

# LIVING BY THE BORDER: SOUTH SLAVIC MARCHER LORDS IN THE LATE MEDIEVAL BALKANS (13<sup>TH</sup>–15<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES)\*

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*Cuvinte cheie:* Evul mediu târziu, hotare, frontieră, nobileme, Balcani, slavii de sud, Serbia, Bosnia, Croația, Ungaria, otomanii

South Slavic states in the Balkans were at all times surrounded by potent neighbouring countries (Byzantium, First Bulgarian Empire, Hungary, Ottoman Empire) and their mutual relations were often uneasy. Those neighbours were first to establish formal marches along the borderline, with the aim of protecting their frontiers and forming the basis for broadening their territories at the expense of Slavic states.<sup>1</sup> A similar practice was later adopted by the Slavs as well. Since the time of Roman and Frankish military frontiers (*limes* and *marca*), such a system was well-known in European warfare and politics and it was usually organised around natural barriers. Lords of the marches were bearers of one of the highest titles in medieval hierarchy, and were usually appointed by the central government and belonging to the most trusted and loyal nobles of the country. In time, their service was rendering them and their family influential, mighty and often very rich.<sup>2</sup> Which was at first an office, i.e. a

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew B. Urbansky, *Byzantium and the Danube Frontier. A Study of the Relations between Byzantium, Hungary, and the Balkans during the Period of the Comneni* (Twayne Publishers, 1968); Ferenc Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni. Political Relations between Hungary and Byzantium in the 12th Century* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989); Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier. A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900–1204* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004<sup>2</sup>); Alexandru Madgearu, *Byzantine Military Organization on the Danube, 10th–12th Centuries* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica* 17 (11th ed.), ed. Hugh Chisholm (Cambridge: Cambridge

temporary and conditional position, gradually became a hereditary title linked with the range of estates. It was not always the case, but there are examples of such practice, especially from the period when central power's strength was decreasing (due to weak or underage rulers, political or military crisis). The marcher lords were, therefore, not only living by the border territorially, but also politically and economically.

As in some other parts of late medieval Europe, crises of central government and frequent conflicts between the states in the South Eastern part of the Old Continent made marcher lords extremely important political players. As it was already noted, although there were differences in administrative and military organisation of specific states, it was often the case that the territories on the borders were not given to the temporarily appointed administrators in whom the rulers put their undivided trust, but became hereditary possessions of a family or kin. In less centralised states as Bosnia and Croatia (the latter as unit of the Realm of St. Stephen), but to some extent also in a more centralised Serbia, marcher lords either exploited the strength of central power to extend their wealth and possessions through war and plunder, or rulers' weaknesses to launch their own political enterprise.<sup>3</sup> Being an important asset, they were prone to changing sides to their own benefit, especially in the times of greater conflicts like the one between neighbouring Hungarian Kingdom and Ottoman Empire in the late 14<sup>th</sup> and in 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>4</sup> By establishing their own area of influence, marcher lords were often leaders of rebellions and pioneers of political fragmentation of the late medieval Balkans.<sup>5</sup> Even after the final demise of South Slavic states, when the mutual border between Hungary and Turkey was established, the frontiersmen were essential, though not trustworthy factors of both offensive and defensive strategies of aforementioned monarchies, as well as their strategies of repopulation.<sup>6</sup> Since the military frontier system from the early modern period, as a product of central administration of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empire, has been thoroughly researched, we should now shed some light on the late medieval period in the same area.

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University Press, 1911), 688–689; Archibald Ross Lewis, *The Development of Southern French and Catalan Society, 718–1050* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965), 69–90; Julia M. H. Smith, *Province and Empire: Brittany and the Carolingians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> *Лексикон српског средњег века*, ed. Сима Ђирковић – Раде Михаљчић (Београд: Knowledge, 1999), 319–321 (Милош Благојевић).

<sup>4</sup> Nenad Lemajić, *Srpski narodni prvaci, glavari i starešine posle propasti srednjovekovnih država* (Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet u Novom Sadu, 1999), 30–60.

<sup>5</sup> Ferdo Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić i njegovo doba 1350–1416* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1902), *passim*; Сима Ђирковић, “Русашка господа,” *Историјски часопис* 21 (1974): 5–17.

<sup>6</sup> See footnotes 55 and 56.

It should first be noted that South Slavic states, faced by militarily superior Byzantine Empire and Turkic nations that formed and led early Bulgarian and Hungarian realm, avoided wide plains even if there were natural barriers in them, such as large rivers. Their marches were usually in mountainous regions with narrow gorges, overlooked by series of forts built on steep hills. Such configuration of land was, in fact, the main reason why these states preserved some independence in the earlier period of their existence, although they were often in some kind of alliance with a stronger neighbour. During their gradual rise to regional power in 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, respectively, both Serbia and Bosnia had variable relations with Byzantium and Hungary.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the Hungarians gave impetus for the development of marcher lordships in the Balkans, along the border between the Realm of St. Stephen and South Slavic states. The Árpád monarchy was a composite state and some of its parts were given to the members of royal family as administrators (i.e. Croatia, Slavonia).<sup>8</sup> Those parts were most commonly called banates, and were led by ban. After the renewal of the Bulgarian Empire, strengthening of Serbian state, Mongol invasion and influx of Eastern nations (Cumans and Pechenegs) by mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, Hungarian rulers gradually formed or reformed several banates along their southern border.<sup>9</sup> Kingdoms of Croatia and Slavonia were already administered by ban, and they were followed by the banates of Usora (Ózora), Soli (Só), Mačva (Macsó), Kučevo (Kucsó), Braničevo (Barancs) and Severin (Szörény).<sup>10</sup> Some of these units were sometimes merged under the same

