15435.

⁷² MNL OL, DF 287231; I. Kukuljević Sakcinski, „Događaji Medvedgrada“, 45; Sonja Dünnebeil, Paul Herold und Kornelia Holzner-Tobisch, *Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III. (1440–1493) nach Archiven und Bibliotheken geordnet* 18, Wien 2004, 126–127, no. 194.

⁷³ М. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 95

Andreas Kraiger – she sold her properties in the Lands of the Hungarian Crown, namely Gradec near Zagreb, Medvedgrad, Rakovec, Varaždin, Vinica, both Kalniks, and Koprivnica, together with the revenues from the then-derelict Kamengrad, as well as half of the revenues from Đurđevac, Čakovec, and Štrigovo, to her *compater* John Vitovec, Count of Zagorje and Ban of Slavonia, and to his brothers-in-law Sigismund and Balthazar of Weyspriach, for the sum of 62,000 gold florins.⁷⁴ The other half of the revenues from Čakovec and Štrigovo Kantakuzina had at some earlier date sold to Count Michael of Maydburg (Magdeburg), as we learn from a letter of King Matthias Corvinus in 1462, who claimed that the Countess's sale was unlawful (since Michael of Magdeburg was a foreigner).⁷⁵ Ban John Vitovec and his brothers-in-law issued a charter confirming the purchase of Kantakuzina's estates on 8 May 1461 as well.⁷⁶ From this charter we learn that the buyers undertook to deliver the contracted sum to Andreas Kraiger and Friedrich Lamberger in Ptuj (Petau), who were then to transfer it to Kantakuzina in Krško. Vitovec and the Weyspriach brothers were also obliged to provide an escort for Kantakuzina, her entourage, and their belongings from Krško to Pušja vas (Peuscheldorf) in Friuli (today Venzone), and to recompense her for any possible damages, or else return the purchased properties. This shows that Kantakuzina was determined to leave Slavonia and the Hungarian Lands once and for all, intending to settle in Friuli, in Pušja vas, where indeed we find her in 1469, when she issued her final charter to Emperor Friedrich of Habsburg, relinquishing to him all her revenues and rights, including her annual allowance and the fort of Krško.⁷⁷

Kantakuzina's charter to Vitovec also states that her brother, Despot Stefan, was co-proprietor of these estates, and that they had made the sale together, thus relinquishing their rights over these possessions.⁷⁸ This demonstrates both Kantakuzina's effort to frame her already contested property rights as a dynastic matter,⁷⁹ and her intention to provide for her brother and his family. It is also worth noting that a document from 1457 records an earlier transaction in which the late Count Ulrich of Celje and King Ladislaus V of Habsburg sold the fort of Rakovec to

⁷⁴ Zagreb (Croatia), Hrvatski državni arhiv, Ugarska dvorska komora. Hrvatske plemićke obitelji i vlastelinstva – Neoregistrata acta (=HR-HDA-25), fasc. 1525, no. 14; MNL OL, DL 33809; I. Kukuljević Sakcinski, „Događaji Medvedgrada“, 46, 99–100, no. 21; Lajos Thallóczy & Antal Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia közti összeköttetések oklevéltára 1198–1526*, Budapest 1907, 250–253, no. 352; N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba I*, 156; eadem, *Medvedgrad*, 152; M. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 96–97.

⁷⁵ *Epistolæ Matthiæ Corvini regis Hungariæ ad pontifices, imperatores, reges, principes, aliosque viros illustres datæ*, Cassoviæ 1764, 53, no. 43; I. Kukuljević Sakcinski, „Događaji Medvedgrada“, 46; N. Klaić, *Povijest Zagreba I*, 156; eadem, *Medvedgrad*, 152.

⁷⁶ MNL OL, DL 15581.

⁷⁷ А. Ивић, „Нови подаци“, 48–49.

⁷⁸ HR-HDA-25, fasc. 1525, no. 14; MNL OL, DL 33809; I. Kukuljević Sakcinski, „Događaji Medvedgrada“, 99–100, no. 21; L. Thallóczy & A. Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia*, 250–253, no. 352.

⁷⁹ N. Klaić, *Medvedgrad*, 150.

Ulrich's brother-in-law, the Serbian Despot Lazar Branković, another of Kantakuzina's brothers. This purchase was never carried out, as Lazar's realm was in a precarious situation due to the Ottoman threat, and the Despot himself soon died.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the episode suggests that there had been attempts to secure property rights in Slavonia for the despotal House of Branković. The joint rule of several family members was not unfamiliar to the House of Celje, since Kantakuzina's husband Ulrich spent years co-ruling with his father and even grandfather, and they also permitted Kantakuzina to participate in governance. The House of Branković likewise had a long tradition of joint rule in family affairs. After the death of Vuk Branković, his *state* i.e. domain ("država") on Kosovo was governed jointly by his widow Mara (Maria) Lazarević Branković and their three sons. Only after the eldest son Grgur (Gregory) took monastic vows and died in 1408, and the youngest son Lazar was killed in the Ottoman succession struggles in 1410, did Đurađ Vuković emerge as the chief ruler, still sharing power with his mother Mara.⁸¹ Mara's influence began to wane only after her son's marriage to Jerina Kantakouzene, who thereafter participated in governance alongside her husband. Jerina continued to wield influence both during her husband's reign as Despot of Serbia and, after his death, as dowager despotess during the rule of their son, Despot Lazar Branković, until her own death. In fact, some sources claim that Despot Đurađ left his throne jointly to his wife and their sons, meaning that she was regarded as an equal heir and co-ruler.⁸² Given these family traditions of joint rule, it is not too far-fetched to assume that Đurađ and Jerina's daughter Kantakuzina may have entertained similar intentions of ruling jointly in Slavonia with her brothers – first with Despot Lazar, and later with Despot Stefan – after her husband's untimely death.

But in 1461, Kantakuzina's years in Slavonia were drawing to an end. As a newly widowed countess, she was still residing in Styria, in Celje, as shown by her charters issued there on 8 January and 18 December 1457. Before 10 March 1458 she had left Celje and moved to Varaždin, where she had previously held her court even during her husband's lifetime, certainly in 1453/1454 (on 1 January 1453 in Varaždin she received an annual tribute from Gradec, and in the same year her *Praksapostol* was copied there). She resided in Varaždin for the next three years: there she issued charters on 9 and 21 May 1458, and on 13 May and 15 June 1459. While attempting to sell her properties to Emperor Friedrich of Habsburg, she stayed in Vienna, as evidenced by her charter issued there on 10 March 1460. Afterwards she returned to Varaždin, where she again issued charters, on 12 May and 14 September 1460. The sale of her properties to John Vitovec was finalized on 8 May 1461 in Zagreb, where Kantakuzina was then staying. Since Vitovec's charter issued on the same date stipulated that the proceeds of the sale were to be delivered to Kantakuzina in Krško, and that an escort

⁸⁰ HR-AHAZU-70, D-XIII-7; MNL OL, DF 231389; J. Stipišić & M. Šamšalović, „Isprave u Arhivu Jugoslavenske akademije“, 586, no. 2344; М. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 93.

⁸¹ Милош Благојевић, „Савладарство у српским земљама после смрти цара Уроша“, *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 21 (1982) 202–205.

⁸² М. Благојевић, „Савладарство“, 205–206; М. Спремић, *Деспот Ђурађ*, 64, 497, 504–506.

was to be provided for her, her retinue, and their possessions for the journey between Krško and Pušja vas, we may assume that by then Kantakuzina had already moved her court from Varaždin to Krško, certainly only temporarily, given her plans to proceed to Pušja vas in the near future.

After securing funds from the sale to Vitovec, in 1461 Kantakuzina travelled first to Venice, then to Dubrovnik (where she stayed in August and September 1461), and finally to Corfu, where she met her Byzantine relatives who had taken refuge there after fleeing from the Ottomans. Around 1465 she purchased from her late husband's kinsman, Leonard, Count of Gorizia, the derelict castle of Belgrad (Belgrado) near Udine in Friuli, intended for her brother Stefan Branković and his family.⁸³ At that time, she herself was residing nearby in Pušja vas, to which she had planned to move her court and retinue in the spring of 1461, as previously mentioned. After relinquishing her annual allowance and surrendering Krško to Emperor Friedrich in 1469, and with her finances running low, Kantakuzina departed for Ježevo in the Ottoman Empire (today Dafni, formerly Ezova, in Greece) to join her sister Mara, the Dowager Sultana.⁸⁴ She had issued the charter to the Emperor while residing in Pušja vas,⁸⁵ but after purchasing Belgrad she may also have stayed there on occasions. Despot Stefan appears to have settled in Belgrad only after 1466, since at the end of that year he may still have been in Albania with his wife.⁸⁶

Finding herself in the Ottoman Empire, once again living surrounded by compatriots from her native lands, the Dowager Countess of Celje reverted to using her Orthodox Christian name, Kantakuzina. She began writing letters in her Serbian mother tongue, enlisted Orthodox clerics as her personal envoys, and acted as a benefactress of Orthodox monasteries on Mt. Athos,⁸⁷ all of which further complicates the question of her religious identity. This issue likewise cannot be resolved simply by analysing Kantakuzina's earlier relationships with various religious orders of the Roman Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Slavonia, since those relationships were not necessarily a reliable indication of her personal religious convictions. If her ties with the Pauline monks appeared cordial and harmonious – cordial enough for the

⁸³ М. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 96–98.

⁸⁴ Ibidem, 98.

⁸⁵ А. Ивић, „Нови подаци“, 48–49.

⁸⁶ Иван Божић, „Белешке о Бранковићима (1460–1480)“, *Зборник Филозофског факултета у Београду* 13-1 (1976) 105. It seems that Aleksa Ivić (in: А. Ивић, „Нови подаци“, 46; idem, *Историја Срба у Угарској: Од пада Смедерева до сеобе под Чарнојевићем (1459–1690)*, Зарепб 1914, 18–19) took for granted that Kantakuzina lived with her brother and his family in Belgrad from ca. 1465 until she left for Ježevo, yet she clearly issued her final charter in 1469 while in Pušja vas.

⁸⁷ Lj. Thallóczy, „Prilozi k objašnjenju izvorā bosanske historije“, *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja u Bosni i Hercegovini* 5 (1893) 208–209; idem, *Bosnyák és szerb élet-s nemzedékrajzi tanulmányok*, Budapest 1909, 65; idem, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens und Serbiens im Mittelalter*, München – Leipzig 1914, 125–126; А. Ивић, *Историја Срба у Угарској*, 20–21; М. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 104–107.

prior of Lepoglava to petition the Countess for confirmation of earlier charters, to which she assented, and for her to order the payment of tributes to the Pauline monks (see notes 64–66) – this was because the practical interests of both parties either aligned or, at the very least, did not conflict. By contrast, her relationship with the Zagreb Chapter was nothing short of open hostility, arising from disputes over property and possession rights. The canons of Zagreb blamed all their troubles on the rule of the House of Celje over the town, and they pursued their claims before the Hungarian Crown. There, they accused Kantakuzina's late husband and father-in-law of unlawfully depriving the Chapter of its tower in Gradec (Popov turen) and of the tithes from Međimurje. The Međimurje region had been granted to the Counts of Celje in 1405 by King Sigismund, from whom they had purchased it for a considerable sum (see notes 28, 37–41). Documents issued by King Ladislaus V the Posthumous in 1457 and by Regent Michael Szilágyi and King Matthias Corvinus in 1458 (see note 45) show that Kantakuzina, considering herself the sole heiress of the House of Celje, at that time refused to allow the canons from Zagreb to collect tithes from the Međimurje forts of Čakovec and Štrigovo. It is also evident that she was supported in this matter by the castellans of those forts, who remained loyal to her even though they held castles which the Hungarian Crown regarded as royal possessions. Friedrich Lamberger, who, together with his brother Johann, continued to hold the office of castellan of Čakovec by royal grace long after Kantakuzina's position in Slavonia had deteriorated, likewise remained her confidant. It was he, in fact, to whom John Vitovec was instructed to hand over the money due to Kantakuzina following his purchase of her Slavonian estates in 1461 (see note 76).

