



MEDIEVAL BOSNIA AND SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN RELATIONS

POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, AND CULTURAL LIFE AT THE ADRIATIC CROSSROADS

Edited by **DŽENAN DAUTOVIĆ,**
EMIR O. FILIPOVIĆ
 and **NEVEN ISAILOVIĆ**

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In memory of Prof. Dr. Dubravko Lovrenović (1956–2017)



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INTRODUCTION

Dženan Dautović, Emir O. Filipović, and Neven Isailović

THE DALMATIAN COAST of the Adriatic and its vast Balkan hinterland were an integral part of the medieval European world, both in a geographical and historical sense. However, due to language issues and scarcity of sources, the whole region has been overlooked by western historiography, and has thus remained beyond the imagined borders of medieval Europe. Consequently, this book will be devoted to the wider region of Southeast Europe, which was physically framed by the eastern Adriatic coast in the south, the edges of the Pannonian plain in the north and west, and the shores of the Black Sea to the east, while being politically and culturally shaped by the Venetian Republic, Hungarian Kingdom, and the Byzantine Empire. Within this region, particular emphasis will be placed on topics pertaining to the history of the medieval Bosnian state, since it shared a lot of common features with contemporary European societies while simultaneously exhibiting some very distinctive peculiarities. As the central political entity within the broader region, situated on the ridge where ancient Roman emperors split their imperial domains into eastern and western parts, and where boundaries between Catholic and Orthodox Christianity were demarcated deep into the Middle Ages, it was heavily influenced by both sides of this civilizational divide. But as a small, landlocked country, Bosnia managed to preserve its individuality, characterized above all by religious plurality, the existence of an indigenous ecclesiastical organization, recognized neither by the Pope in Rome or the Patriarch of Constantinople, and by a persistent viability of certain ancient customs which defined its remarkable position.

Few western historians have devoted their careers to the research of the medieval past of this region, while domestic medievalists only sporadically published their papers in English, French, German, or other world languages. For these reasons, this collected volume covers a number of different themes and a broad chronological scope. Another feature of this volume is that all the contributors belong to a younger generation of medievalists, who have already published their research papers, to a greater or lesser extent, in major world languages, and have therefore already initiated the process of integrating the history of medieval Bosnia and Southeast Europe into dominant general narratives of the Middle Ages.

The contributions encompass various topics ranging from the political development of the states in the region, including interstate diplomatic relations, to certain religious or cultural nuances that have been of special interest. Several papers of the volume are dedicated to the different kind of interstate relations in Southeast Europe. The volume opens with the contribution of Neven Isailović, which considers the way the expansion of the Bosnian state towards the West affected its relations with the neighbours whose territory was conquered during this expansion. The focal part of his work discusses two

periods during which the Bosnian state held dominance over almost the entire central area of the east coast of the Adriatic, including the Dalmatian communes, during the reign of King Tvrtko I and the peak of the power of the Bosnian magnate Duke Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić. Unlike the temporary rule of the Croatian noble kindred of Šubići from Bribir over Bosnia in the early fourteenth century, the era of Bosnian control over Dalmatia and Southern Croatia had an irreversible impact on regional politics. Although this period lasted less than twenty years, the prolonged conflict gradually weakened the positions of the Realm of St. Stephen and paved the way for the imminent dominance of the Republic of St. Mark on both shores of the Adriatic, which was in turn coupled with prevailing Ottoman influence in the continental Balkans. Years of bitter rivalry over border regions between Bosnia and Croatia-Dalmatia made the unity of the neighbouring Christian states an impossible task, and so Ottoman pressure ultimately led to their demise.

Enes Dedić identifies the Ottomans, as well as the Hungarian Kingdom and the Republic of Ragusa, as the main forces which participated in the modeling of relations between the Bosnian Kingdom and the Serbian Despotate between 1402 and 1459. The interests of Hungarian rulers were mainly focused on the northern part of the border between Bosnia and Serbia, specifically on the town and mining area of Srebrenica, while the Ottomans had clear aspirations toward the territory of both states, gradually weakening their military and economic strength with persistent political pressure. Meanwhile, the Ragusans were keen observers of this process since their main interests lay in preserving good trading links with both political entities, which, to the benefit of modern historians, ultimately caused the creation of the majority of written sources regarding these relations which survive to the present day.