<sup>7</sup> Сима Ђирковић, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе* (Београд: Српска књижевна задруга, 1964), 58–135; *Историја српског народа I*, ed. Сима Ђирковић (Београд: Српска књижевна задруга, 1981), 263–272, 297–314, 341–356, 437–475, 496–556, 566–602; Георгије Острогорски, *Историја Византије* (Београд: Просвета, 1993), 422–503; Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen. A History of Medieval Hungary (895–1526)* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 88–111, 124–136, 151–153, 157–167, 195–206.

<sup>8</sup> Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 33–37, 52, 89, 91–92, 94, 96.

<sup>9</sup> *Лексикон српског средњег века*, 28–29 (Сима Ђирковић); Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 98–106, 108; István Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars. Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans, 1185–1365* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 57–85.

<sup>10</sup> Ђирковић, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе*, 65–77; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 106, 108; Frigyes Pesty, “A macsóí bánok,” *Századok* 9 (1875): 361–381, 450–467; Frigyes Pesty, *A Szörényi bánóság és Szörény vármegye története I–III* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1877–1878); Михаило Динић, *Српске земље у средњем веку. Историјско-географске студије* (Београд: Српска књижевна задруга, 1978), 84–11, 270–291; Александар Крстић, “Кучево и Железник у светлу османских дефтера,” *Историјски часопис* 49 (2002): 140–149; Ема Миљковић – Александар Крстић, *Браничево у XV веку. Историјско-географска студија* (Пожаревац: Народни музеј Пожаревац, 2007), 13–14, 29; Сима Ђирковић, “Земља Мачва и град Мачва,” *Прилози за књижевност, језик, историју и фолклор* 1–4 (2008): 3–20.

authority, and sometimes separated. In certain periods during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, even banate of Bosnia, a more or less independent Slavic state, was formally included in this frontier project for Hungarian Southern Lands (*Délvidék*, *Alvidék* or *Végvidék*).<sup>11</sup> Although primarily administered by the members of royal family, the banates were mostly inhabited by the Slavs and many administrators were Slavic noblemen linked to Hungarian court by family ties or service (there were even some Eastern Slavs such as Rostislav Mikhailovich, a member of Kievan Rus' dynasty, in Mačva). In such a way, Bosnian ban Prijezda practically kept his state by accepting to be formally included in Hungarian system, although some Hungarian nobles occasionally bore the title of ban of Bosnia.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Serbian king Dragutin, after he resigned from the throne in 1282 and divided lands with his brother Milutin, acquired banates of Usora, Soli and Mačva, as well as Belgrade (around 1284) as the brother-in-law of the Árpád king Ladislaus IV. In time he practically formed his own buffer state between Hungary and Serbia and was still styled as king.<sup>13</sup> In early 1290's, aided by his brother Milutin, he was able to conquer regions of Kučevo and Braničevo from Cuman-Bulgarian noblemen Drman and Kudelin, allies of Tatar khan Nogai (1292).<sup>14</sup>

After Dragutin, also known as the king of Sylvania, died in 1316, his son Vladislav II tried to keep his "state" together, but was not able to do so. Some of his possessions became part of Serbia, while the others eventually reverted to Hungary.<sup>15</sup> In next century and a half, Serbian-Hungarian border was on the rivers Sava and Danube or somewhat south of them, depending on the strength of both countries, but primarily the strength of Serbia. While Serbia was powerful (in the late 13<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries), it seems that central government had control over the borderline. In times of conflict

<sup>11</sup> Ђирковић, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе*, 42–77.

<sup>12</sup> Ђирковић, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе*, 72–77.

<sup>13</sup> Динић, *Српске земље*, 123–147; Михаило Динић, "Област краља Драгутина после Дежева," *Глас Српске академије наука* 203 (1951): 61–82; Михаило Динић, "Однос између краља Милутина и Драгутина," *Зборник Радова Византолошког Института* 3 (1955): 51–61, 64–67, 72–75, 80; Сима Ђирковић, "Краљ Стефан Драгутин," *Рачански зборник* 3 (1998): 17, 20; Јованка Калић, "Краљ Драгутин између Ђурђевих Ступова, Београда и Ариља," *Рачански зборник* 3 (1998): 33–36; Тибор Живковић, Владета Петровић, Александар Узелац, *Анопути Descriptio Europae Orientalis. Анонимов Опис источне Европе* (Београд: Историјски институт, 2013), 120–125.

<sup>14</sup> Динић, *Српске земље*, 95–98; Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, 102–108; Александар Узелац, *Под сенком пса. Татари и јужнословенске земље у другој половини XIII века* (Београд: Утопија, 2015), 118–120, 204–210.