Well received in the Ottoman Empire at first, owing to her intercession in diplomatic relations with Venice, Kantakuzina later endured many indignities at the hands of Sultana Mara's stepson, Sultan Mehmed II. He attempted to compel the Dowager Countess to sell the Friulian Belgrad after the death of Despot Stefan in 1476 and to surrender the proceeds to him. Outliving Mehmed (†1481), Kantakuzina managed, with the consent of Stefan's widow, Angelina, freely to dispose of Belgrad in 1485, when she gave it in lien to her Byzantine relative Matthew Spandounes (Spandugnino), an attendant of Emperor Friedrich of Habsburg.⁸⁸ Kantakuzina also outlived her sister Mara (†1487), and ultimately died around 1491. She was buried in the Church of St Stephen in Konča (today Konče in Northern Macedonia). Her worldly possessions passed to her niece Mara-Jelena, daughter of Despot Lazar Branković, and widow of the last king of Bosnia.⁸⁹ By then, however, these could only have been meagre remnants of the once vast and long-vanished fortune of the Countess of Celje in Slavonia.

As the childless widow of the last Count of Celje, Kantakuzina inherited the Slavonian estates of the House of Celje, which at the height of their power comprised

⁸⁸ М. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 99–106. The best survey of the sale of Belgrad, based on archival material, was provided by Lj. Thallóczy, „Prilozi k objašnjenju izvorâ bosanske historije“, 202–210.

⁸⁹ М. Спремић, „Кантакузина“, 96–98, 106–107.

twenty-two forts (some held as fiefs, others in lien) across the counties of Zagreb and Križevci and the district of Zagorje, together with the free royal town of Gradec near Zagreb and the entire neighbouring region of Međimurje with its forts. After her husband's murder, it is certain that Kantakuzina retained ten towns and forts in Slavonia: Varaždin, Vinica, Rakovec, Veliki Kalnik, Mali Kalnik, Koprivnica, Kamengrad, Đurđevac, Medvedgrad, and Samobor, as well as Gradec near Zagreb, along with Čakovec and Štrigovo in Međimurje. Most of these towns and forts had been granted to the Counts of Celje in lien, though not all—for example, Varaždin and Vinica. She conducted herself as a Hungarian noble and proprietor of these estates until the very end of her stay in Slavonia, which came in 1461, when she sold all her property rights and left the Kingdom of Hungary for good.

The Case Study of Vuk Grgurević

The other prominent member of the Branković dynasty who acquired vast possessions in the Kingdom of Slavonia was Vuk Grgurević, later celebrated in epic poetry as Zmaj Ognjeni Vuk ("Vuk the Fiery Dragon"). According to historiographical findings, Vuk was most probably an illegitimate son of Grgur (Gregory) Đurđević Branković, the son of Despot Đurađ (George) Vuković Branković and Jerina (Irene) Kantakouzene. Grgur was blinded by Sultan Murad II in 1441 due to unauthorized contacts with his father Đurađ. He had been heir apparent to the Serbian throne at least since 1428/1429, but was effectively disqualified when he and his brother Stefan (Stephen) lost their eyesight. Grgur returned to Serbia from Ottoman captivity in 1444, after the restoration of the Despotate, and in 1446 his youngest brother Lazar became the official heir and his father's co-ruler.⁹⁰ There is practically no information on either Grgur or his son Vuk until the late 1450s. During the divisions within the Branković family following the death of Đurađ Branković, Grgur assumed a pro-Turkish stance against his pro-Hungarian brother Lazar, and in May 1457 he left Serbia for Ottoman territory together with his sister Sultana Mara (the widow of Murad II), his uncle Thomas Kantakouzenos, and his son Vuk. Grgur and Mara's mother, Despotess Jerina, who initially accompanied them, died en route in Rudnik.⁹¹ It is possible that Grgur hoped to become ruler of Serbia with Sultan Mehmed II's support, since he and Vuk joined the campaign of Mahmud Pasha Angelović against the remnants of the Serbian Despotate in 1458. This suggests that Vuk must have been at least around 18–20 years old at the time, so we may assume that he was born in 1440 or earlier. The Ottoman army reached Smederevo, but the town held against the invaders until the following year. Since the capital was not taken and the campaign ended, Grgur eventually retreated to Macedonia. He became a monk in the Chilandar monastery, taking the name Germanos (Serbian: German), and died shortly

⁹⁰ М. Спремић, *Деспот Ђурађ*, 68, 139–140, 195, 251–252, 297–298, 315, 320.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, 505–506.

thereafter, on 16 October 1459.⁹² Although Smederevo had already fallen by that time (the Ottomans entered the fortress on 20 June 1459) and Serbia had ceased to exist as a separate polity, Vuk Grgurević succeeded to his father's claim to the throne and, probably already in 1459, assumed the title of despot, most likely on his own initiative.⁹³

Vuk remained in Ottoman service until at least 1464, and his military actions were most likely conducted along the Hungarian–Ottoman border, which at that time ran through parts of northern and central Bosnia and along the Sava and Danube rivers. He may have joined the campaign of Mahmud Pasha Angelović against the Hungarians at Jajce in 1464, but later that year (certainly before February 1465) he changed sides, entered the service of King Matthias Corvinus (Hunyadi) of Hungary, and resettled in the Realm of St Stephen.⁹⁴ His career in Hungary began only several years after his paternal aunt, Kantakuzina-Katherina, had permanently left Slavonia, having lost or sold all the estates of the Celjski (Cilli, Cillei) family that she had inherited from her murdered husband, Ulrich II, in 1456. Although they belonged to the same Serbian dynasty, no estate formerly held by Kantakuzina ever came into Vuk's possession, and there is no indication that they even maintained contact.⁹⁵ Unlike his aunt, who was a Slavonian landholder by marriage (to a foe of the Hunyadi family, which ascended to the Hungarian throne in 1458), Vuk became a Hungarian nobleman and acquired estates on the strength of his military service throughout Central and Southeastern Europe, as well as through the important offices he held in the royal army and along the Hungarian–Ottoman frontier.

When Vuk Grgurević changed sides, he was already known as Despot Vuk. As noted earlier, it is most probable that he styled himself thus after his father's death in 1459. It is less likely that the title was bestowed upon him by Sultan Mehmed II, and even less convincing that it might have come from a ruler of one of the Byzantine successor states, which survived until 1460/1461 (and of which only that of Trebizond bore the imperial title). King Matthias Corvinus did not grant Vuk the title but merely acknowledged and recognised it once he had proved indispensable in border warfare, most certainly from early 1471 onward, after which he was consistently referred to as despot.⁹⁶ The

⁹² Iván Nagy & Albert Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából (1458–1490)* I, Budapest 1875, 18; Викентије Макушев, *Историски споменици споменици Јужнога Словенства и околних народа* II, Београд 1882, 115, 218–219; Љубомир Стојановић, *Стари српски родослови и летописи*, Београд – Сремски Карловци 1927, 243–245; Сима Ћирковић, „О деспоту Вуку Гргуревићу“, *Зборник за ликовне уметности. Матица српска* 6 (1970) 284–285; М. Спремић, *Деспот Ђурађ*, 521, 531, 547.

⁹³ С. Ћирковић, „О деспоту Вуку“, 285–287; М. Спремић, *Деспот Ђурађ*, 543–545.

⁹⁴ Vilmos Fraknói, *Mátyás király levelei* I, Budapest 1893, 77–78; Иван Божић, *Дубровник и Турска у XIV и XV веку*, Београд 1952, 107; С. Ћирковић, „О деспоту Вуку“, 286–287; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 7–8; Катарина Митровић, „Вук Гргуревић између Мехмеда II и Матије Корвина (1458–1465)“, *Браничевски гласник* 2 (2004) 27–29.

⁹⁵ For details, see the first part of this article on Kantakuzina-Katherina Branković.

⁹⁶ MNL OL, DL 17199; Константин Јиречек, *Историја Срба* I, Београд 1952, 410–411; С. Ћирковић, „О деспоту Вуку“, 284–287; К. Митровић, „Вук Гргуревић“, 30; Н. Обрадовић, *Срби и краљ*, 107–108.

Hungarian frontier system, strengthened by territorial gains in northern Bosnia, held firm against the Ottomans during the first five or six years after Vuk's arrival north of the Sava and Danube. Following a successful campaign near Smederevo in June 1466, the Serbian titular despot was dispatched to wage war against the Habsburgs, as well as the Czechs and Poles.⁹⁷ Earlier historiography mistakenly claimed that Vuk had already become a Hungarian baron (the highest-ranking noble) *ex officio* as early as December 1467, when "dominus despotus Servie" was mentioned in a peace agreement between King Matthias and Emperor Friedrich III of Habsburg. However, that document was misdated: it actually refers to the peace concluded in 1487, and the despot in question was Vuk's first cousin and successor in the despotal title, Đorđe (George) Branković.⁹⁸ At the outset of the war with Bohemia (1468–1471), the Hungarian ruler conquered Lusatia, Silesia, and Moravia, which in turn led him into conflict with Poland (1470–1474), whose ruler had similar territorial ambitions.⁹⁹

During these wars, in which Vuk rose to prominence as a military commander against the Czechs in 1469, the first historical evidence of his estates in Slavonia appeared. Namely, for his loyal service, in 1470 or 1471 King Matthias granted Grgurević the fortress (*castrum*) of Bela Stena/Bijela Stijena (Fejérkő) in the County of Križevci (Körös), together with its appurtenant estate, which, according to a later source, consisted of sixty villages.¹⁰⁰ The original donation charter is not preserved, and most information about this large estate comes from sources written after Grgurević's death. Although this was almost certainly his first known possession in Slavonia, we can confidently assume that Vuk already held some estates that provided him with income prior to 1470. It is possible that, upon entering Hungary, he received part of the old possessions of the Serbian despots in the County of Srem (Szerém, Syrmia), since he sometimes resided in Kupinik (Kölpény, present-day Kupinovo), also

⁹⁷ A. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 345; Norbert C. Tóth, Richárd Horváth, Tibor Neumann & Tamás Pálosfalvi, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1458–1526. I. Főpapok és bárók*, Budapest 2017, 144; T. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 226–227.

