

POVIJEST JEDNOG SUKOBA ZA BUDUĆNOST NOVIH SUSRETA. TURSKA PRISUTNOST U DALMACIJI OD 16. DO 18. STOLJEĆA

THE HISTORY OF A CONFLICT FOR THE FUTURE
OF NEW ENCOUNTERS: TURKISH PRESENCE IN
DALMATIA FROM THE 16TH TO THE 18TH CENTURY



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SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF PASTORAL ACTIVITIES OF THE FRANCISCANS IN THE AREA OF DALMATIA UNDER THE OTTOMAN RULE

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Abstract

The author of this paper explores, from a historical and theological-pastoral perspective, the lives and pastoral activities of Franciscans of what is today the Franciscan Province of the Most Holy Redeemer in the area of Dalmatia under Ottoman rule (16th-18th century). To provide a comprehensive understanding of the historical context in which the pastoral care occurred, the first part of the paper describes the socio-cultural circumstances of Dalmatia during that period. Following this contextual overview, the author examines the ecclesiastical circumstances, ways of pastoral activity, and the practice of faith, with particular emphasis on the available translations of Turkish documents from the mentioned time. In the conclusion, the author offers a theological-pastoral evaluation of era, highlighting the impact of the Ottoman rule on pastoral work.

1. SOCIO-CULTURAL CIRCUMSTANCES

1.1. Ottoman conquest and the resulting population displacement

In accordance with theological-pastoral methodology and the methods of pastoral evaluation, this research begins by examining the realities in which pastoral activities were carried out.¹ Missions are never carried out in a timeless or uniform manner; instead, they are carefully tailored to the specific circumstances in which people live². With this in mind, we

¹ Conf. Sergio Lanza, La teologia pastorale secondo la "scuola lateranense", *I Laterani, Questioni di teologia pastorale*, 1 (2010) 1, 13-64.

² Conf. Norbert Mette, Il Gesù difficile. L'invito a una prassi di sequela nelle condizioni attuali, *Concilium* 33 (1997) 1, 41.

will first briefly explore the socio-cultural circumstances of the period to better visualise and understand the pastoral activities of the Franciscans of today's Province of the Most Holy Redeemer during the Ottoman occupation in the 16th and 17th centuries in Dalmatia. Following the execution of Stjepan Tomašević, the last king of Bosnia, which was deceitfully carried out in Ključ in 1463, the Ottomans eliminated all of Bosnia's high nobility, and their children were taken to Constantinople and converted to Islam.³ In doing so, they dismantled the foundation of Bosnia's statehood and left the people leaderless. This pattern was not unique to Bosnia and Herzegovina but was also replicated in other regions conquered by the Ottomans. The tragic fate of a large part of Bosnia was soon shared by Herzegovina, and later, by much of Dalmatia as well. Bosnia, weakened by prolonged internal crises and conflicts among magnates, was unable to mount significant resistance against the Ottoman forces. Unfortunately, the efforts of some Christian rulers to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in their defence against the Ottomans were ultimately unsuccessful. After the fall of Herzegovina in 1482, the Ottomans periodically raided Dalmatia. = Even before Herzegovina's definite fall, Ottoman assault troops (akinji) conducted incursions into specific areas of Dalmatia, ravaging and plundering villages.⁴ These actions significantly weakened the economic and defensive capabilities of the defenders. Given these circumstances, there was great uncertainty, leading the population to flee to safer areas where the threat of Ottoman raids was less severe or absent altogether.⁵

³ For a complete insight of the specified period see the proceedings: Ante Birin (ed.), *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.–1463.): slom srednjovjekovnoga Bosanskog Kraljevstva. Zbornik radova sa Znanstvenog skupa održanog 11. i 12. studenog 2011. godine u Jajcu* [*Stephen Tomašević (1461 – 1463): crash of medieval Kingdom of Bosnia. Proceedings from the Scientific Meeting held on November 11 and 12, 2011, in Jajce*], Hrvatski institut za povijest – Katolički bogoslovni fakultet u Sarajevu, Zagreb, 2013.

⁴ More on Ottoman intrusions in the area of Dalmatia see: Bogumil Hrabak, *Turske provale i osvajanja na području današnje sjeverne Dalmacije do sredine 16. st.* [Turkish intrusions and conquests in the area of today's northern Dalmatia until the middle of the 16th century], *Radovi instituta za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskog fakulteta u Zagrebu*, 19 (1985) 1, 69-100.