<sup>15</sup> *Историја српског народа* I, 472–475, 496–498; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 132, 134–135, 151–152.

with first Angevin kings of Hungary, Serbian king and emperor Dušan intervened, leading the army to the border himself. In his time, local administrators were appointed and controlled by the central government. However, Dušan's son and heir, emperor Uroš, was unable to maintain the same level of order in the country which more than doubled its size.<sup>16</sup>

In 1359 king Louis I of Hungary crossed the Danube and defeated Serbian forces in a two-month campaign that reached the mountain and town of Rudnik. Supposedly, before the Hungarian attack, emperor Uroš did not succeed to reconcile two of his noblemen. The weaker of them, a member of the Rastislalić family who had possessions in the border region of Braničevo along the banks of the Danube, secretly crossed the river and requested aid from the Hungarians. He defeated his opponent with the assistance of Hungarian troops and became vassal of king Louis I. Through the Rastislalićs Hungary acquired control over the right bank of the Danube once again.<sup>17</sup> These marcher lords remained semi-independent until 1365, when Hungarian king conquered Vidin and fully included them in his Realm. However, in 1379 a Serbian magnate, prince Lazar, defeated Radič Branković of the Rastislalić family and reincorporated the regions of Kučevo and Braničevo in Serbia, maybe with consent of both his and Radič's suzerain – king Louis I.<sup>18</sup> One charter from 1381 indicates that prince Lazar also acquired possessions in the region belonging to the banate of Mačva, which were taken from Hungarian hands.<sup>19</sup> In mid-1380's an alliance was made between Lazar, Bosnian king Tvrtko I and Hungarian nobleman, former ban of Mačva, Ivaniš Horvat (János Horváti). Together they gained control over a large part of Southern Hungary, only to be pushed back in 1386 and 1387 by the royal forces of queen Mary and king Sigismund.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Историја српског народа* I, 514–515.

<sup>17</sup> Динић, *Српске земље*, 98; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 164; Михаило Динић, “Растислалићи. Прилог историји распадања српског царства,” *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 2 (1953): 139–144.

<sup>18</sup> Динић, “Растислалићи,” 139–142; Динић, *Српске земље*, 98–99; Милош Благојевић, “Господари Срба и Подунавља,” *Историјски гласник* 1–2 (1983): 43–44; Андрија Веселиновић, “Североисточна Србија у средњем веку,” *Историјски гласник* 1–2 (1987): 55–56.

<sup>19</sup> Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 164–165; Александар Младеновић, *Повеље кнеза Лазара. Текст, коментар, снимци* (Београд: Чигоја штампа, 2003), 131, 148, 165, 172, 192; Милош Благојевић, “Јединство и подвојеност српских земаља пре Косовске битке,” *Немањини и Лазаревићи. Српска средњовековна државност* (Београд: Завод за уџбенике и наставна средства, 2004), 284–291.

<sup>20</sup> Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 195–202; Благојевић, “Јединство и подвојеност,” 298; Сима Ђирковић, “Косовска битка у међународном контексту,” *Глас Српске академије наука и уметности* 378 (1996): 53–54, 60–65.

It is important to mention some other marcher lords in 14<sup>th</sup>-century Serbia. One of them was a rather mysterious Detoš who controlled the mountainous area south of the banate of Mačva and whose possessions were taken by Hungarian palatine Nicholas Garai in 1392, only to be returned to Serbian despot Stephen in 1403.<sup>21</sup> The whole area came to be known as *Detoševina* (the land of Detoš). In eastern Serbia, near the region formerly controlled by the Rastislalić family, in Braničevo, there are mentions of the Vukosalić and Desislalić family, also in late 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> Unlike these personalities, which are only scarcely mentioned in the sources, there is more data on Nikola Zojić, master of Rudnik. The mountain and town of Rudnik were often the point of border between Hungary and Serbia, belonging to the latter most of the time. Before 1373 Zojić may have been in the service of another Serbian territorial lord Nikola Altomanović. After Nikola's defeat, Zojić joined the supporters of prince Lazar. However, in 1398, along with his fellow-noble Novak Belocrkvić he rebelled against Lazar's son and successor Stephen, claiming that the young prince is in alliance with the Hungarians who attacked Rudnik and Zojić's possessions. Zojić was recommending himself to the Turks, formal suzerains of Serbia, but his rebellion ultimately failed.<sup>23</sup> In 15<sup>th</sup> century, Stephen Lazarević, trying to recentralise his state, introduced a system of military-administrative units (so-called *vlasti*), which were also formed along the border with the

<sup>21</sup> Динић, *Српске земље*, 44–54; Сима Ђирковић, “Црна Гора и проблем српско-угарског граничног подручја,” *Ваљево постанак и успон градског средишта*, ed. Синиша Бранковић (Ваљево: Народни музеј, 1994), 63–69; Милош Благојевић, “Насеља у Мачви и питања српско-угарске границе,” *Ваљево постанак и успон градског средишта*, ed. Синиша Бранковић (Ваљево: Народни музеј, 1994), 78–92; Гордана Томовић, “Посед српског властелина Детоша у XIV веку,” *Историјски часопис* 58 (2009): 93–108; Милош Ивановић, “Структура властеоског слоја у држави кнеза Лазара,” *Власт и моћ – Властела Моравске Србије од 1365. до 1402. године*, ed. Синиша Мишић (Крушевац: Народна библиотека Крушевац – Центар за историју географију и историјску демографију ФФБГ, 2014), 85–87.