⁹⁸ József Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon* XII, Pesten 1857, 375; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 9, 41; K. Митровић, „Вук Гргуревић“, 30. Yet again, it should also be noted that as early as October 1468 Vuk bore the epithet *magnificus* (MNL OL, DL 29828), a designation reserved for high-ranking nobility, although in March 1471 he was once again referred to as *egregius*, denoting nobles of the middle rank (MNL OL, DL 17199).

⁹⁹ Алекса Ивић, *Историја Срба у Војводини од најстаријих времена до оснивања Потиско-поморишке границе (1703)*, Нови Сад 1929, 17; P. Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 302–305; Петар Рокаи, Золтан Ђере, Тибор Пал & Александар Касаш, *Историја Мађара*, Београд 2002, 163–165.

¹⁰⁰ Antonius de Bonfinis, *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades* IV/1, eds. József Főgel, Béla Iványi & László Juhász, Budapest 1941, 27, 40; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 8–10; Ratko Ivanušec, Marija Mihaljević & Marina Matković Vrbanić, „Sustavna arheološka istraživanja utvrde Bijela Stijena“, in: *Graditeljsko i povijesno nasljeđe plemićke obitelji Berislavića Grabarskih u Slavoniju u razdoblju kasnog srednjeg vijeka i ranog novog vijeka*, Nova Gradiška 2019, 45–54. Also see: Matija Mesić, „Građa mojih razprava u 'Radu'“, *Starine. Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti* 5 (1873) 120–121.

a residence of Despot Đurađ Branković, and because Kupinik later appeared as his noble predicate.¹⁰¹ Vuk also held Irig (Ürög) in the same county, as well as Berkasovo (Berekszó) in the County of Vukovo (Valkó). It remains uncertain when Vuk acquired Berkasovo (not before late September 1480), but he certainly held it by March 1482. In 1486, by royal decree, it passed to his cousins, the new Despot Đorđe and his brother Jovan (John), since Vuk had no heirs.¹⁰² Although the evidence is insufficient for a definitive conclusion, it seems likely that Vuk's estates in Hungary proper (namely in Srem and Vukovo) were granted to him earlier, as a reward for his decision to enter King Matthias's service and for his role on the southern border, whereas his Slavonian estates were obtained later, in recognition of his war efforts in Central Europe.¹⁰³ He also temporarily held estates in the County of Kraszna in Transylvania, but these were restored to their previous owners in October 1468.¹⁰⁴

Unlike Bela Stena, it is entirely uncertain when Despot Vuk acquired the estate of Teteševina (also known as Tetuševina, Tituševina, Totuševina, Töttösevina, and in various Latinised forms), which had previously belonged to the noble family of Töttös of Bátmonostor and Blinja, whose name the estate bore (from the Slavic "land of the Töttös family").¹⁰⁵ It is, however, probable that Vuk obtained it around the same time, i.e. ca. 1470/1471, since Ladislaus Töttös (Töttös László, Ladislav Titušević) had died in 1468. Some of his properties passed to the Várdai family through his daughter's marriage, while others reverted to the crown.¹⁰⁶ Teteševina was divided between two

¹⁰¹ MNL OL, DL 74528 (1476: „magnificus Wok despotus de Kewlpén”); V. Fraknói, *Matyás király levelei* I, 78; С. Ђирковић, „О деспоту Вуку”, 285–287; А. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 345–346.

¹⁰² MNL OL, DL 18615; J. Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon* XII, 303–304; Љубомир Стојановић, *Старе српске повеље и писма* I/2, Београд – Сремски Карловци 1934, 487; Никола Радојчић, „Пет писама с краја 15. века”, *Јужнословенски филолог* 20 (1953–1954) 353–354; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići”, 9; Stanko Andrić, „Srednjovjekovni Šarengrad i njegovi gospodari”, *Povijesni prilozi* 23 (2002) 50–51; А. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 346, 356; Владимир Поломац, *Српски као дипломатски језик у XV и XVI веку. Филолошки приступ*, Крагујевац 2023, 133.

¹⁰³ А. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 346.

¹⁰⁴ MNL OL, DL 29828.

¹⁰⁵ Vjekoslav Klaić, „Топографске sitnice”, *Vjesnik Hrvatskoga arheološkoga društva* 9 (1907) 189–191; Suzana Miljan, *Plemićko društvo Zagrebačke županije za vladavine Žigmunda Luksemburškoga (1387.–1437.)* (doktorska disertacija, Hrvatski studiji Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2015) 25–26, 35–36, 42, 45–47, 76, 127, 130, 133.

¹⁰⁶ MNL OL, DL 24576. According to Tamás Pálosfalvi, alongside Várdai, Nicholas (Miklós) Dersfi, a grandson of Sophia (Zsófia) Töttös, sister of Ladislaus Töttös, unsuccessfully laid claim to Teteševina. After the death of Barbara Frankapan, Nicholas Dersfi appears to have attempted to acquire the estate, with its small castle then called Razohatec, but to no avail. The estate was retained by the Berislavić family and subsequently passed to John Bánffy (Bánffy János, Ivan Banić), who married Margaret Székely (Székely Margit, Margareta Sekelj), Franjo Berislavić's third wife and widow. Tamás Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite in the County of Körös (Križevci) 1400–1526*, Budapest 2014, 340–341.

Slavonian counties: partly in the County of Zagreb (Zágráb) and partly in the County of Križevci, on both banks of the Sava River.¹⁰⁷ A document from early 1475 records that the village of Šučje (Schwchye) belonged to Vuk, and since this village was part of the Teteševina estate, it is rather certain that he had acquired the entire estate before that date.¹⁰⁸ In 1478, litigation arose between Oswald, Bishop of Zagreb, and Despot Vuk concerning the tithe from Bela Stena, Teteševina, and other Grgurević estates under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic diocese of Zagreb. The lawsuit was initiated by the Bishop because Vuk, being Orthodox (and probably not only for that reason), refused to pay the tithe. It concluded with a settlement whereby Vuk acknowledged his obligation to remit money from his estates to the Bishop.¹⁰⁹

Since the situation on Hungary's southern borders worsened, especially after the Ottomans established their fortress at Šabac (1470–1471), Vuk left the Czech battlefields and became one of Matthias's principal commanders in operations against the Turks. In a punitive campaign launched in response to Ottoman reinforcements along the frontier, Vuk burned Srebrenica and pillaged its surroundings in January 1471. The following year, in retaliation, the Turks from Šabac raided Srem.¹¹⁰ Negotiations in 1473 failed due to the unacceptable terms demanded by both sides: the Turks insisted on receiving Jajce, while the Hungarians demanded the fortresses of Golubac (Galambóc) on the Danube and Žrnov near Belgrade.¹¹¹ Between 1473 and 1476, intensive warfare broke out between the Hungarian marcher lords, including Despot Vuk, and Mihaloğlu Ali Bey, the sanjakbey of Smederevo. While Ali Bey plundered the southern regions (Délvidék) and the areas of the major towns of Timișoara (Temesvár, Temišvar) and Oradea (Nagyvárad, Veliki Varadin), King Matthias, once hostilities with Poland had ended, devised a plan to attack the Turks on two fronts: to capture Smederevo and to reinstate Vlad III as voivode of Wallachia.¹¹² Failed

¹⁰⁷ MNL OL, DL 24576; V. Klaić, „Топографске sitnice“, 189–191.

¹⁰⁸ MNL OL, DL 100842; Ненад Обрадовић, „Писмо деспота Вука Гргуревића подбану Ладиславу од Гребена“, *Стари српски архив* 19 (2020) 77–89. By this document, issued in Bela Stena, Vuk granted one *sessio iobagionalis* in Šučje to the viceban of Slavonia, Ladislaus of Greben (Grebeni László, Ladislav Grebenski).

¹⁰⁹ Zagreb (Croatia), Hrvatski državni arhiv, Nadbiskupijski arhiv u Zagrebu (=HR-NAZ), Srednjovjekovne isprave, Desetina zagrebačkoga biskupa (Acta decimaria), DEC 37, 56; MNL OL, DF 252066, 252087, 280281; M. Mesić, „Građa“, 120–121.

¹¹⁰ Iván Nagy & Albert Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából (1458–1490)* II, Budapest 1877, 221–222; В. Макушев, *Историски споменици* II, 38–39; V. Fraknói, *Matyás király levelei* I, 270–271; L. Thallóczy & A. Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia*, 262, no. 361; A. de Bonfinis, *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades* IV/1, 40; К. Јиречек, *Историја Срба* I, 411; Јованка Калић-Мијушковић, *Београд у средњем веку*, Београд 1967, 194; Франц Бабингер, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, Нови Сад 1968, 276; А. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 346–347.

¹¹¹ Ф. Бабингер, *Мехмед Освајач*, 264–265; А. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 347.

¹¹² I. Nagy & A. Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek* II, 273, 282, 299–302; Ј. Калић-Мијушковић, *Београд*, 195; Ф. Бабингер, *Мехмед Освајач*, 289–290; Олга Зиројевић, „Смедеревски санџакбег Али-бег Михалоглу“, *Зборник за историју. Матица српска* 3 (1971) 16–17; А. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 347–349.

negotiations led to winter campaigning. Instead of Smederevo, the Hungarian forces led by Despot Vuk, Paul (Pál) Kinizsi, and Vlad III of Wallachia besieged Šabac in January and February 1476 and ultimately captured it. From there, Vuk and Vlad advanced into the Podrinje region, moving upstream along the Drina River. They plundered and burned Srebrenica and the fortress of Kučlat, and unsuccessfully attacked Ottoman Zvornik, where the Despot was wounded.¹¹³ Afterward, the Hungarians shifted their operations to the Danube. Despite their efforts, and despite Ali Bey's defeat near Požežena in August 1476, Smederevo remained untaken when the campaign ended later that year.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, Vuk's actions contributed to the establishment of a new Hungarian frontier territory south of the Sava River. The area that had once formed the Banate of Mačva (Macsó), largely lost to the Ottomans after 1459, was reorganised into the Banate of Šabac (by 1491 at the latest), which was administratively linked to the Banate of Belgrade.¹¹⁵

Although Ali Bey resumed his activities along the Hungarian–Ottoman border in 1477, by that time Vuk Grgurević was primarily engaged in King Matthias's new war against Emperor Friedrich III, during which the Despot's and Dmitar Jakšić's Serbian troops conquered and thoroughly looted Lower Austria.¹¹⁶ It is not known whether any of Grgurević's territorial acquisitions were granted as a reward for this particular campaign. After the Austrian campaign of 1477, Vuk returned to the southern borders, where Ottoman raids had intensified. Since no truce or peace was concluded in 1478, the Serbian despot became one of the principal commanders of the Hungarian frontier in northern Bosnia, which was gradually taking shape as the Banates of Jajce and Srebrenik.¹¹⁷ After participating in the great Christian victory at

¹¹³ I. Nagy & A. Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek* II, 282–283, 285, 288–289, 291, 297–298, 338–339, 344–345; V. Fraknoi, *Matyás király levelei* I, 317–319, 322–324, 333–334, 344–345, 354–355; L. Thallóczy & A. Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia*, 265–270, no. 367–373, 388–390, no. 519; Љ. Стојановић, *Стари српски родослови*, 250; A. de Bonfinis, *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades* IV/1, 61–63; К. Иречек, *Историја Срба* I, 411; Ј. Калић-Мијушковић, *Београд*, 196; Ф. Бабингер, *Мехмед Освајач*, 296–298; Т. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 255–258; Ненад Обрадовић, „Опсада Шапца 1476. године“, *Историјски часопис* 72 (2023) 237–279.