Francesco Dall'Aglio articulates the complex web of relations that the Bulgarian Tsardom developed with its neighbours during the reign of Emperor Kalojan. Most of these relations were hostile. During the first phase, he collided with the Hungarian King Emeric as well as with Byzantine emperors Alexios III and Alexios IV. Using Kalojan's need to legitimize his position and the desire of his opponents to disqualify him as a usurper, Pope Innocent III gained a very important role in political intrigues of Southeast Europe. The second phase of Bulgarian foreign relations began after the Fourth Crusade and the formation of the Latin Empire. At first, Kalojan tried to establish friendly contacts with the new power holders in the Balkans who dethroned his Byzantine enemies, but his efforts hit a wall, since the first Latin emperor Baldwin of Flanders and the powerful lord of Thessalonica, Boniface of Montferrat, saw Bulgaria as the very best avenue for expanding their domains. This triggered a set of very tumultuous and violent events culminating in the battle near Adrianopolis where Bulgarians achieved an important victory, additionally imprisoning the emperor Baldwin.

The presence of the Ottoman Turks in the Balkans dates from the mid-fourteenth century, and they soon became a defining political factor in the whole region. Güneş Işıksel offers a detailed analysis of one pillar of Ottoman society—the elite noblemen who had very distinctive roles and positions in the processes of forming and expanding Ottoman power from Constantinople to Vienna, from the Middle East and Northern Africa to Central Europe. Those elites had an especially important role in the Ottoman

Balkans, usually as frontier-marcher lords whose main objective was to destabilize neighbouring countries through swift and effective raiding incursions. Işıksele presents not just the military aspect of their actions, but also emphasizes those concerning their patronage in the building of mosques, hospices, caravanserais, bathhouses, etc. An especially important example in this sense is the family of Pasha Yiğit, whose descendants Ishak and Isa had important roles in the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans.

In his contribution, Davor Salihović presents a Hungarian perspective on the situation immediately after the Ottoman and Hungarian dismemberment of the Bosnian Kingdom in 1463, following events in detail up until the appointment of Nicholas of Ilok as king of Bosnia in 1471 by the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus. The author debates with older historiography regarding multiple themes, among which the most useful are the ones elaborating Nicholas's role and participation in the internal quarrels in the Hungarian Kingdom. As one of the most powerful magnates of his time, the former voivode of Transylvania and the ban of Slavonia and Mačva (Macsó), Nicholas was initially granted the possession of territories in the northeastern parts of Bosnia, in the Land of Usora, but he gradually managed to improve his position and succeeded in gaining consent from King Matthias to acquire the title "King of Bosnia."

Finally, there are two chapters which predominantly cover themes from religious or everyday life. Dženan Dautović offers an analysis of different marriage practices in medieval Bosnia and how they were perceived by the Roman Curia. The first part of this article presents several examples of marital unions which needed special papal dispensation due to the close blood kinship of the spouses, or because one of them was under the suspicion of being a heretic. These cases demonstrate the gradual improvement of relations between Bosnia and the Papacy during the fourteenth century, which stands in stark contrast to the paucity of sources regarding their ties throughout the 1200s. The second part of the work is devoted to a particular ancient custom which was typical for medieval Bosnia: the practice of the conditional, easily dissolvable marriage known as matrimony *per modo Bosignanorum*. This practice was so deeply rooted in medieval Bosnian society that even the most zealous efforts of Franciscan missionaries failed to achieve significant progress in this matter as part of their attempts to re-catholicize the Bosnian monarchy. The already mentioned religious pluralism of the society resulted in a high number of inter-confessional marriages, which were not commonplace in other contemporary societies.

The final piece in the volume is that of Igor Razum, which presents the activities of an important though not very well-known church-persona, Stephen II, who held the office of the bishop of Zagreb for twenty-two years (1225–47). This high-ranking ecclesiastical official probably finished his studies in Bologna (or in Oxford) and served as a court chancellor for the Hungarian king Andrew II before he was elected to the position of bishop. Stephen II was active during the pontificates of Gregory IX and Innocent IV, maintaining ties with both pontiffs and managing to persuade them to unify the ecclesiastical sees of Zagreb and Split into a single archbishopric, a project that ultimately did not survive the test of time. Stephen was also witness to the Mongol invasion of the Hungarian lands after the Battle near the river Sajó, which compelled him to escape from Zagreb.

Overall, the volume aims to shed fresh light on the medieval past of a rather understudied and neglected region of Europe with Bosnia as its focal point. It attempts to analyze the main processes, internal political developments, international relations, the ever-present and changing frontier policies, social characteristics, cultural patterns, religious and cultural issues. As editors, we hope that the presented studies and examples will convince readers that despite its various peculiarities, distinctive historical experience, and liminal geographical position, Southeast Europe was still an integral component of the rich and varied European medieval experience. The editors would like to thank Dr. Judith Rasson for her generous contribution in significantly improving the reading-quality of the final drafts of the work collected here.

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