<sup>22</sup> Благојевић, “Јединство и подвојеност,” 296; Милош Ивановић, “Структура властеоског слоја,” 82–84; Раде Михаљчић, “Прилог српског дипломатару. Даровнице властеоске породице Вукославић,” *Историјски гласник* 1–2 (1976): 99–105; Марко Шуица, *Немирно доба српског средњег века. Властела српских обласних господара* (Београд: Службени лист, 2000), 116–119.

<sup>23</sup> Марко Шуица, *Немирно доба*, 103–110, 153, 160, 167–168; Милош Ивановић, “Структура властеоског слоја,” 77–79; Марко Шуица, “Завера властеле против кнеза Стефана Лазаревића 1398. године,” *Историјски гласник* 1–2 (1997): 7–24; Марко Шуица, “Властела кнеза Стефана Лазаревића (1389–1402),” *Годишњак за друштвену историју* 11/1 (2004): 15, 21–27; Марко Шуица, “Писмо Дубровчана Николи Зојићу: 1397, октобар 1.,” *Стари српски архив* 10 (2011): 123–128; Марко Шуица, “Дубровачка писма: огледало друштвено-политичких промена у српским земљама (1389–1402),” *Годишњак за друштвену историју* 18/2 (2011): 37–39, 41–43, 45, 48.

Hungarians and the Turks. The system was temporarily functional, relying on the army and the series of major fortresses, as well as on the men power of population in *vlach* status, but it did not prevent Ottoman conquest, especially since many commanders of most important strongholds (such as Golubac) often chose to surrender to the Turks.<sup>24</sup>

We already mentioned the case of Bosnian ban Prijezda in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>25</sup> Protected by a range of mountains, he retained a high level of independence, while formally and occasionally being included in Hungarian administrative system. His heirs were under pressure of Croatian and Slavonian marcher lords Babonići and Bribirski, also royal administrators who rose from local to regional power, the latter acquiring a great deal of autonomy from the central authorities.<sup>26</sup> In early 14<sup>th</sup> century the Bribirski seized control over most of Bosnia, only to be defeated in 1322 by a broad coalition gathered by the first Angevin king of Hungary Charles I Robert, who originally rose to power with the help of the Bribirski.<sup>27</sup> Bosnian banal family of the Kotromanićs survived, first in alliance with the Bribirski and after that by helping king Charles I to

<sup>24</sup> *Лексикон српског средњег века*, 92–93 (Јелена Мргић); Михаило Динић, “Власти за време Деспотовине,” *Зборник Филозофског факултета у Београду* 10/1 (1968): 237–244; Сима Ђирковић, *Голубац у средњем веку* (Браничево – Пожаревац, 1968), 11–26; Душанка Бојанић-Лукач, “Власи у северној Србији и њихови први кануни,” *Историјски часопис* 18 (1971): 255–268; Милош Благојевић, “Крајишта средњовековне Србије од 1371. до 1459. године,” *Историјски гласник* 1–2 (1987): 29–42; Андрија Веселиновић, *Држава српских деспота* (Београд: Завод за уџбенике, 2006<sup>2</sup>), 101–113, 189–194, 254–257; Александар Крстић, “Град Некудим и Некудимска власт,” *Историјски часопис* 55 (2007): 99–113; Милош Ивановић, “Смедеревска и Голубачка власт у време владавине деспота Ђурђа Бранковића,” *Наш траг* 50 (2010): 437–449; Милош Ивановић, *Властела Државе српских деспота* (Београд: Филозофски факултет, 2013, unpublished doctoral dissertation), 46, 68, 173–175, 229–230, 234, 358, 416–417; Александар Крстић, “Подунавље и Посавина Србије у позном средњем веку. Историјско-географски аспекти истраживања,” *Историја и географија. Сусрети и прожимања*, ed. Софија Божић (Београд: Географски институт САНУ – Институт за новију историју Србије – Институт за славистику РАН, 2014), 23–27.

<sup>25</sup> Ђирковић, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе*, 72–77.

<sup>26</sup> Ђирковић, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе*, 74, 77–80; Nada Klaić, *Srednjovjekovna Bosna: politički položaj bosanskih vladara do Tvrtkove krunidbe (1377. g.)* (Zagreb: Eminex, 1994), 119–179.

<sup>27</sup> Ђирковић, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе*, 77–80, 84–88; Klaić, *Srednjovjekovna Bosna*, 155–172; Vjekoslav Klaić, *Bribirski knezovi od plemena Šubić do god. 1347.* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1897), 76–78, 81–82, 99–101, 114–118; Damir Karbić, *The Šubići of Bribir. A Case Study of a Croatian Medieval Kindred* (Budapest: Central European University, 2000, unpublished doctoral dissertation), 65–70, 84–85, 92; Јелена Мргић-Радојчић, *Доњи Крају. Крајина средњовековне Босне* (Београд: Филозофски факултет у Београду, 2002), 40–46; Damir Karbić, “Šubići Bribirski do gubitka nasljedne banske časti (1322.),” *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti HAZU* 22 (2004): 16–17, 22.