¹¹⁴ I. Nagy & A. Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek* II, 317, 325–326; В. Макушев, *Историјски споменици* II, 238–239; L. Thallóczy & A. Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia*, 269–270, no. 371–373; A. de Bonfinis, *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades* IV/1, 63–66; Ј. Калић-Мијушковић, *Београд*, 196–197; Ф. Бабингер, *Мехмед Освајач*, 298; О. Зиројевић, „Смедеревски санџакбег“, 17–18.

¹¹⁵ L. Thallóczy & A. Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia*, 287–288, no. 400; А. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 350–351; Н. Обрадовић, „Опсада Шапца“, 262–263.

¹¹⁶ А. Ивић, *Историја Срба*, 22; A. de Bonfinis, *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades* IV/1, 81–82; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 13; P. Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 305–306; П. Рокаи и др., *Историја Мађара*, 165; Момчило Спремић, „Српски деспоти у Срему“, in: *Срем кроз векове: слојеви култура Фрушке горе и Срема*, ed. Миодраг Матици, Београд–Беоцин 2007, 51–52.

¹¹⁷ I. Nagy & A. Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek* II, 368–369, 371–374; V. Fraknoi, *Matyás király levelei* I, 381–383, 387–388, 408–409, 419; Н. Радојчић, „Пет писама“, 362–363; Ј. Калић-Мијушковић, *Београд*, 197, 412. On the bordering between the Ottomans and Hungarians,

the Battle of Breadfield (Kenyérmezei csata) in Transylvania, Vuk was stationed in Jajce. In November 1480 he reported on a campaign he conducted together with Ladislaus (László, Ladislav) Héderváry, Ban of Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia, and Peter (Péter, Petar) Dóczy, Ban of Jajce. During this expedition, the aforementioned Hungarian marcher lords pillaged the area of Vrhbosna (i.e. Sarajevo), burned the town, and seized the valuables of Daut Pasha. On their retreat they were ambushed by the Turks in a gorge, but Vuk repelled the attack and, the following day, defeated the enemy once more near Travnik.¹¹⁸ In 1480 and 1481, warfare along the Hungarian–Ottoman border continued under the leadership of Despot Vuk, Pál Kinizsi, and Stephen (István) Báthory. Kinizsi supposedly brought with him thousands of Serbs when he retreated from Serbia in 1480. Major Christian offensives also took place in August and November 1481. During the autumn campaign of that year, following successful operations along the Danube in the regions of Smederevo, Braničevo, and Golubac, Vuk advanced upstream along the Velika Morava River as far as Kruševac, which he plundered. Many locals were taken to Timișoara, and these Hungarian victories probably encouraged another prominent Serbian nobleman, Miloš Belmužević, to abandon his estates in Ottoman Serbia and enter King Matthias's service.¹¹⁹ At roughly the same time, Vuk Grgurević was referred to in a Latin document as one of the bans

see: Davor Salihović, „The Process of Bordering at the Late Fifteenth-Century Hungarian–Ottoman Frontier“, *History in Flux* 1 (2019) 93–120; idem, *Definition, Extent, and Administration of the Hungarian Frontier toward the Ottoman Empire in the Reign of King Matthias Corvinus, 1458–1490* (doctoral dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2020).

¹¹⁸ Викентије Макушев, „Прилози к српској историји 14. и 15. века“, *Гласник Српског ученог друштва* 32 (1871) 204–208; А. Ивић, *Историја Срба*, 23; К. Јиречек, *Историја Срба* I, 412; Dušanka Bojanić, „Dve godine istorije bosanskog krajišta (1479. i 1480) – prema Ibn Kemal“, *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 14–15 (1969) 39–48; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 13; М. Спремић, „Српски деспоти“, 52; Т. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 267, 273–275; Небојша Порчић & Невен Исаиловић, *Документи владара средњовековне Србије и Босне у венецијанским збиркама*, Београд 2019, 124–126, 414–417; D. Salihović, *Definition*, 32–34, 39–41, 92, 143, 221–222. More on these series of wars in: Велимир Стефановић, *Краљ Матија према Влашкој и Босни*, Нови Сад 1932; idem, *Ратовање краља Матије у Босни и његови односи с папском куријом и чешким краљем у ствари акције против Турака*, Нови Сад 1932.

¹¹⁹ В. Макушев, „Прилози“, 204–206; Iván Nagy & Albert Nyáry, *Magyar diplomaciai emlékek Mátyás király korából (1458–1490)* IV, Budapest 1878, 339–342, 362; В. Макушев, *Историски споменици* II, 50–52; V. Fraknói, *Matyás király levelei* I, 450–451; idem, *Matyás király levelei* II, Budapest 1895, 65–69, 76–80, 91–92, 158, 185, 190, 195–197; Nicolae Jorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des Croisades au XVe siècle* V, Paris 1916, 113–115; Љ. Стојановић, *Стари српски родослови*, 253, 296; К. Јиречек, *Историја Срба* I, 412; Ј. Калић-Мијушковић, *Београд*, 198–199; Ф. Бабингер, *Мехмед Освајач*, 325–327; О. Зиројевић, „Смедеревски санџакбег“, 19–20; А. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 352–353; Т. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 276; Aleksandar Krstić & Adrian Magina, „The Belmužević Family: the Fate of a Noble Family in South East Europe during the Turbulent Period of the Ottoman Conquest (the 15th and the first half of the 16th centuries)“, *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 59 (2021) 105–115.

of Jajce, and in a Slavic document as captain of the Bosnian cities – likely two versions of the same title, i.e. office.¹²⁰ He did not command the Serbian contingents who besieged Hainburg on the Danube, where Matthias again clashed with Friedrich III's forces in 1482, but remained instead on the Ottoman frontier.¹²¹

For his merits to the Hungarian Crown on the battlefield, on 14 April 1482 King Matthias granted Vuk the following estates in the County of Zagreb: the fortified castles of Komogojna (Komogojno, Komogovina) and Gradisa (Gradica, Gradusa), the marketplace of Komogojna with its revenues (*tributum*), and all appurtenant possessions belonging to these estates, namely Gradisa, Ozeljsko, Brebrovnica, Građa, Orašje, and parts of Selce and Strmina.¹²² These properties had previously belonged to Ivan (John) Frajleković, who had acquired them from his lord Martin Frankapan (Frangepán), deceased in 1479. However, Frajleković lost them after murdering a nobleman named Juraj (George) Dešković.¹²³ Possibly at the same time, Vuk also received the estate of Kostajnica, which had previously belonged to Martin Frankapan

¹²⁰ MNL OL, DL 95411; N. C. Tóth et. al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája* I, 140; Беџамин Хекић, „Сигилографски образци српских деспота после 1459: од српских суверена до угарских магната“, *Српске студије / Serbian Studies Research* 12/1 (2021) 20–21; Nenad Obradović, „Vuk despota jajcai bánsága. Adalék a Mátyás-kor archontológiájához“, *Fons. Forráskutatás és történeti segédtudományok* 28/3 (2021) 467–473; idem, „Jedna karijera na ugarsko-osmanskoj granici pred kraj XV veka. Despot Vuk Grgurević kao jajački ban“, *Historijska misao* 9 (2023), 2024, 47–66; В. Поломац, *Српски као дипломатски језик*, 129–131.

¹²¹ А. Ивић, *Историја Срба*, 25; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 15; П. Рокаи и др., *Историја Мађара*, 172; А. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 353.

¹²² HR-HDA-25, fasc. 571, no. 21; MNL OL, DL 33491; Matija Mesić, „Pleme Berislavića“, *Rad. Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti* 8 (1869) 59; idem, „Građa“, 121–122 („castella Komogoyno et Gradisky appellata, item oppidum similiter Komogoyno cum tributo, nec non possessiones Gradyzza, Ozelzko, Brebrowncza, Gradya, Oresya, ac porciones possessionarias in possessionibus Zelcze et Ztermina vocatis, in comitatu Zagrabiensi“); D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 10.

¹²³ The Frajleković family descended from Frajlek (Fraylech, Frajlj) Vincenc, who was Martin Frankapan's *familiaris* and had controlled Komogojna as its castellan since the mid-15th century. Prior to 1436/1437, both Komogojna and Kostajnica had belonged jointly to the families Surdis of Lipovec and Tóth of Susedgrad. The Frankapans acquired them through the marriage of Martin Frankapan with Jelena (Helen) of Lipovec. The Zrinski family also tried, for decades, to reclaim its long-lost possession of Komogojna. See: MNL OL, DL 14155, 34217, 34228, 34235; HR-HDA-25, fasc. 1648, no. 8, 44, 46; M. Mesić, „Građa“, 121–122; L. Thallóczy & A. Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia*, 275–276, no. 387; Lajos Thallóczy & Samu Barabás, *A Blagay-család oklevéltára*, Budapest 1897, 345–347; Lajos Thallóczy & Samu Barabás, *A Frangepán család oklevéltára II 1454–1527. Hamis oklevelek 1209–1481*, Budapest 1913, 107–108, 156–157; Damir Karbić & Suzana Miljan, „Knezovi Zrinski u 14. i 15. stoljeću između staroga i novoga teritorijalnog identiteta“, in: *Susreti dviju kultura: obitelji Zrinski u hrvatskoj i mađarskoj povijesti*, eds. Sándor Bene, Zoran Ladić & Gábor Hausner, Zagreb 2012, 17–18, 21, 30–31, 40; S. Miljan, *Plemićko društvo*, 25, 34–35, 37–38, 40–42, 48, 50, 130, 134–135.

and, after his death, to Ivan Bevenjud of Ostrožin.¹²⁴ Since no donation charter has been preserved, the information can only be reconstructed from litigation in 1491 between the Bevenjud family and Vuk's first cousins and successors in the despotal title, Despot Đorđe and Jovan Branković. Ivan Bevenjud and his brothers Toma (Thomas) and Nikola (Nicholas) claimed that King Matthias had incarcerated Ivan, held him captive, and then seized the Kostajnica estate to grant it to Vuk Grgurević.¹²⁵ Kostajnica was among the very few possessions conferred by the king on Vuk's successors in the despotal title and members of the Branković family.