⁵ Conf. Fra Ivan Marković, *Sinj i njegovo slavlje, Spomen knjiga* [*Sinj and Its Celebration. A Memorial Book*], Dionička tiskara u Zagrebu, Zagreb, 1898, reprint 1998, 12-13.

It was particularly concerning that during these incursions, the Ottomans did not focus on besieging fortified cities; instead they targeted surrounding areas. They burned forests, cut down vineyards and orchards, and killed or enslaved the rural population. By the early 16th century, the Ottomans had conquered most of what is now the Dalmatian Zagora (Hinterland). As a result of these circumstances, large-scale migrations of the Croatian population occurred, as people were forced to flee to save their lives. The Croats from the occupied areas primarily sought refuge in fortified coastal cities and other coastal settlements⁶. However, the people did not flee without resistance. As long as there was any chance of defence, they fought to protect their land and families. When resistance became futile, some surrendered and remained within the Ottoman Empire, while others fled to the coast, seeking safety in free territory. The Uskoks, for example, relocated to Senj and the surrounding area, from where they later caused significant problems for the Ottomans.⁷

The Ottomans first entered Sinj in 1513, occupying it in 1516 and subsequently, establishing the seat of the Croat vilayet⁸ a few years later. In 1522, they expanded their control by capturing Knin, Drniš, Skradin and Obrovac. With the occupation of Klis in 1537, the Ottomans effectively became the rulers of Central Dalmatia. The following year, in 1538, they seized Neorić, which had been held by Uskoks until its commander-viceban, was killed by the Turks near Kadina Glavica in Petrovo Polje.

⁶ Some fled to islands (Čiovo, Veliki and Mali Drvenik), or even across the sea (to Apulia). Part of the population of the Šibenik Zagora fled before the Turks to Istria, and it is known that some noble families, like the Talovac and Neorić families, fled to Slavonija. Conf. Emilio Laszowski, *Monumenta habsburgica II*, Zagreb, 1915., 186; Kresimir Kužić, *Povijest Dalmatinske zagore* [*The History of the Dalmatian Zagora*], Književni krug Split, Split, 1997, 89; Conf. Vjeko Omašić, *Mletačko-tursko razgraničenje na trogirskom području nakon ciparskog i kandijskog rata i njegove posljedice* [*Venetian-Turkish Demarcation Lines in the Trogir Area After the Wars of Cyprus and Crete, and Its Consequences*], Trogir, 1971, 12.

⁷ Conf. K. Kužić, *Povijest Dalmatinske zagore* [*The History of the Dalmatian Zagora*], 96.

⁸ Marin Tadin, *Iz prošlosti Muća* [From the past of Muć], *Crkva u svijetu* 15 (1980) 1, 56.

The nearby source, named Banovača⁹ after the viceban, commemorates this event. Following these defeats, the Uskoks retreated over the Mosec mountains and transferred their base of operations to Senj.¹⁰ The fall of Klis marked the loss of the last stronghold of the Hungarian-Croatian state in the south, leading to the establishment of the Klis Sanjak, which encompassed nearly the entire Central Dalmatian region. Consequently, the territories of the old Croatian counties of Cetina, Vrhrika, Knin, Zmino and Klis were divided into the following nahiyas: Sinj, Cetina, Klis, Dicmo, Petrova gora (sometimes referred to as Zagora or Zagorje), Zmino Polje, Poljica, Petrovo Polje and Vrlika.¹¹ Sinj, Drniš, Klis, Vrlika, Knin and Hrvace were part of urban areas (kasaba), while other occupied cities, including Makarska, Imotski, and Vrgorac, were part of the sanjak called Hercegovina.¹²

1.2. Forced displacement of the Old and migration of the New Population

In the occupied and largely deserted regions near the newly established borders, uncultivated fields persisted, posing a significant challenge for both Venetian and Ottoman authorities. Following the wars and the occupation of a substantial portion of Dalmatia, the presence of unin-

⁹ Conf. Gašpar Vinjalić, *Kratki povijesni i kronološki pregled zbivanja koja su se dogodila Slavenima u Dalmaciji, Hrvatskoj i Bosni, 1514.-1769.* [A Brief and Chronological Overview of Events Which Happened to the Slavs in Dalmatia, Croatia, and Bosnia, 1514 – 1769] (arr. Bruno Pezo, matched with the original and accompanied by explanations by Vicko Kapitanović), Književni krug Split, Split, 2010, 37-38.

¹⁰ Conf. K. Kužić, *Povijest Dalmatinske zagore* [The History of the Dalmatian Zagora], 97.