defeat the afore-mentioned Croatian magnates.<sup>28</sup> Although the restoration of local dynasty marked the beginning of rise of medieval Bosnia, the country remained decentralised, with strong local factions of gentry and nobility. Its marcher lords were an important element of state building and its dissolving, depending on period and political circumstances.<sup>29</sup>

The best known and documented example is that of the Hrvatinić family, *de facto* rulers of the Donji Kraji (Lower Parts, Alföld, Alsó Rézsek), a march between Croatia-Slavonia and Bosnia. Hailing from a *župa*<sup>30</sup> near the river Vrbas, this family gradually gained control over a number of *župas* forming the *land* (orig. *zemlja*) of Donji Kraji. They sometimes recognised the authority of the Slavonian Babonići or Croatian Bribirski, and sometimes the authority of Bosnian ban. Their suzerains confirmed their offices of local administrators (*župans* or *knezes*) which in fact become hereditary.<sup>31</sup> In 1322, the Hrvatinić clan supported Stephen (Stjepan) II of Bosnia against Mladin II Bribirski and once again made their march the part of Bosnian state.<sup>32</sup> In 1350's and 1360's, when Bosnia was frequently under the attack of king Louis I of Hungary, many members of the Hrvatinić family made a pact with the king and surrendered their forts, receiving rather large estates in Slavonia in exchange.<sup>33</sup> However, a few of them, like Vukac Hrvatinić, remained loyal to the ban of Bosnia.<sup>34</sup> Vukac's sons Hrvoje and Vuk Vukčić, although they also "flirted" with Louis I in 1370's, become principal generals in Bosnian newly-created king Tvrtko I's campaign to the west after Louis's death in 1382 and civil war in Hungary which began in 1386.<sup>35</sup> By Tvrtko's death in 1391 Hrvoje

<sup>28</sup> Ђирковић, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе*, 84–88; Klaić, *Srednjovjekovna Bosna*, 155–185; Мргић-Радојчић, *Доњи Краји*, 40–45.

<sup>29</sup> Ђирковић, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе*, 88–132; Klaić, *Srednjovjekovna Bosna*, 172–266.

<sup>30</sup> *Župa* was a smaller administrative unit in South-Slavic states. See: *Лексикон српског средњег века*, 195–197 (Гордана Томовић).

<sup>31</sup> Мргић-Радојчић, *Доњи Краји*, 42–70; Jelena Mrgić-Radojčić, "Rethinking the Territorial Development of the Medieval Bosnian State," *Istorijski časopis* 51 (2004): 46, 51–52, 54–57.

<sup>32</sup> Ђирковић, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе*, 87–88, 94; Мргић-Радојчић, *Доњи Краји*, 43–54; Ludwig Thallóczy, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens und Serbiens im Mittelalter* (München – Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1914), 7–8, 55–60.

<sup>33</sup> Thallóczy, *Studien*, 60–64, 332–333, 336–347; Ђирковић, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе*, 121–125; Мргић-Радојчић, *Доњи Краји*, 60–68; Mladen Ančić, *Putanja klatna. Ugarsko-hrvatsko kraljevstvo i Bosna u XIV. stoljeću* (Zadar – Mostar: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Zadru – Zajednica izdanja Ranjeni labud, 1997), 153–173.

<sup>34</sup> Ђирковић, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе*, 128–129, 131; Мргић-Радојчић, *Доњи Краји*, 66–68; Јелена Мргић-Радојчић, "Повеља бана Твртка кнезу Вукцу Хрватинићу," *Стари српски архив* 2 (2003): 167–184.

<sup>35</sup> Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje*, 37–75; Ančić, *Putanja klatna*, 174–233; Мргић-Радојчић, *Доњи Краји*, 71–80.



and Vuk regained control over the whole land of Donji Kraji and became governors of Croatia and Dalmatia in the name of Hungarian pretender Ladislaus of Naples. In this area they imposed their own taxes and named their *familiars* the holders of many local offices. Their previous coalition with Slavonian and Croatian nobility, namely Horváti and Paližna, and Serbian prince Lazar, almost completely breached the Hungarian borderline with the South Slavs.<sup>36</sup> However, by 1394 the coalition had already failed on many fronts and the counter-attack of king Sigismund of Hungary and his principal supporters – the Garai family made the Hrvatinićs change their side once again and recognise Hungarian ruler as their suzerain. While Vuk definitely switched allegiances, Hrvoje chose to accept dual allegiance (to both Sigismund of Hungary and Dabiša of Bosnia).<sup>37</sup>

In 1398, Hrvoje Vukčić felt strong enough to depose Dabiša's widow and to put king Ostoja on the throne of Bosnia, leading the coalition of magnates against Sigismund's claims to the Bosnian crown. Once again, Hrvoje's march became the basis for the expansion to the west.<sup>38</sup> Re-establishing connections with Hungarian pretender Ladislaus of Naples and the rebels against Sigismund's rule, Hrvoje invaded Slavonia and conquered Southern Dalmatia and Croatia once again, being rewarded by the title of Duke of Split in 1403. His personal estates were now ranging from the river Sava to the Adriatic Sea.<sup>39</sup> In late 1408, another shift of power occurred. Hrvoje, being in collision with Bosnian

<sup>36</sup> Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje*, 75–86; Ђирковић, “Косовска битка”, 53–54, 61–68; Franjo Rački, “Pokret na slavenskom jugu koncem XIV. i početkom XV. Stoljeća,” *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 2 (1868): 68–160; Franjo Rački, “Pokret na slavenskom jugu koncem XIV. i početkom XV. Stoljeća,” *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 3 (1868): 65–156; Mladen Ančić, *Bosanska vlast u Hrvatskoj i Dalmaciji 1387–1394* (Beograd: Filozofski fakultet, 1985, unpublished master thesis), 15–67; Dubravko Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti (sveta kruna ugarska i sveta kruna bosanska) 1387–1463* (Zagreb – Sarajevo: Synopsis, 2006), 25–67.