After his donation in mid-April 1482, King Matthias issued another charter on 24 April 1482, this time concerning Vuk's wife Barbara (Borbála) Frankapan, who appears for the first time as his consort. At the request of Queen Beatrice of Naples (Aragóniai Beatrix), who had probably been petitioned by Barbara, the king decreed that, should the despot's wife outlive her husband, by whom she had no children, she was to inherit the fortress of Bela Stena in the County of Križevci and the district of Teteševina, together with all their appurtenant possessions. Vuk's military merits were once again praised by the king.¹²⁶ After receiving Matthias's approval, Vuk

¹²⁴ L. Thallóczy & S. Barabás, *A Frangepán család oklevéltára* II, 149–150. Kostajnica belonged to the Kostajnički family in the late 14th and early 15th century. Later, it passed to the Surdis of Lipovec and the Tóth family of Susedgrad, and then to Martin Frankapan (around 1436/37). In 1471, Martin pledged Kostajnica to Ivan Bevenjud for 4,000 florins. King Matthias did the same in 1478 (for 1,500 florins) and finally donated the castle to him in 1480. HR-NAZ, Arhiv Zagrebačkog kaptola (Archivum capituli Zagrabienensis), Zagrebački kaptol kao vjerodostojno mjesto (Locus credibilis), Series I, F 113; Zagreb (Croatia), Hrvatski državni arhiv, Zbirka srednjovjekovnih isprava – Documenta mediaevalia varia (=HR-HDA-877), no. 489, 496, 498; HR-HDA-25, fasc. 644, no. 20, fasc. 1645, no. 13; MNL OL, DL 33624, 33990; MNL OL, DF 218973, 218980, 218982, 274913; M. Mesić, „Građa“, 117–119; Vjekoslav Klaić, *Krčki knezovi Frankapani: od najstarijih vremena do gubitka otoka Krka (od godine 1118. do godine 1480.)*, Zagreb 1901, 250, 264–265, 272–273; Marija Karbić & Damir Karbić, „Kostajnica i njezini gospodari tijekom srednjeg vijeka“, in: *Hrvatska Kostajnica 1240.–2000.*, Hrvatska Kostajnica 2002, 57–58; S. Miljan, *Plemićko društvo*, 231–232. Also see the previous footnote.

¹²⁵ HR-HDA-25, fasc. 644, no. 21, fasc. 1558, no. 62; MNL OL, DL 33625, 34144; M. Mesić, „Pleme Berislavića“, 58–59; idem, „Građa“, 127; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 10, 29; A. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 355, f. 41. The estate of Kostajnica consisted of the fortress and marketplace of the same name, as well as the following villages: Dobryno, Polanycza, Gergin, alter Gergin, Gorysca, Monychy, Erth, Rakythowecz, Nowaky, Brebrokowa Zela, Bwkowye, Lazy et alteri Lazy, Szamlachye, Podwraneye, Lyzkowecz, Brezye, Podwersye, Dolacz, Werhowcze, Horesye, Lypye, Bobowacz, Poddabal, Thawya, Bezdye, Cerncha Zela, Sthermina, Scleschewye et Therche. In 1492, the Bevenjud family sold their rights to the Kostajnica estate to the magnate Ladislav Egervarski (Egervári László, Ladislav of Egervár), and Despots Đorđe and Jovan continued their litigation with him, at least until 1494. It remains uncertain to whom Kostajnica was eventually assigned.

¹²⁶ HR-HDA-877, no. 512; MNL OL, DF 218997; L. Thallóczy & A. Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia*, 274–275, no. 385–386; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 18; Marija Karbić, „Položaj pripadnica visokog plemstva u hrvatskim zemljama. Primjer Barbare Frankapan“, *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 30 (2012) 147.

himself confirmed the stipulations of this charter on 3 May 1482, bequeathing the aforementioned estates to Barbara to ensure her maintenance and livelihood after his death.¹²⁷ Following Vuk's death, King Matthias reaffirmed his donation to Barbara. After she returned the castles of Kostajnica and Berkasovo to the King, on 19 August 1485 he confirmed her lifetime possession of the castle of Komogojno, and on 29 July 1486 her hereditary possession of the castles of Komogojna and Gradisa, along with the marketplace of Komogojna, its revenues, and seven appurtenant possessions in the County of Zagreb (see note 122).¹²⁸ The documents from late April and early May 1482 were, as already noted, the first to mention Barbara as Vuk's wife. She was one of the two daughters of Žigmund (Sigismund) Frankapan of Otočac, the other being Doroteja (Dorothea), who married into the Blagajski (Blagay) family. Barbara's father died before March 1468, after which his estates reverted to his brothers. His widow Jelena (Helen) was nevertheless able to retain several castles and estates for her livelihood and for her to arrange suitable marriages for her daughters. By the time she resettled with her late husband's family in 1475, it seems that both Barbara and Doroteja were already married. It is therefore probable that the marriage of Vuk and Barbara took place between 1469 and 1475.¹²⁹

The new sultan, Bayezid II, who came to power in May 1481, wished Vuk to act as intermediary in peace talks between the Ottoman Empire and Hungary, as is evident from letters in Serbian exchanged between Vuk and the Turks in 1482 and 1483.¹³⁰ The restoration of the Serbian Despotate, with Vuk as despot, was among the ideas acceptable to both sides, provided that the new polity paid tribute to the sultan. A preliminary arrangement for a lasting peace was reached, and Vuk continued his negotiations with Ali Bey of Smederevo while also sending an envoy to the Sublime Porte. However, when Ottoman marcher lords invaded Banat, and were defeated on

¹²⁷ HR-HDA-877, no. 513; MNL OL, DF 218998; M. Mesić, „Građa“, 122–123; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 18; M. Karbić, „Položaj pripadnica“, 147–150. The following estates are mentioned: Blynya, Hrasthye, Oresye, Zelcze, Podgradie, Gorycza lwsyncz, Gleboko, Hor, Obres, Chethertek, Sernowo, Oztrowochka Zela, Zona, Kalokesyczca, Trybozyl, Serme, Bezthercz, Lethonya, Othok, Wokosewa zela, Pwztba Gradycza, Gozthya, Ghygowcz, Kratheczko, Prewlaka, Schwchye, Prekolochye, Wzthylonya, Zredoy, Bwkowsko, Preloy, Rozohachecz, Also Bwdowsewo, Felsew Bwdowsewo et Gherneecz.

¹²⁸ Belgrade (Serbia), Архив Српске академије наука и уметности, Историјска збирка 32; HR-HDA-25, fasc. 648, no. 4, fasc. 649, no. 13; HR-HDA-877, no. 529; MNL OL, DL 33628, 33629, 34119; MNL OL, DF 219015, 274888; M. Mesić, „Građa“, 124–125; L. Thallóczy & A. Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia*, 278–281, no. 393–394; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 18; Marija Karbić, „Hrvatsko plemstvo u borbi protiv Osmanlija. Primjer obitelji Berislavića Grabarskih iz Slavonije“, *Povijesni prilozi* 31 (2006) 74; eadem, „Položaj pripadnica“, 147–148.

¹²⁹ L. Thallóczy & S. Barabás, *A Frangepán család oklevéltára* II, 109, 131–135; M. Karbić, „Položaj pripadnica“, 145–154.

¹³⁰ Н. Радојчић, „Пет писама“, 353–355; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 15–17; Катарина Митровић, „Пет писама деспота Вука Гргуревића“, *Браничевски гласник* 3–4 (2006) 63–82; В. Поломац, *Српски као дипломатски језик*, 125–135.

their return near Bečej (Óbecse) by Grgurević, Kinizsi, and Dóczy, the peace talks were temporarily interrupted.¹³¹ In the renewed negotiations of 1483, the idea of restoring the Serbian Despotate was abandoned. Instead, the new policy envisaged a broad buffer zone prohibited to both sides and their armies. The Turks were not to advance north of Niš and Kruševac, while the Hungarians were to keep their forces north of Szeged and Timișoara. On the rivers, the Hungarians were not to sail further downstream on the Danube than Futog (Futak) and Slankamen (Szalánkemén), while the Turks were not to advance upstream from Smederevo. These negotiations failed owing to Hungarian grievances over the newly built Ottoman fortresses of Kulič and Ram, while the Ottomans demanded the return of their subjects taken into Matthias's realm.¹³² That same year, 1483, Matthias (Mátyás) Geréb, Ban of Croatia and Dalmatia, with the support of Vuk Grgurević and the Jakšić family, inflicted a severe defeat on the Bosnian Turks at the River Una. A truce was finally concluded in 1484.¹³³ Vuk died on 16 April 1485, probably still holding not only the titular dignity of Despot of Serbia but also the office of Ban of Jajce. He left no children by his wife Barbara Frankapan, and his estates devolved partly to King Matthias and partly to his widow.¹³⁴

After acquiring his Slavonian estates, Vuk transferred some of them to local, hierarchically lower nobles (*praediales*) who owed military service to his *banderiaum*. However, the precise distribution of each possession remains unknown. What is certain is that Gradisa was granted to its former owner, Ivan Frajleković, as a *praedium* in return for his loyal service.¹³⁵ Other nobles in the service of Despot Vuk included Nikola, son of Barnaba Britvić (Borotva) of Vrbovec and Trstenica, whose lands lay near the fortress of Bela Stena, and the castellan of the same fortress, Ladislaus of Szenche (Szencsei László, Ladislav Svetački), son of Nicholas. Both men are recorded in a charter from September 1476.¹³⁶ Alongside Ladislaus, another castellan named

¹³¹ V. Fraknói, *Matyás király levelei* II, 235; A. Ивић, *Историја Срба*, 25; A. de Bonfinis, *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades* IV/1, 118–120; O. Зиројевић, „Смедеревски санџакбег“, 21; М. Спремић, „Српски деспоти“, 53; А. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 353–354.

¹³² Iván Nagy & Albert Nyáry, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Mátyás király korából (1458–1490)* III, Budapest 1877, 22; V. Fraknói, *Matyás király levelei* II, 267–270, 273–275; N. Jorga, *Notes et extraits* V, 135–142; Љ. Стојановић, *Старе српске повеље и писма* I/2, 487–489; Н. Радојчић, „Пет писама“, 362–363; М. Спремић, „Српски деспоти“, 53–54; Machiel Kiel, „The Ottoman Castle of Ram (Haram) in Serbia and the Accounts of Its Construction, 1491“, in: *State and Society in the Balkans Before and After Establishment of Ottoman Rule*, eds. Srđan Rudić & Selim Aslantaş, Belgrade 2017, 165–189; Aleksandar Jakovljević, „Border Diplomacy on the Lower Danube: The Ottoman–Hungarian Legations and the Peace of 1483 Reconsidered“ (manuscript in preparation for publishing).

¹³³ D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 17–18; А. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 354; Aleksandar Jakovljević & Neven Isailović, *Petrovo polje u vrelima osmanskog razdoblja (1528.–1604.)*, Šibenik 2019, 130; A. Jakovljević, „Border Diplomacy“.

¹³⁴ Љ. Стојановић, *Стари српски родослови*, 254; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 18; N. Obradović, „Vuk despota“, 470–473; idem, „Jedna karijera“, 53–59.

¹³⁵ М. Месић, „Грађа“, 122, 125; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 19.

¹³⁶ MNL OL, DL 74528; T. Pálosfalvi, *The Noble Elite*, 137, 279.