¹¹ Tomislav Perković, Demografske posljedice na dinarsko-zagorskom prostoru prouzročene Morejskim ratom (1684.-1699.) [The demographic consequences in the Dinaric-Zagora area caused by the Morean War (1684-1699)], in: Josip Dukić – J. Grbavac (ed.), *300. obljetnica slavne obrane Sinja 1715. godine. Zbornik radova s Međunarodnoga znanstvenog skupa* [300th Anniversary Celebration of the Glorious Defence of Sinj 1715: (1715-2015): Proceedings from the International Scientific Conference], Sinj, 2018, 82.

¹² Conf. Fehim Spaho, Jedan turski popis Sinja i Vrlike iz 1604. [A Turkish list of Sinj and Vrlika from 1604], *Acta historico-oeconomica Iugoslaviae* 12 (1985), 137-162.

habited land was disadvantageous to all parties involved. During the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire extended its reach to the sea by Obrovac, occupying nearly the entire hinterland of Zadar, Šibenik, Trogir, Split, Omiš and the entire Makarska coast. This extensive area, which included the entirety of inland Bosnia as well as the regions surrounding Herceg-Novi, Budva and Ulcinj, was consolidated into a large administrative unit known as the Bosnia Eyalet, established in 1580. This eyalet was subdivided into three sanjaks: Hercegovina, Krka (Lika) and Klis.¹³ Both the Ottoman and Venetian authorities, driven by economic and military considerations, sought to repopulate the area, which includes Kotari and Bukovica, we today call Dalmatian Zagora. For instance, in 1533, they reached a demarcation agreement concerning the areas of Šibenik, Trogir, Klis, Solin, and Kamen. According to this agreement, the Ottomans resettled populations from previously conquered areas into sixteen villages in the Trogir hinterland (Suhidol, Trolokve, Radošić, Bristivica, Blizna, Zbičje, Mitlo, Bašindol, Prapatnica, Ljubitovica, Vraca, Kosmači, Labin, Opor, Prgomet).¹⁴ These inhabitants were required to pay all prescribed taxes to both the Venetian and Ottoman authorities, a topic that will be elaborated on further.¹⁵

From the visit of Nikola Bijanković, who was then the apostolic visitor and later became the bishop of Makarska, in 1681- prior to the large-scale immigration of populations from Bosnia and Herzegovina that occurred a few years later- it is evident that the area of the old Zagora (Split and

¹³ Conf. Milorad Pavić, *Jugoistočna Europa pod osmanskom vlašću* [*Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule*], Sveučilište u Zadru, Zadar, 2014, 179; For more on the Bosnian Eyalet see: Hazim Šabanović, *Bosanski pašaluk. Postanak i upravna podjela* [*The Bosnian Eyalet. Origin and Administrative Division*], Sarajevo, 1982, 204-216; Ive Mažuran, *Hrvati i Osmansko Carstvo* [*The Croats and the Ottoman Empire*], Zagreb, 1998, 40-76.

¹⁴ Conf. Karlo Kosor, *Drniška krajina za turskih vladanja* [*The Drniš region during the Ottoman rule*], in: Ante Čavka (ed.), *Povijest Drniške krajine* [*The History of the Drniš Region*], Split, 1995, 105; Danica Božić-Bužančić, *Prilog poznavanju stanovništva i antroponima Mučko-lečevičke zagore* [*Contribution to the knowledge of the population and anthroponyms of the Muć-Lečevica Zagora*], *Čakavska rič: Polugodišnjak za proučavanje čakavske riječi* 16 (1988) 2, 36.

¹⁵ Usp. K. Kužić, *Povijest Dalmatinske zagore* [*The History of the Dalmatian Zagora*], 111.

Trogir hinterland) and the Cetina region were very sparsely populated.¹⁶ The backbone of the entire Central Dalmatian region consisted of the fertile valley interstices around Sinj, Drniš, Knin and Kotari. At the beginning of the 16th century, 67.3% of households were located in the nahijas withing these areas (Kosovo, Petrova Gora, Petrovo Polje, Zminje Polje, Sinj and Ostrovica).¹⁷ When considering the size of the villages, i.e., the number of households (based on Ottoman census from 1550 and 1604), villages were biggest in Zminje Polje and in Petrovo Polje. Approximately 61% of inhabited places in the Central Dalmatian region were small villages with no more than 10 households. In nearly the entire area of occupied Dalmatia, from Sinj to Lika, only 4,220 households were recorded in the 1528 census, increasing to 6,631 households by the 1604 census, excluding single individuals.¹⁸