<sup>37</sup> Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje*, 86–101; Ančić, *Bosanska vlast*, 68–73; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 67–81; Невен Исаиловић, *Политика босанских владара према Далмацији (1391–1409)* (Београд: Филозофски факултет, 2008, unpublished master thesis), 30–51; Невен Исаиловић, “Повеља војводе Хрвоја Вукчића Хрватинића угарском краљу Жигмунду и краљици Марији,” *Грађа о прошлости Босне* 1 (2008): 87–97; Emir O. Filipović, “Bosna i Turci za vrijeme kralja Stjepana Dabiše – neke nove spoznaje,” *Споменица др Тибора Живковића*, ed. Срђан Рудић (Београд: Историјски институт, 2016), 273–301.

<sup>38</sup> Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje*, 127–139; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 87–94; Исаиловић, *Политика босанских владара*, 66–72.

<sup>39</sup> Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje*, 139–167; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 95–107; Исаиловић, *Политика босанских владара*, 72–122; Dubravko Lovrenović, “Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić i srednjodalmatinske komune (1398–1413),” in *Jajce 1396–1996: Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog simpozija u povodu 600. obljetnice spomena imena grada Jajca*, ed. Dubravko Lovrenović (Jajce: Općina Jajce, 2002), 31–51; Neven Isailović, “O familijarima Hrvoja Vukčića Hrvatinića u Splitu (1403–1413),” *Istorijski časopis* 58 (2009): 125–146.

barons and witnessing withdrawal of Ladislaus of Naples from the Balkans, once again reconciled with king Sigismund.<sup>40</sup> Their relationship was, however, very strenuous, especially since Hrvoje wanted to keep his full authority in what was becoming his “state”, while Sigismund wanted to be crowned king of Bosnia only to find that Hrvoje cannot fulfil him that wish anymore.<sup>41</sup> In 1413, Sigismund and other Bosnian nobles plotted to terminate Hrvoje’s buffer state between Hungary and Bosnia. After initial success, their plans started to crumble when Hrvoje called the Turks to his aid, which ended in disastrous defeat of Hungarian army in the valley of the river Lašva in summer of 1415.<sup>42</sup> Vukčić’s state did cease to exist, but only after he died in 1416, without direct male heirs. His nephews and successors continued to be Bosnian marcher lords, but failed to achieve the semi-independent position of their uncle.<sup>43</sup>

The other example worth noting is that of the Zlatonosović family, marcher lords from Usora region, south of the Sava, east of the river Vrbas and west of the river Drina. Their history is less documented, but it is certain that they had control over some parts of no-man’s land between Bosnia and Hungary in late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. This region, partly in lowland, was frequent battle-field during Bosnian-Hungarian wars in the above-mentioned period.<sup>44</sup> That was probably the reason why Zlatonosovići also recognised dual allegiance, to the Bosnian state and Hungarian king. With their seat in Zvornik on the Drina, they were crucial for stability of both mining region near Srebrenica and strategic land of Belin, protecting Hungarian counties of Vukovo (Valkó) and Srem (Szerém) and the banate of Mačva. Sigismund gave them many possessions in

<sup>40</sup> Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje*, 202–206; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 137–147; Исаиловић, *Политика босанских владара*, 158–170.

<sup>41</sup> Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje*, 210–226; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 143–171; Emir O. Filipović, “Viteške svečanosti u Budimu 1412. godine i učešće bosanskih predstavnika,” *Spomenica akademika Marka Šunjića (1927–1998)*, ed. Dubravko Lovrenović (Sarajevo: Filozofski fakultet u Sarajevu, 2010), 285–306.

<sup>42</sup> Сима Ђирковић, “Две године босанске историје (1414. и 1415.),” *Историјски гласник* 3–4 (1953): 29–42; Сима Ђирковић, “О једном посредовању деспота Стефана између Угарске и Турске,” *Истраживања* 16 (2005): 229–240; Невен Исаиловић – Александар Јаковљевић, “Шах Мелек (Прилог историји турских упада у Босну 1414. и 1415. године),” *Споменица академика Симе Ђирковића*, ed. Срђан Рудић (Београд: Историјски институт, 2011), 441–453.

<sup>43</sup> Šišić, *Vojvoda Hrvoje*, 226–237; Мргић-Радојчић, *Доњи Крају*, 93, 108–121; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 171–216.