Rudolf is mentioned: first in January 1475 as the sole castellan, and again in September 1476 as Szenche's colleague.¹³⁷

Although Vuk held all his Slavonian estates in the capacity of a Hungarian nobleman, he retained many Serbs in his entourage, and the Serbian chronicles recall his twenty-seven-year rule as despot, from 1459 to 1485.¹³⁸ He maintained a court with servants and had his own castellans (such as Stefan Vitez in Berkasovo and the above-mentioned Rudolf and Ladislaus in Bela Stena), and *familiares*.¹³⁹ During the dispute over the estates in the Counties of Bač (Bács) and Srem, occupied by the despot and his men in March 1479, a document issued by the Chapter of Bač refers to Stefan (Stephen) the Literate, a Serb from Srem.¹⁴⁰ There was also a priest named Jovan (John), who took part in negotiations with Ali Bey and the sultan, corresponding in the Serbian language. Jovan wrote a book in 1481, dating it "during the days of the pious and Christ-loving lord Despot Vuk".¹⁴¹ As noted earlier, in epic poetry Vuk was remembered as a warrior, celebrated under the epithet "Vuk the Fiery Dragon".¹⁴² Tradition also credits him with the foundation of the Church of St Nicholas in Slankamen, though this remains unproven, particularly since Slankamen was never his possession.¹⁴³ As Vuk died without an heir, King Matthias bestowed the title of despot upon Đorđe, son of the former Despot Stefan the Blind (Vuk's paternal uncle), thereby continuing to secure the loyalty of the Serbs.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷ Zagreb (Croatia), Hrvatski državni arhiv, Pavlinski samostan Lepoglava (=HR-HDA-650), fasc. 1, no. 38; MNL OL, DL 34516 („Rodolphus, castellanus de Belazhtena“), 74528 („Ladislai filii condam Nicolai de Zenche et Rodoff castellanorum per ipsum [Vuk] in castro suo Feyerkew“); R. Ivanušec, M. Mihaljević & M. Matković Vrbani, „Sustavna arheološka istraživanja“, 45. Rudolf had a wife named Stana (Zthana) and a son named Anthony (Anthonius/Antun/Antal). In 1475, some members of the noble family of Kaštelanović of Sveti Duh (Szentléleki Kasztellánfi) re-pledged several of their estates in the County of Križevci (Rosechnyk, Hwdethan, Zthoysina, Komaryn, Hrusewye, and Odomodbrod) to Rudolf in exchange for 120 florins.

¹³⁸ A. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 356.

¹³⁹ MNL OL, DL 18615; S. Andrić, „Srednjovjekovni Šaregrad“, 50–51.

¹⁴⁰ MNL OL, DF 259536; L. Thallóczy & A. Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia*, 271–272. no. 376.

¹⁴¹ Љубомир Стојановић, *Стари српски записи и натписи I*, Београд 1902, 111, бр. 351; М. Спремић, „Српски деспоти“, 55.

¹⁴² Вук Стефановић Караџић, *Српске народне пјесме II*, Београд 1932, 528–541; Стојан Новаковић, „Последњи Бранковићи у историји и у народном певању 1456–1502“, in: idem, *Историја и традиција*, Београд 1982, 216–246; Љиљана Пешикан-Љуштановић, *Змај Деспот Вук – мит, историја, песма*, Нови Сад 2002; А. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 357.

¹⁴³ С. Ћирковић, „О деспоту Вуку“, 288–289; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 20; A. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 357, f. 49. Jakov Lukarević (Giacomo Luccari) stated in 1605 that Despot Vuk was buried in a Church of Saint Nicholas, omitting the location of the church (Giacomo Luccari, *Copioso Ristretto degli Annali di Rausa*, Venetia 1605, 102).

¹⁴⁴ D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 28–29; М. Спремић, „Српски деспоти“, 55–57; Снежана Божанић, „Политичка и културна делатност деспота Ђорђа Бранковића у Срему“, in: *Војвођански простор у контексту европске историје : зборник радова*, ed. Владан Гавриловић, Нови Сад 2012, 115–128; А. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 357–371.

After Vuk's death, his widow Barbara retained the possessions granted to her and issued several documents between 1487 and 1489 concerning her estates, neighbouring noblemen, and royal officials, styling herself as "the widow of the late Vuk, Despot of Rascia".¹⁴⁵ She remarried before August 1495, when she is first attested as the wife of Franjo Berislavić of Grabarje (Beriszló Ferenc, Francis Berislavić), Ban of Jajce, in a document recording litigation between Barbara and Balthasar (Boldizsár) Batthyány over *sessiones iobagionales* and inhabitants in the territory of Teteševina.¹⁴⁶

Barbara and Franjo were accused of infidelity and of trading with the Turks, which may have been connected to the rebellion of Lawrence of Ilok (Újlaki Lőrinc, Lovro Iločki). As a consequence, King Vladislaus (Ulászló, Vladislav) II deprived Franjo of his office as ban of Jajce and confiscated from the couple the fortress of Bela Stena in the County of Križevci, the district of Teteševina, and the castles of Komogojna in the County of Zagreb and Dolacki in the County of Vrbas. On 15 January 1496, these properties were granted to the Bishop of Eger and royal chancellor Thomas Bakócz (Bakócz Tamás, Toma Bakoc) and his cousins.¹⁴⁷ This decision, however, was revoked in May 1498 when Franjo and Barbara regained royal favour.¹⁴⁸

Ivan Frajleković, who had held Gradisa as a *praedialis* since the time of Despot Vuk, reached a settlement with Barbara in January 1494, confirming her rights while retaining his possession. After Ivan's death, his elder son Juraj renewed the agreement in May 1497, according to a charter issued by a *locus credibilis*, the Chapter of Čazma (Csázma), on behalf of himself, his brother (*frater carnalis*) Nikola, and their cousins. The Frajleković family attempted to reassert their independence from Barbara concerning the possessions of Gradisa and Brebrovnica, but these efforts were blocked by King Vladislaus II, who in August 1499 ordered the Slavonian ban,

¹⁴⁵ MNL OL, DL 101031, 101037, 101052, 103962; Б. Хекић, „Сигилографски обрасци“, 19–21; Н. Обрадовић, *Срби и краљ Матија*, 238–239; idem, „Писмо деспотице Барбаре Бранковић (Франкопан) Јовану Береију“, *Стари српски архив* 23 (2024) 113–123; idem, „Писмо деспотице Барбаре Бранковић (Франкопан) Ладиславу од Гребена“, *Стари српски архив* 23 (2024) 97–111.

¹⁴⁶ MNL OL, DL 101221. Franjo Berislavić was mentioned in Bela Stena a year earlier, so it is probable that the marriage took place before the summer of 1494: Ferdo Šišić, „Rukovet spomenika o hercegu Ivanišu Korvinu i o borbama Hrvata s Turcima, (1473–1496)“, *Starine. Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti* 38 (1937) 84–85; Marija Karbić, *Plemićki rod Borića bana*, Slavonski Brod 2013, 49. The litigation with Batthyány continued for years, until 1501 (HR-HDA-25, fasc. 648, no. 7; MNL OL, DL 34318; M. Mesić, „Građa“, 135–138).

¹⁴⁷ MNL OL, DF 248701; L. Thallóczy & A. Áldásy, *A Magyarország és Szerbia*, 293–296, no. 411; M. Karbić, „Hrvatsko plemstvo“, 74; eadem, „Položaj pripadnica“, 150; eadem, *Plemićki rod*, 51. Dušanka Dinić-Knežević wrongly stated that this charter confirmed the estates to Barbara (D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 19). King Vladislaus's charter from 1496 states that all the mentioned estates reverted to the crown upon Vuk's death, but were later returned to his widow.

¹⁴⁸ HR-HDA-25, fasc. 648, no. 7; MNL OL, DL 34318; M. Mesić, „Građa“, 133–134.

John Corvinus, not to alter their status.¹⁴⁹ Barbara subsequently received a new royal charter in February 1500 for Komogojna and Gradisa, confirming the earlier cession of those estates to Despot Vuk by the Frajeković family, who continued to hold them as *praediales* under contract with their lords, Barbara and Franjo.¹⁵⁰ Following the death of Juraj Frajeković, Barbara and Franjo Berislavić transferred Gradisa to Nikola, identified as the son of Petar. The contract was concluded in the church of St Peter in Požega (Pozsega), and on 27 January 1502 Nikola confirmed that he would retain Gradisa under the terms of the agreement and serve Barbara and her husband as his predecessors had done.¹⁵¹

A dispute between Franjo and Barbara appears to have arisen in mid-February 1504, when she adopted Cristopher Corvinus (Corvin Kristóf, Krsto Korvin), the son of John Corvinus (Corvin János, Ivaniš Korvin) and Beatrice Frankapan (Frangepán Beatrix, Beatrica Frankapan), bequeathing to him Bela Stena and her other estates in the Counties of Križevci and Zagreb, which she would retain for her lifetime.¹⁵² Nevertheless, on 27 February 1504, John Corvinus, illegitimate son of King Matthias and then ban of Slavonia, appeared before the Chapter of Zagreb and confirmed to Franjo Berislavić, his son Ivan, and their descendants numerous estates acquired through marriage with Barbara: the fortress of Bela Stena with its market town, thirteen villages, and two river crossings (Bwczyn and Imenzky Brod); the estate of Teteševina with the castle and market town of Rasohatec and eleven villages (one of which later had the castle of Ustilonja/Ustilónya); the castle of Blinja-Novigrad (Blinja-Újvár) with five further villages; and the castles of Komogojna and Gradisa, with all associated possessions and rights in the Counties of Zagreb and Križevci.¹⁵³ A conflict appears to have arisen from this issue, as Franjo and Barbara reconciled in early March 1504, agreeing that Barbara would retain Bela Stena, Komogojna, and Teteševina, with two-thirds of the income from Bela Stena allocated to the upkeep of their shared court.¹⁵⁴ Already in early May, Barbara complained that her husband was

¹⁴⁹ HR-HDA-25, fasc. 649, no. 15–16, fasc. 1559, no. 99; MNL OL, DL 33630, 33631, 34258; M. Mesić, „Građa“, 125–126; M. Karbić, „Položaj pripadnica“, 149.

¹⁵⁰ HR-HDA-25, fasc. 571, no. 11; MNL OL, DL 33497; M. Mesić, „Građa“, 126.

¹⁵¹ MNL OL, DL 21088; L. Thallóczy & A. Áldásy, *A Magyarországnak és Szerbia, 300*, no. 416; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 19; M. Karbić, „Položaj pripadnica“, 150–151; A. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 356. It is unclear why this Nikola is called „son of Petar“, and not „son of Ivan“, since Juraj is mentioned as his brother.

¹⁵² MNL OL, DL 37757. The charter mentions a fortress with a marketplace (Bela Stena), five castles (*castella*) – Dworysthye, Wywar, Razohatecz, Komogoyna, and Gradycza – and nearly a hundred villages.

¹⁵³ HR-HDA-25, fasc. 630, no. 8; MNL OL, DL 34320; M. Mesić, „Građa“, 142; Lajos Thallóczy & Sándor Horváth, *Alsó-szlávniai okmánytár (Dubicza, Orbász és Szana vármegyék) 1244–1710*, Budapest 1912, 259–260; D. Dinić-Knežević, „Sremski Brankovići“, 19; M. Karbić, „Položaj pripadnica“, 151–153; A. Крстић, *Чланови династија*, 356.