In the border region, encompassing the entire area from Cetina to Velebit, the population was frequently engaged in battles and lived in a state of constant insecurity and uncertainty. Under such conditions, characterised by frequent raids, plundering, and destruction of property from both sides, stable settlements could not be established. The land remained uncultivated, and as a result, animal husbandry¹⁹ became the primary means of subsistence. The cultural life of the population was largely influenced by religious affiliation. Islamic culture was predominantly present in cities where the Muslim population formed the majority, while Chris-

¹⁶ In the mentioned visit Bijanković visited Bisko, Dugopolje, Konjsko, Muć in which there was only 10 Catholic families, Radunić, Bračević, Crivac, Klis, Sinj (Cetinu). Conf. Mile Vidović, *Nikola Bijanković – splitski kanonik i makarski biskup 1645-1730* [*Nikola Bijanković – the Split Canon and the Bishop of Makarska*], Split, 1981, 36-37; Slavko Kovačić, *Crkva na skradinsko-kninskom području u XVII. stoljeću prema izvještajima skradinskih biskupa Svetoj Stolici* [The Church in the Skradin-Knin area in the 17th century according to the reports of the bishops of Skradin to the Holy See], *Croatica christiana periodica* 1 (1977) 1, 24-33.

¹⁷ Aladin Husić, *Demografske prilike u srednjodalmatinskom zaleđu početkom 16. Stoljeća* [The demographic circumstances in the central Dalmatian hinterland at the beginning of the 16th century], *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju*, Orijentalni Institut u Sarajevu, Sarajevo, 2007, 232-234.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 233-234.

¹⁹ Conf. Stipan Zlatović, *Franjevci Države Presvetog Odkupitelja i hrvatski puk u Dalmaciji* [*The Franciscans of the Province of the Most Holy Redeemer and the Croatian People in Dalmatia*], Knjigotiskara i litografija C. Albrechta, Zagreb, 1888, 125.

tian culture was dominant in rural areas.²⁰ To illustrate the demographic situation, we reference the Ottoman census from 1550 for the cities and towns in Dalmatia, which provides a numerical comparison of Christian and Muslim families.²¹

TOWN	Muslims	Single individuals	Christians	Total
Nečven	8	3	17	25
Sinj	14	5	20	34
Drniš	14	2	16	30
Knin	8	0	2	10
Vrh Rika	5	1	0	5

Later data from 1574 indicates that there were 53 Muslim households in the Sinj area. Excluding including military personnel (ranging from 50 – 300 soldiers), as well as individuals employed in the judiciary and state administration, it can be estimated that the population of Sinj²² at that time ranged from approximately 1,000 to 2,000 inhabitants.

The population under Ottoman rule, both in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Dalmatia, frequently expressed their dissatisfaction through various rebellions.²³ Of particular interest for the region in question is the rebellion of 1647, which occurred during the Cretan War (1645–1669). According to an agreement between the representatives of the discontent-

²⁰ Michael Ursinus in his paper *Sinj and its surroundings according to the Turkish census from 1574*, brings a list (a translation of a defter) of all landowners in Sinj and its closer surroundings from the second half of the 16th century. Conf. Michael Ursinus, *Sinj i njegova okolica prema turskom popisu iz 1574*. [Sinj and its surroundings according to the Turkish census from 1574], in: Josip Dukić - Josip Grbavac (ed.), *300. obljetnica slavne obrane Sinja 1715. godine [300th Anniversary Celebration of the Glorious Defence of Sinj 1715]*, 65-80.

²¹ Conf. A. Husić, *Demografske prilike u srednjodalmatinskom zaleđu početkom 16. stoljeća* [The demographic circumstances in the central Dalmatian hinterland at the beginning of the 16th century], 237.

²² Conf. Fehim Dž. Spaho, *Grad Sinj u turskoj vlasti, Zbornik Cetinske krajine* [The city of Sinj during the Turkish rule, Proceeding of the Cetina region], in: Ante Milošević (ed.), *Sinj i Cetinska krajina za vrijeme osmanlijske vlasti [Sinj and the Cetina Region in the Period of the Ottoman Rule]*, Sinj, 1989, 58.