<sup>44</sup> Динић, *Српске земље*, 294–301; Pavo Živković, “Usorska vlasteoska porodica Zlatonosovići i bosanski kraljevi (posljednja decenija XIV i prve tri decenije XV stoljeća),” *Historijski zbornik* 39 (1986): 147–162; Срђан Рудић, “О жени војводе Вукмира Златоносовића,” *Историјски часопис* 55 (2007): 113–117; Јелена Мргић, *Северна Босна 13–16. век* (Београд: Историјски институт, 2008), 93–95, 110–114, 126.

Slavonia (such as the Đurđevac estate), and they were also members of Bosnian noble assembly.<sup>45</sup> In late 1430, however, it seems that they were eliminated by Bosnian king Tvrtko II who wanted their area for himself, but ultimately failed to incorporate Usora in his realm, since it went to Hungarian vassal despot George (serb. Đurađ) of Serbia.<sup>46</sup>

The case of Croatia and Slavonia has already been indirectly discussed. But, it is very important to note the difference in the administrative organisation between these two units of the Realm of St. Stephen. While in late medieval Slavonia the position of count was mostly an office, in Croatia local landowners, usually well-rooted in the region, virtually made the same position hereditary, especially since the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. Despite royal attempts to curb the power of local magnates, through open war or expansion of rights of lesser nobility and gentry, it became clear that the entire structure of authority in Croatia depended on the alliance of the central government (especially ban as its representative) and local nobility, some of which was marcher (primarily towards Serbia and Bosnia).<sup>47</sup> Maybe not to full extent, but there is some correlation between a remark of some English historians that Northumberland (i.e. North Eastern march of England) “knew no king but a Percy” and the situation in the late medieval Balkans.<sup>48</sup> Marcher lords often rose to power serving the central authorities, but later it became quite difficult to control them. Such were the cases of the families Bribirski and Nelipčić, and much later Zrinski and Krčki-Frankapani.<sup>49</sup> For instance, Ivaniš Nelipčić, *knez* of Cetina, was at times a staunch supporter of his brother-in-law, already mentioned Bosnian magnate Hrvoje Vukčić, and at times “the shield” of king Sigismund’s cause in Croatia and Dalmatia.<sup>50</sup> After he died without male heirs, his possessions were ulti-

<sup>45</sup> Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 129, 131, 150, 167, 212, 229–231; Pál Engel, “Neki problemi bosansko-mađarskih odnosa,” *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti HAZU* 16 (1998): 60–61 (the same article was previously published in German: Pál Engel, “Zur Frage der bosnisch-ungarischen Beziehungen im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert,” *Südost Forschungen* 56 (1997): 30–31).

<sup>46</sup> Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 244, 253, 259; Мрѓић, *Северна Босна*, 119–122.

<sup>47</sup> Nada Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata u razvijenom srednjem vijeku* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1976), 253–661.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Hicks, *Bastard Feudalism* (London – New York: Routledge, 2013), 38.

<sup>49</sup> Klaić, *Bribirski knezovi*, passim; Karbić, *The Šubići of Bribir*, passim; Karbić, “Šubići Bribirski do gubitka,” 1–26; Vjekoslav Klaić, *Krčki knezovi Frankapani I. Od najstarijih vremena do gubitka otoka Krka (od god 1118. do god 1480.)* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1901); Ivan Botica, *Krbavski knezovi u srednjem vijeku* (Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet u Zagrebu, 2011, unpublished doctoral dissertation).

<sup>50</sup> Дубравко Ловреновић, “Цетински kneз Иваниш Нелипчић у политичким превирањима у Далмацији крајем XIV и током првих деценија XV стољећа,” *Прилози Института за историју у Сарајеву* 22 (1986): 204–210; Pavo Živković, “Ivaniš Nelipić

mately transferred to the hands of king's minions – the Talovac family, whose heirs controlled the area for two generations.<sup>51</sup> Such abrupt shift of power did not lead to the desired stabilisation of the southern borders, but rather to a series of larger or minor crises. Since the mid-15th century, the Turkish raids and clashes with Bosnian lords led to the weakening and gradual disintegration of Croatian defence.<sup>52</sup> In Slavonia, only Babonić family had a similar experience, since their hereditary possessions were along the border with Bosnia, south of the river Sava. Therefore, they usually had overall control over the small Slavonian marcher counties of Vrbas, Sana and Dubica.<sup>53</sup>

The Ottomans also established a military frontier system in conquered territories of the Balkans. It was partially based on the principles taken from the vanquished Christians. The Turks did not only have their own marches (*krajište*, uc) and magnate marcher families (such as the Ishakovići of Skoplje), but also employed lesser Christian nobility (as *sipahis*), vlach communities or additional troupes (*martoloses*, *voynuks*, *derbencis*) to defend the borderline, attack the enemy and guard the roads.<sup>54</sup> In such a way, large numbers of people were engaged in this offensive-defensive system, controlled by both local and central administration. A similar system was adopted by the Hungarians and many South Slavic marcher commanders changed sides over the years,

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između Mletačke republike i bosanskog kralja Tvrtka II Tvrtkovića,” *Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta u Zadru* 27/14 (1987–1988): 151–170; Ante Birin, *Knez Nelipac i hrvatski velikaški rod Nelipčića* (Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet, 2006, unpublished doctoral dissertation), 91–156.