¹⁵⁴ MNL OL, DL 37759; L. Thallóczy & S. Barabás, *A Frangepán család oklevéltára II*, 254–256; M. Karbić, „Položaj pripadnica“, 151.

not observing the agreement, though the reconciliation itself was not annulled. Consequently, at the end of May 1504 John Corvinus ordered that Franjo Berislavić be formally installed in the estates granted to him in late February of that year.¹⁵⁵ Two years later, King Vladislaus II confirmed this arrangement once more, renouncing royal rights to the estates.¹⁵⁶

Barbara died sometime before the beginning of June 1508, as is clear from the fact that on 2 June 1508 the king confirmed to Franjo and his son Ivan the charter he had issued in 1506, granting them the aforementioned estates in perpetuity.¹⁵⁷ Only three days later, however, the king revoked this charter, and all these estates were granted instead to the previously mentioned Thomas Bakócz, by then archbishop of Esztergom (Ostrogon) and a cardinal, and to his brothers, since Barbara had died without heirs.¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, it is evident that the Bakócz family was unable to enforce this donation, and Franjo Berislavić effectively retained possession of the estates until his death in 1517.¹⁵⁹ After Franjo's death, Bela Stena, Teteševina, and Komogojna were taken into the royal fisc by Ban Petar Berislavić (Berisló Péter), who was unrelated to the Berislavić family of Grabarje. Margaret Székely (Székely Margit, Margareta Sekelj), Franjo's third wife and widow, attempted to secure rights to the estates and to bring them into her new marriage with John Bánffy of Donja Lendava (Alsólendvai Bánffy János, Ivan Banić).¹⁶⁰ The dispute was resolved in 1520, when the estates were granted to Bánffy, and the king cautioned Jelena (Helen) Jakšić, widow of the late Serbian despot Ivaniš Berislavić, not to attempt to seize them by force. However, Bánffy was obliged to pay a substantial sum to cover the expenses of Petar Berislavić's garrisons.¹⁶¹ In the course of a protracted settlement, in 1524 and 1525 Bánffy pledged Teteševina, together with Blinja-Novigrad and Bela Stena, to Petar Keglević of Bužim, the king's courtier and former ban of Jajce, who acted in the king's name and with his consent.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁵ MNL OL, DL 37760.

¹⁵⁶ HR-HDA-25, fasc. 630, no. 7–8; MNL OL, DL 34320, 34321; M. Mesić, „Građa“, 142.

¹⁵⁷ HR-HDA-25, fasc. 630, no. 9; MNL OL, DL 34322; M. Mesić, „Građa“, 147.

¹⁵⁸ HR-HDA-25, fasc. 648, no. 12; MNL OL, DL 33633; M. Mesić, „Građa“, 148–149.

¹⁵⁹ MNL OL, DL 25519; Arijana Koprčina, „Dva popisa dragocjenosti Barbare Frankapan i Franje Berislavića Grabarskog – prilog istraživanju srednjovjekovne kulture življenja u Slavoniji“, *Osječki zbornik* 33 (2018) 47–58; Ненад Обрадовић, „Писмо Јована и Ференца Бериславића Стефану Егерварију“, *Стари српски архив* 22 (2023) 97–107.

¹⁶⁰ M. Karbić, „Položaj pripadnica“, 153; eadem, *Plemićki rod*, 128–129.

¹⁶¹ M. Mesić, „Građa“, 174–175, 180–182, 185–189, 192, 196, 210.

¹⁶² Ibidem, 222–229, 233–237, 240–243, 250–251; Radoslav Lopašić, *Spomenici hrvatske krajine* III, Zagreb 1889, 416–418; Vjekoslav Klaić, *Acta Keglevichiana: annorum 1322.–1527. Najstarije isprave porodice Keglevića do boja na Muhačkom polju*, Zagreb 1917, XLV–XLVII, 78–97, 102–104.

Conclusion

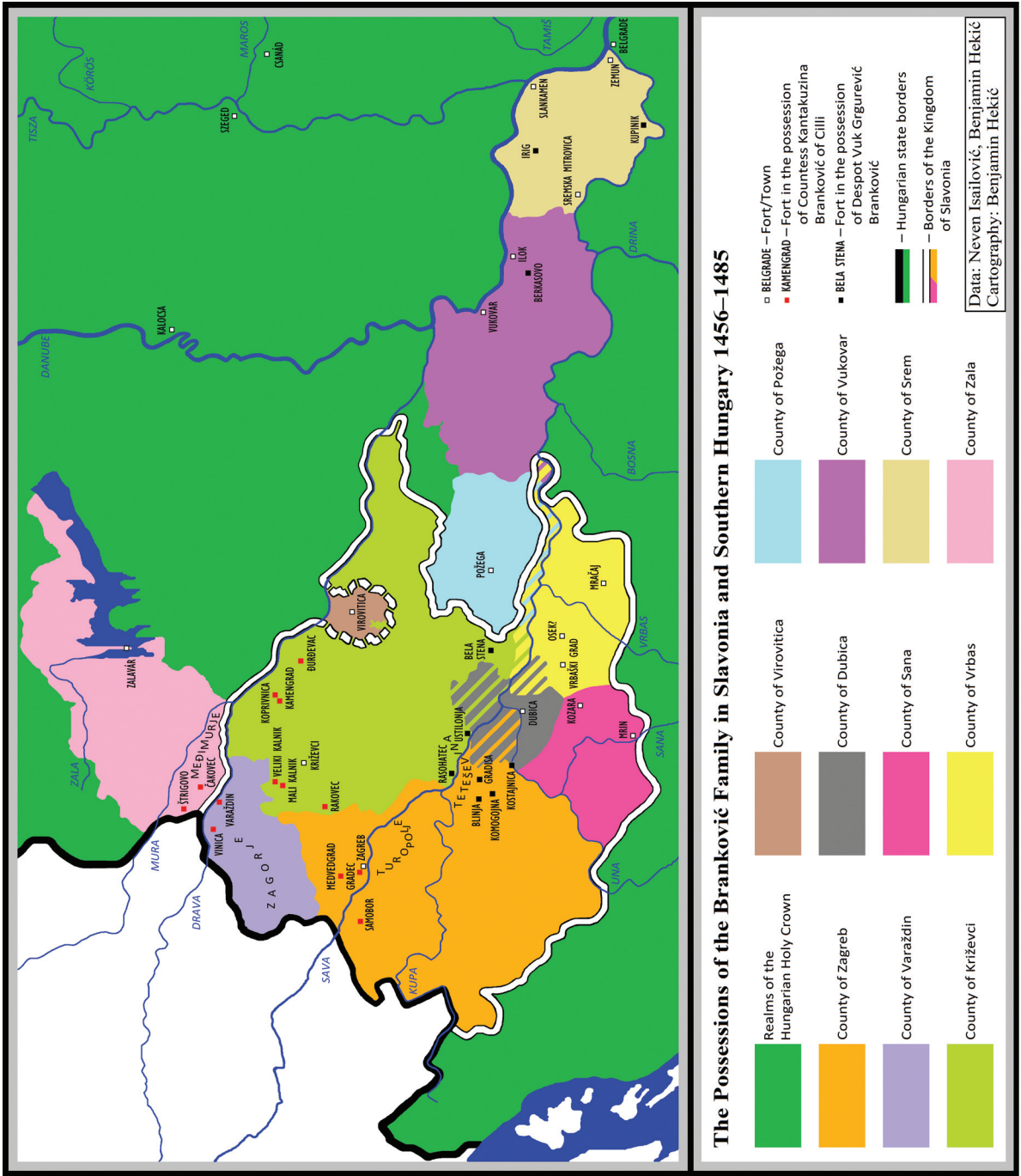
As noted earlier in the article, Kantakuzina, the last countess of Celje and the final heiress of the Celjski family, inherited her husband's Slavonian estates, which comprised twenty-two forts across the Counties of Zagreb and Križevci and the district of Zagorje, the free royal town of Gradec near Zagreb, as well as the entire neighbouring region of Međimurje with its forts. For several years, she retained possession of ten towns and forts in Slavonia, namely Varaždin, Vinica, Rakovec, Veliki Kalnik, Mali Kalnik, Koprivnica, Kamengrad, Đurđevac, Medvedgrad, and Samobor, as well as Gradec near Zagreb, and Čakovec and Štrigovo in Međimurje (see the map). Her stay in Slavonia came to an end in 1461, when she sold all her property rights and permanently left the Realm of St Stephen. Despot Vuk Grgurević gradually acquired all his Slavonian estates as a reward for his military service to King Matthias Corvinus between 1470 and 1482. At the time of his death in 1485, he held the extensive estates of Bela Stena, Teteševina, Komogojna (with Gradisa), and Kostajnica, in the Counties of Križevci and Zagreb, including several fortresses and marketplaces appurtenant to these estates (see the map). After his death, the majority of Grgurević's possessions passed to his widow, Barbara Frankapan.

Through these two parallel cases of members of the Branković family as landowners in late medieval Slavonia, it becomes evident how two high-ranking representatives of the former Serbian ruling dynasty integrated into a new environment while retaining their social status. Although Kantakuzina-Katherina acquired her Slavonian estates through marriage or, more precisely, as inheritance from her husband, and Vuk Grgurević through military service on the northern and western battlefronts of Matthias Corvinus, both Brankovićs held their estates as nobles of the Realm of St Stephen, on equal footing with other landowners who had received royal favour and support. There are no preserved records of communication between aunt and nephew, nor did they share or inherit any estates from one another. They held their lands in their own names, and these lands did not belong to them as properties of representatives of the former Serbian dynasty. Therefore, these were not dynastically inherited estates; their fate was instead determined by sale, bequest, or reversion to the crown, depending on how the estates were acquired and their legal status.

Kantakuzina's Slavonian estates followed the trajectory of the Celjski family, reflecting her position as the last heiress of a significant noble lineage in an environment dominated by the antagonistic Hunyadi magnates, which could hardly be considered favourable. In contrast, Despot Vuk's estates were not directly inherited by his relatives or successors in the despotal title – Đorđe and Jovan. Instead, he bequeathed most of them during his lifetime, with royal consent, to his wife Barbara, a member of the old and prominent Frankapan family. Through her subsequent marriage, the estates passed to another, likewise longstanding, Slavonian noble family. The Slavonian estates transferred to the new despotal line of the Branković family did not remain in their hands for long, as they were lost in legal

disputes that challenged earlier, often conflicting, royal charters issued by King Matthias.

It is worth noting that, despite becoming Hungarian nobility, both Kantakuzina and Vuk remained in the Orthodox faith and brought with them some of their Serbian officials and servants, as well as members of the wider Serbian population.



Map: THE POSSESSIONS OF THE BRANKOVIĆ FAMILY IN SLAVONIA AND SOUTHERN HUNGARY 1456–1485.