²³ Conf. Lovre Katić, *Četiri priloga historiji grada Splita XVII i XVIII st. [Four Contributions to the History of the City of Split in the 17th and 18th Century]*, Split, 1954, 88.

ed population of Zagora and the Šibenik prince Zorzi, the inhabitants deliberately destroyed their villages and burned their homes, subsequently joining the Venetian army as it approached Drniš. This action, led by the Franciscans from Visovac, resulted in the relocation of over 10,000 inhabitants from more than 70 villages, primarily from Petrovo Polje and the surrounding areas, to Venetian controlled territory. The displaced population initially settled in Šibenik and the area stretching from Grebaštica to Tisno; later, they also settled in Klis and Solin following their liberation from Ottoman control.²⁴ The displaced population initially settled in Šibenik and the area stretching from Grebaštica to Tisno; later, they also settled in Klis and Solin following their liberation from Ottoman control. This relocation marked the beginning of a series of population exchanges that occurred multiple times towards the end of the 17th century. Approximately forty years after the aforementioned rebellion, following the Cretan War, a group of 1,300 families, primarily from the areas around Muć and Petrovo Polje, once again led by Franciscans, relocated to the Skradin area, which had been freed, and settled in villages to the west of Skradin.²⁵ A few years later, in 1687, during the Morean War (1684–1699), a large influx of new settlers from Bosnia and Herzegovina moved into the largely depopulated Cetina region, as well as into previously abandoned areas around Drniš and Muć, and the hinterlands of Split and Trogir.²⁶

²⁴ Conf. S. Zlatović, *Franjevci Države Presvetog Odkupitelja...* [*The Franciscans of the Province of the Most Holy Redeemer...*], 186; More on the difficult lives of the settlers and consequently the appearance of the hajduk lifestyle they after lived see in: K. Kosor, *Drniška krajina za turskog vladanja* [*The Drniš Region during the Turkish Rule*], 129-134.

²⁵ Conf. Fra Stanko Bačić, *Visovački franjevci u Skradinskoj biskupiji* [*The Franciscans of Visovac in the Diocese of Skradin*], *Zbornik Kačić*, Split, 1991, 25-29.

²⁶ The Franciscans from Rama relocated 5,000 people from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the wider area of Sinj, in Ogorje, Muć, Prugovo, Konjsko, Brštanovo, Lečevica, Visoka, Čvrljevo, and several other villages in the Trogir area. Conf. S. Zlatović, *Franjevci Države Presvetog Odkupitelja...* [*The Franciscans of the Province of the Most Holy Redeemer...*], 154. More on the arrival of new population see: Josip Ante Soldo, *Sinjska krajina u 17. i 18. stoljeću* [*The Sinj region in the 17th and 18th centuries*], *Matica Hrvatska*, Sinj, 2011, I, 9-122; According to available data, Dalmatia had only 60,000 inhabitants in the mid-17th century. After the arrival of new population from Bosnia and Herzegovina, from the area of Rama, Livno,

1.3. Life under the Ottoman rule

Life under Ottoman rule was challenging, and the situation did not significantly improve for settlers under Venetian control. While the Venetians were quick to make promises of support to the population, they seldom fulfilled these commitments.²⁷ As a result, the settlers, disillusioned by the government's indifference and the poor living conditions, often expressed a desire to return to their homeland.²⁸ Venice, however, required manpower for defence and therefore employed various means, sometimes even resorting to brutal force, to retain the population. It is important to note that not all migrations were voluntary. For instance, in 1693, 700 Catholics from Blato, Brotnjo and Goranci relocated to Venetian territory. Dissatisfied with this number, the Venetians, primarily through the employment of hajduks-whose role will be discussed later-set fire to 13 villages near Mostar, thereby compelling the remaining population to move.²⁹ This forced migration led to the relocation of 736 families, totalling approximately 5,000 individuals, who primarily settled around Vrgorac and Zadvarje.³⁰

and Herzegovina, at the end of the 17th century Dalmatia had 80,000 inhabitants. Conf. Mile Bogović, *Katolička crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za mletačke vladavine* [Catholic Church and Orthodoxy in Dalmatia during the Venetian Rule], Zagreb 1982, 15.

²⁷ From the most recent translations of Turkish documents from the Poljica area, we have a document from 1614 and 1640 that tell us about the exploitation and abuse (murders of four Poljica residents) of workers, confiscation of all property from those who fled to the Christian side ili participated in the battles against the Ottomans; Conf. Josip Dukić – Marko Trogrlić (ed.), *Turski izvori u Srednjoj Dalmaciji: Poljica 1: izabrani dokumenti 1548 - 1689* [Turkish sources in Central Dalmatia: Poljica 1: selected documents 1548–1689], prepared for publication by Michael Ursinus; Centar za epigrafička, paleografska i povijesno-teološka istraživanja "Don Frane Bulić" - Katolički bogoslovni fakultet - Sveučilišni centar za hrvatske, mletačke i osmanske studije, Split, 2021, 97, 123, 43, 51.