<sup>51</sup> Elemér Mályusz, “A Négy Tallóci fivér,” *Történelmi szemle* 23/4 (1980): 531–587 (in German: “Die vier Gebrüder Talloci,” *Studia Slavica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 28 (1982): 3–66).

<sup>52</sup> Borislav Grgin, *Počeci rasapa. Kralj Matijaš Korvin i srednjovjekovna Hrvatska* (Zagreb: Ibis grafika, 2002), 81–186.

<sup>53</sup> Lajos Thallóczy, Samu Barabás, *A Blagay-család oklevéltára. Codex diplomaticus comitum de Blagay* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1897), passim; Lajos Thallóczy, Sándor Horváth, *Alsó-szlavóniai okmánytár (Dubicza, Orbász és Szana vármegyék) 1244–1710* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1912), 1–304; Hrvoje Kekez, “Između dva kralja: plemićki rod Babonića u vrijeme promjene na ugarsko-hrvatskom prijestolju, od 1290. do 1309. godine,” *Povijesni prilozi* 35 (2008): 61–89; Hrvoje Kekez, *Plemićki rod Babonića do kraja 14. stoljeća* (Zagreb: Univerzitet u Zagrebu. Hrvatski studiji, 2012, unpublished doctoral dissertation), 14–177.

<sup>54</sup> Глиша Елезовић, “Скопски Исаковићи и Паша-Јигит бег,” *Гласник Скопског научног друштва* 11 (1932): 159–168; Branislav Đurđev, Nedim Filipović, Hamid Hadžibegić, Muhamed Mujić and Hazim Šabanović, *Kanuni i kanun-name za Bosanski, Hercegovачki, Zvornički, Kliški, Crnogorski i Skadarski sandžak* (Sarajevo: Orijentalni institut, 1957), 11–14; Hazim Šabanović, *Krajište Isa-bega Ishakovića. Zbirni katastarski popis iz 1455. godine* (Sarajevo: Orijentalni institut, 1964); Dušanka Bojanić, *Turski zakoni i zakonski propisi iz XV i XVI veka za smederevsku, kruševačku i vidinsku oblast* (Beograd: Istorijski institut, 1974), 12–13, 15–16, 21–23, 27–34, 42–48, 93–96; Hazim Šabanović, *Bosanski pašaluk. Postanak i upravna podjela* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1982), 15–87.

sometimes leading the population from their region along.<sup>55</sup> After the fall of medieval Hungary, Habsburg and Ottoman authorities gradually organised a more centralised and centrally financed Military Frontier, diminishing the power of locally based marcher lords.<sup>56</sup>

### TRĂIND LA FRONTIERĂ: MARGRAFII SUD-SLAVI ÎN BALCANII EVULUI MEDIU TÂRZIU (SECOLELE XIII–XV)

#### Rezumat

Articolul oferă o prezentare generală a istoriei teritoriilor de frontieră din Evul mediu târziu și a stăpânilor în regiunea cuprinsă între statele sud-slave și țările vecine (Ungaria, în primul rând). Se remarcă faptul că atât statele sud-slave cât și vecinii lor apropiați au organizat teritoriile de frontieră ca mărci oficiale sau neoficiale. În vreme de război, o stare frecventă în epocă, aceste teritorii-tampon erau primele expuse atacurilor dușmanilor. Din acest motiv, nobilii puternici și de seamă, de încredere pentru suzeran, au ocupat pozițiile de margrafi, acumulând, ca urmare a serviciilor aduse, mai multă putere și avere care, ocazional, deveneau ereditare. Pe baza exemplelor oferite de nobilii sârbi, bosnioci și croați care controlau zonele de hotar, se subliniază că în ciuda încrederii ce le-a fost arătată, aceștia nu erau întotdeauna loiali suzeranului. Pentru a-și atinge propriile țeluri, aceștia declanșau uneori chiar și divizarea propriilor lor țări folosindu-se de substanțiala lor putere politică, economică și umană. În perioada ocupației otomane a Balcanilor, au fost dispuși să schimbe taberele, servind și pe unguri, și pe turci în același timp, conducând pe același drum și populația locală.

<sup>55</sup> Lemačić, *Srpski narodni prvaci*, 30–60; Ненад Лемајић, *Српска елита на прелому епоха* (Сремска Митровица – Нови Сад: Историјски архив Срем – Филозофски факултет у Новом Саду, 2006), passim; Adrian Magina, “Un nobil sârb în Banatul secolului al XV-lea: Miloš Belmužević,” *Analele Banatului* (Serie Nouă. Arheologie-Istorie) 18 (2010): 135–142; Александар Крстић, “Нови подаци о војводи Милошу Белмужевићу и његовој породици,” *Иницијал. Часопис за средњовековне студије* 1 (2013): 161–185.

<sup>56</sup> Олга Зиројевић, *Турско војно уређење у Србији 1459–1683* (Београд: Историјски институт, 1974), passim; *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe. The Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest*, eds. Géza Dávid, Pál Fodor (Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill, 2000); Géza Pálffy, “The Habsburg Defense System in Hungary Against the Ottomans in Sixteenth Century: A Catalyst of Military Development in Central Europe,” *Warfare in Eastern Europe, 1500–1800*, ed. Brian J. Davies (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012), 35–61.

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