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A BRANKOVICS CSALÁD MINT A SZLAVÓNIAI MAGYAR NEMESSÉG RÉSZÉ A KÉSEI KÖZÉPKORBAN

Összegzés

Kantakouzine, az idősebbik Brankovics-testvér, Brankovics György szerb despota lánya volt, az egyik szlavóniai magyar földbirtokos család képviselője. Luxemburgi Zsigmond magyar király és német-római császár támogatását biztosítandó, Kantakouzine-t édesapja 1434-ben feleségül adta a császár rokonához, II. Ulrik cillei grófhhoz, akinek családja Stájerországban megörökölt birtokain túl kranji és karintiai birtokokat is szerzett, illetve más szlavóniai megyékben is földterületekhez jutott (Zágráb, Kőrös és Varasd). Miután férjhez ment, felvette a Katherina (Katalin) nevet, és energikus grófnőként még a család férfitagjainak életében részt vállalt a Cillei grófság és Szlavónia kormányzásában. Magyar nemesként és szlavóniai birtokosként, tevékenységének csúcsára apósa, II. Frigyes halála után, illetve férje meggyilkolását követően ért, amikor Kantakouzine 1456-ban a cillei grófság egyetlen örökösevé vált, hiszen Ulrikkal közös gyermekei még férje halála előtt elhunytak.

A stájerországi, karintiai és kranji birtokokat a Cillei grófsággal együtt Kantakouzine-nak nagyon gyorsan át kellett engednie III. Frigyes Habsburg uralkodónak, osztrák főhercegnek és német-római császárnak, így ezután Varasdban telepedett le. Itt értelemszerűen megtartotta különböző származású (német, horvát és szerb) udvaroncait és hivatalnokait. Innen bonyolította kormányzói hivatalos és pénzügyeit, amihez hozzátartozott a különböző igazolványok kiállítása is szlavóniai birtokain, melyekhez számos várerőd is tartozott (Varasd, Vinica, Rakolnok, Nagykemlék, Kiskemlék, Kapronca, Kővár, Szentgyörgyvár, Medvevár, Szamobor, Gradec a Zágráb melletti dombon fekvő királyi város, Csáktornya és Stridóvár a szomszédos Muraközben. Azonban a helyi nemesekkel és a bécsi meg a budapesti uralkodókkal támadt számos probléma miatt a cillei özvegy-grófnő úgy döntött, hogy eladja birtokait, amit 1461-ben végül meg is tett, és pénzbeli térítés ellenében az említett városok tulajdonjogát Vitovec János zagorjei grófra és szlavóniai bánra ruházta át, aki egykori férjének alkalmazottja volt. Ezután Kantakouzine testvérével, Brankovics István despotával (+1476) és családjával Friuliba költözött, itt testvérének megvásárolta a Belgrád kastélyt, majd ő maga Törökországba költözött, és Brankovics Máriának, (+1487) nővérének udvartartásához csatlakozott, aki II. Murád oszmán szultán felesége-özvegye volt. Kantakouzine végül Ježevo faluban hunyt el 1491 körül.

Kantakouzine unokaöccse, Vuk Grgurević volt az első szerb despota, akit Corvin Mátyás e tisztségében megerősített, miután a despota kilépett az oszmán szultán szolgálatából és a Magyar Királyságba ment 1464/65. A csehországi hadműveletekben való hű szolgálatáért a király 1470-ben vagy 1471-ben jutalmul Fejérkő várát adományozta a szerb despotának a környező falvakkal együtt Kőrös megyében.

Valószínűleg még ezt megelőzően a despota Kupinik, Ürög településeket kapta Szerém vármegyében és Berekszó települést Valkó vármegyében, amelyek nem a Szlavóniai Királysághoz, hanem a Magyar Királysághoz tartoztak. Ugyanabban az időszakban, amikor Fejérkőt, Vuk a királytól megkapta a Zágrábi és a Kőrösi vármegyék határán fekvő Tetusevinát, továbbá nagyszámú Száva-menti birtokot és falut.

A 15. század nyolcadik évtizedében Vuk despota Mátyás oldalán harcolt a törökök ellen Szerbiában és Boszniában, boszniai városok kapitánya lett, illetve az újonnan alapított Jajcei bánság bánja, emellett katonai szolgálatot teljesített Mátyás király seregében a III. Frigyes Habsburg uralkodó, osztrák főherceg és német-római császár elleni harcokban. Jutalomként Corvin Mátyás 1482 áprilisában neki adományozta Komogojna (Komogovina) várát és Gradisát a hozzá tartozó birtokokkal Zágráb vármegyében, emellett Komogojna mezővárost bevételeivel együtt. Kostajnica is Vuk birtokába került. Ily módon nagy birtokokra tett szert Szlavóniában, s Vuk despota feleségével, Barbarával (Borbála, szül. Frangepán) együtt kieszközölte Mátyás királynál Fejérkő és Tetusevina öröklési jogát az asszony számára, amennyiben túlélné Vukot, akivel nem volt közös gyermeke. Vuk 1485 áprilisában bekövetkezett halála után Mátyás király 1485 augusztusában és 1486 júliusában megerősítette Barbara örökléshez való jogát, továbbá kiterjesztette azt Komogojna és Gradisa várára, valamint hét birtokra a Zágrábi vármegyében. Barbara körülbelül 1495-ben újra férjhez ment Franjo Berislaviához (Beriszló Ferenc), birtokait pedig megtartotta II. Ulászló királlyal és új férjével való változó viszonya ellenére is. Halálát követően, 1508-ban, a király 1508 júniusában birtokait Bakócz Tamás esztergomi érseknek adományozta, ám ez az adomány nem valósult meg, és Berislavić azokat 1517-ben bekövetkezett haláláig megtartotta.

Cillei Kantakouzine-Katherina és Vuk Grgurević szlavóniai birtokaikra szerbeket telepítettek. Akár udvaroncokról vagy a birtokokon dolgozó hivatalnokokról, vagy a köznépről illetve katonákról volt szó, akik birtokaikon megtelepedtek, ez volt a szerbek első – igaz, kis léptékű – migrációja Szlavóniába. Ezáltal Kantakouzine és Vuk voltak a betelepülési folyamat kezdeményezői, amelyet aztán a későbbi századokban a Habsburgok és a törökök folytattak tovább.

Бењамин Хекић, Невен Исаиловић

**ЧЛАНОВИ ПОРОДИЦЕ БРАНКОВИЋ КАО УГАРСКО ПЛЕМСТВО
У СЛАВОНИЈИ У ПОЗНОМ СРЕДЊЕМ ВЕКУ**

Резиме

Кантакузина, старија од двоје Бранковића који су били угарски феудалци у Краљевини Славонији, била је кћи српског деспота Ђурђа Вуковића Бранковића. У плановима за обезбеђивање подршке угарског краља и римско-немачког цара Жигмунда Луксембуршког, отац је 1434. Кантакузину удао за царевог сродника, цељског грофа Улриха II, чија је породица, поред наслеђених баштина у Штајерској, стекла и поседе у Корушкој и Крањској, те у славонским жупанијама (Загреб, Крижевци и Вараждин). С новим именом Катарина, узетим у мужевом дому, енергична грофица је узимала удела у управним пословима Цељских у Славонији и током живота мушких чланова породице. Но, врхунац њених активности као угарске племкиње и славонске велепоседнице наступио је након смрти свекра Фридриха II, те мужевог убиства, када је Кантакузина 1456. остала једина баштеница Цељских, будући да су њена деца са Улрихом умрла пре очеве смрти.

Штајерске, корушке и крањске поседе, заједно с престоним Цељем, Кантакузина је морала веома брзо да препусти аустријском надвојводи и римско-немачком цару Фридриху III Хабзбуршком, те се сместила у Вараждину. Ту је очигледно задржала своје дворане и службенике различитог порекла (немачког, хрватског, али и српског), и одатле је водила своје управне и финансијске послове, што је укључивало и издавање исправа у вези с пословима везаним за њене славонске поседе које су чинили град Вараждин и утврђења Винаца, Раковец, Велики и Мали Калник, Копривница, Каменград, Ђурђевац, Медведград, Самобор, те Градец, краљевски град на брду крај Загреба, као и Чаковец и Штригово у суседном Међимурју. Међутим, због бројних проблема с локалним племићима, као и с владарима у Бечу и Будиму и њиховим бановима у Славонији, цељска грофица-удова је одлучила да прода своје поседе, што је најзад и учинила 1461. године, када је, уз новчану накнаду, својинска права за све наведене градове пренела на загорског грофа и славонског бана Јана Витовца, некадашњег службеника њеног мужа. Након тога, Кантакузина се најпре с братом, деспотом Стефаном Бранковићем (†1476), и његовом породицом сместила у Фурланији, где је за брата купила замак Београд, а затим се сама преселила у Турску, на двор своје старије сестре, султаније-удове Маре Бранковић (†1487), у Жежеву, где је и умрла око 1491.

Кантакузинин братанац, Вук Гргуревић, постао је први титуларни српски деспот кога је краљ Матија Корвин именовао, односно потврдио, након што је напустио службу османског султана и прешао у Угарску 1464/65. За верну војну службу током ратовања у Чешкој, краљ му је 1470. или 1471. даривао славонско

утврђење Белу Стену (Fejérkő) с припадајућим селима, у Крижевачкој жупанији. Вероватно и пре тога, деспот је од краља у посед добио Купиник, Ириг у Сремској и Беркасово у Вуковској жупанији, које нису биле део Краљевине Славоније, већ Краљевине Угарске. По свој прилици, у исто време када је добио белостенско имање, Вук је од краља у посед добио и дистрикт Тетешевину (Тетушевину) уз границу између Загребачке и Крижевачке жупаније, с већим бројем поседа и села дуж Саве.

Током осме деценије 15. века, деспот Вук је за краља Матију ратовао против Турака у Србији и Босни, те постао капетан босанских градова тј. бан новоуспостављене Јајачке бановине, а краљу је пружао војну службу и у сукобима с аустријским надвојводом и римско-немачким царем Фридрихом III Хабзбуршким. Као награду, априла 1482. Матија Корвин му је доделио тврде градове Комогојну (Комоговину) и Градису с припадајућим поседима, у Загребачкој жупанији, те трговиште Комогојну с приходима. У посед деспота Вука дошла је и Костајница. На овај начин стекавши значајне поседе у Славонији, деспот Вук је са супругом Барбаром (рођ. Франкапан) од краља Матије измолио дозволу да деспотица Барбара наследи поседе Белу Стену и Тетешевину ако надживи Вука, с којим није имала порода. По Вуковој смрти у априлу 1485, краљ Матија је августа 1485. и јула 1486. потврдио наслеђе Барбари, и проширио га и на Комогојну и Градису, те на седам поседа у Загребачкој жупанији. Барбара се око 1495. године преудала за Фрању Бериславића, задржавши своје поседе упркос променљивим односима с краљем Владиславом II и својим новим супругом. Када је умрла 1508. године, краљ је њене поседе даривао острогонском надбискупу Тамашу Бакоцу јуна 1508. године, али та даровница није спроведена у дело и Бериславић их је задржао до смрти 1517. године.

И Кантакузина-Катарина Цељска и Вук Гргуревић су на своје славонске поседе довели одређен број Срба. Било да се радило о дворанима и службеницима на имањима, или о пучанству и војницима који су се населили на њиховим славонским поседима, у питању су прве – али ипак малобројне – миграције српског живља у Славонију. Тиме су Кантакузина и Вук били зачетници овог процеса насељавања који ће у потоњим вековима Хабзбурговци и Османлије наставити и појачати.