²⁸ Conf. Dinko Tomašić, *Društveni i politički razvitak Hrvata* [Social and Political Development of Croats], Jesenski i Turk, Zagreb, 2013, 152-153.

²⁹ Conf. Gligor Stanojević, *Dalmacija u doba morejskog rata* [Dalmatia during the Morean War], Vojno delo, Beograd, 1962, 98, 123-124.

³⁰ Conf. Andrija Nikić, *Pokušaji oslobođanja i islamizacije u Hercegovini prema rimskim izvorima* [The attempts of liberation and Islamisation in Herzegovina according to Roman sources], *Nova et vetera* 29 (1979) 1, 173.

The population in the aforementioned regions, particularly in the hinterlands of Trogir and Šibenik, was often burdened with the obligation to pay various taxes to multiple authorities. There were particularly challenging periods during which they were required to pay taxes to three different rulers simultaneously, merely to secure a semblance of peace. For instance, in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, they were obligated to pay an annual tax of one ducat per “hearth” (i.e., per household) to the Sultan in Constantinople. Additionally, they had to pay an equivalent amount to the emperor in Vienna, often via the Uskoks, and they were also required to send a portion of their produce to coastal cities under Venetian control. However, their obligations did not end there. In addition to imperial taxes, the inhabitants of this part of the Old Zagora were required to make contributions to their spahis and to pay taxes on pigs, fields, mills, honey and hay. Even brides were taxed upon marriage.³¹ The most grievous imposition, however, was the forcible conscription and Islamisation of their children through the devshirme system, also known as the “blood tax.” Despite Venetian promises of land redistribution following liberation,³² many injustices occurred during this process.³³ Although two kanaps of land were generally allocated per person, a significant portion of the fertile land in certain villages ended up in the hands of more prominent citizens of Trogir, Kaštela, and Split. Among the peasants, there were substantial disparities in property size.³⁴ Many fell into debt, while

³¹ Conf. Fehim Spaho, Splitsko zaleđe u prvim turskim popisima [The Split hinterland in the first Turkish lists], *Acta Historico-oeconomica Iugoslaviae* 13 (1986), 51; K. Kužić, *Povijest Dalmatinske zagore* [The History of the Dalmatian Zagora], 111.

³² Kanap (campo) was a Venetian unit of area (1 kanap = 3655, 007 m²). More on Venetian units see: Marija Zaninović-Rumora, Stare mjere za površinu u sjevernoj Dalmaciji [Old units of area in northern Dalmatia], *Rad. Zavod, povij. znan. HAZU in Zadru*, vol. 35/1993, 121-135, here 132-133.

³³ The Venetian methods of administration were valid until the French occupation of Dalmatia. In Anvers, on September 4, 1806, the old Venetian system of state ownership was abolished by Napoleon, and he declared the tenants or land beneficiaries to be the owners. Conf. M. Tadin, *Iz prošlosti Muća* [From the history of Muć], 62.

³⁴ For example, in 1711 in the village Bračević, the four-member family of Križan Banjilović had only 5 campos, one quarta and 130 tavolas, plough-fields, while in the same village the nine-member family of Pavao Jukić had plough-fields, 38 campos, two quartas and 135 tavolas. Conf. D. Buzančić, *Prilog poznavanju stanovništva i*

wealthier tenants profited by selling agricultural products and extending credit to the indebted peasantry. In summary, Venice neglected Dalmatia leaving its administration to uneducated individuals who were often indifferent to its progress.³⁵ The primary causes of the misery endured by residents of the Dalmatian Zagora, in addition to the burden of tithes, included the poor quality of land, underdeveloped agriculture, and, in some villages, a complete lack of water and infrastructure.

Furthermore, the residents of Zagora seldom planted fruit trees, continuing the agricultural practices of their ancestors by focusing solely on the cultivation of cereals and lentils. The method of land tilling was extremely rudimentary, as were the agricultural tools³⁶ employed. The lack of advancement in agriculture and animal husbandry, combined with the underdevelopment of crafts—except the traditional craft of blacksmithing—were significant contributors to the pervasive poverty in the region. These factors, though only briefly outlined here, underscore the causes of the extremely low living standards, particularly in terms of housing and diet, which adversely affected the population's health. Such conditions hindered the advancement of civilisation and culture in these areas and compelled many to seek economic opportunities elsewhere. After a prolonged period marked by the debilitating consequences of extended conflicts (Cretan War: 1645 – 1669; Morean War: 1684 – 1699; and Second Morean War: 1714 – 1718), Dalmatia finally experienced a phase of peace and stability following the Treaty of Požarevac. This treaty also led to the geographical consolidation of Dalmatia into its present form.

antroponima mućko-lečevićke zagore [Contribution to the knowledge of the population and anthroponyms of the Muć-Lečevica Zagora], 43-44.

³⁵ Conf. J. A. Soldo, *Sinjska krajina u 17. i 18. stoljeću* [*The Sinj Region in the 17th and 18th century*], II, 73-75.

³⁶ Conf. Stanko Ožić, *Poljoprivreda Dalmacije u prošlosti* [*Agriculture in Dalmatia in the Past*], Split, 1955, 11-12; Grga Novak, *Poljoprivreda Dalmacije u drugoj polovici XVIII st.* [*Agriculture in Dalmatia in the second half of the 18th century*], *Starine JAZU*, bk. 50, Zagreb, 1960, 468.

2. ECCLESIASTICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

After the Ottomans conquered the continental part of Dalmatia and established their rule, significant changes occurred not only in the socio-administrative structure but also in the organisation of the church. The previously established church organisation and pastoral activities were completely disrupted. Fearing the Ottomans, the parish priests (predominantly diocesan Glagolitic priests) fled the region along with the local population, leaving the pastoral care of the remaining or newly arrived Catholics to Bosnian Franciscans. Bishops from Makarska, Split, Trogir, Skradin and Šibenik only later—some not until after the liberation from the Ottomans at the end of the 17th century—began to visit the faithful in the occupied areas, a topic that will be discussed further. Evidence that Glagolitic priests served as spiritual shepherds in this region before the arrival of the Ottomans is provided by the example of Juraj Cetinjanin, a Glagolitic priest from Cetina. He was the first parish priest of Olib (on the island of Olib), who, in 1476, fled the Cetina region with its population to the island due to the fear caused by Ottoman plundering and arson.³⁷ The presence of the Franciscans in Bosnia, however, was initially of a missionary nature, aimed at converting the Bosnian Krstjani from heresy.³⁸ The presence of the Franciscans in Bosnia, however, was initially of a missionary nature, aimed at converting the Bosnian Krstjani

³⁷ Conf. Ivan Milčetić, Arheologiĉno-istoriĉne crtice s hrvatskih otoka [Archeological-historical sketches from Croatian islands], *Viestnik hrvatskoga arheologiĉnoga druŹtva*, 6 (1884) 3, 118; I. Markoviĉ, *Sinj i njegovo slavlje* [Sinj and Its Celebrations], 12; Ivan Botica, Franjevaĉki samostan i crkva Sv. Marije u podgrađu Cetini pod Sinjem [Franciscan friary and the church of St. Mary in the Sinj suburb of Cetina], *Povijesni prilozi* 29 (2010) 38, 9-29, 16.

³⁸ More on Bosnian Krstjani see: Franjo Raĉki, *Bogomili i patarini* [Bogomils and Patarines], Golden marketing-Tehniĉka knjiga, Zagreb, 2003; Franjo Źanjek, *Bosansko-humski krstjani u povijesnim vrelima (13.-15. stoljeće)* [Krstjani from Bosnia-Hum in historical sources (13th-15th century)], Barbat, Zagreb, 2003; Ivan MuŹiĉ, *Vjera crkve bosanske: krstjani i pogani u srednjovjekovnoj Bosni* [Faith of the Bosnian Church: Krstjani and Pagans in Medieval Bosnia], Muzej hrvatskih arheoloŹkih spomenika, Split, 2008; Dmitri Obolensky, *Bogomili* [Bogomils], MISL, Zagreb, 2009; Sreĉko M. DŹaja, Katoliĉanstvo u Bosni i Hercegovini od Kulina bana do austro-ugarske okupacije [Catholicism in Bosnia and Herzegovina from ban Kulin to the Austro-Hungarian occupation], *Croatia Christiana periodica* 16 (1992) 30, 153-178.

from heresy. By the decree of Pope Nicholas IV, the first two Franciscans, Friar Marin and Friar Ciprijan, arrived in Bosnia in 1291 from the Croatian province (Provincia Slavoniae), followed by many other brothers from Zadar, Split, Dubrovnik, and other places. Later, by the decision of Pope Benedict XII and at the recommendation of the Croatian-Hungarian King Charles Robert, Gerard Odonis, the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, while visiting Ban Stjepan II Kotromanić in 1339, strongly advocated for the eradication of heresy at any cost. Due to concerns about the reaction of his subjects and the general situation in the country, Ban Stjepan II requested that the conversion be conducted peacefully, specifically through the efforts of the Franciscans, who focused on preaching and witnessing the Gospel.³⁹

Within a relatively short span of approximately fifty years, the number of Franciscans in Bosnia grew to such an extent that they were able to establish their own province. At that time, the Franciscan Order had not yet established provinces but rather vicariates, which held a somewhat lower rank. In 1340, the Bosnian Vicariate was founded at the General Assembly of the Franciscan Order in Assisi, and it was placed directly under the authority of the Franciscan Minister General. With this solid institutional framework in place, the Franciscans continued their missionary efforts following the unsuccessful Dominican inquisitional mission.

Over time, they developed extensive activities in Bosnia, encompassing ecclesiastical (missionary-inquisitional), political, economic, and cultural fields.⁴⁰ As circumstances changed, particularly with the arrival of the Ottomans, the Franciscans expanded their activities to Slavonija, Bulgaria, Hungary, Raška (Rascia), and Wallachia, including Romania. At one point, the Bosnian Vicariate was active across a vast region stretching from the Adriatic Sea to the Carpathians, and from Lika to the Black Sea,

³⁹ Conf. Dominik Mandić, *Franjevačka Bosna. Razvoj i uprava Bosanske vikarije i provincije 1340.-1735.* [*Franciscan Bosnia. The Development and Administration of the Bosnian Vicariate and Province 1340-1735*], Hrvatski povijesni institut, Rim, 1968, 51-52. Bazilije S. Pandžić, *Hercegovački franjevci. Sedam godina s narodom* [*Franciscans from Herzegovina. Seven Years with the People*], Ziral, Mostar - Zagreb, 2001, 9-11.

⁴⁰ Conf. Jozo Džalto, *Franjevci u srednjovjekovnoj Bosni* [*Franciscans in Medieval Bosnia*], Kulturno-povijesni institut Bosne srebrene – Sarajevo, Sarajevo, 2022, 270.

encompassing 40 monasteries.⁴¹ The original objective of their mission was to convert the Bosnian Krstjani to Catholicism.⁴² However, the shifting circumstances led them to extend their activities to the east, where they encountered Orthodox Christians, whom they sought to bring into unity within the Catholic Church.

To successfully carry out the aforementioned mission, it was essential to be understood by the local population, which required speaking their language. This was crucial not only for converting the Krstjani but also for ensuring the loyalty of Catholics to the Church, particularly in resisting conversions to Orthodoxy. Mile Bogović highlights the importance of language in this historical and spatial context: “After the Turks conquered Bosnia, there was a tendency by the representatives of the Catholic Church to introduce the Latin language everywhere, even in those churches where the liturgy was “of yore” in the Old Slavonic, i.e. the Old Croatian language. In this way, a special type of priests which we call Glagolitic priests, were being excluded from pastoral care. These priests, even though were not much educated, were highly esteemed by the people because they celebrated liturgy in an understandable language, also they lived with their faithful. Catholics – poorly educated – when left without their priests who used the vernacular, often more easily got used to an Orthodox priest who used the language like the Glagolitic priest,

⁴¹ Anđelko Barun, *Kalendar sv. Ante* [*Calendar of St. Anthony*], Svjetlo riječi Livno/Sarajevo, 1997, 64–79.

⁴² “M. Brković, regarding the religious affiliation of the Krstjani from Bosnia-Hum, according to the medieval documents of Bosnia-Hum rulers, points out that they were not heretics, i.e. Patarines, Bogomils or Manichaeans, as they are most often called by foreign sources, but rather Christians who professed Roman faith. Not even on tombstones, stećak or marble of the time do we find traces of any heresy. On the contrary, the faith in the Holy Trinity is clear from them. It seems that the biggest sin of the Krstjani of Bosnia-Hum was that they did not respect church discipline, i.e. they did not recognise neither Orthodox nor Catholic Church authorities. From the charters and letters that Brković interprets, it is clear that they respected the Virgin Mary, they celebrated the same feast days as the Catholics and did not deny any religious truth. The only difference was in the structure of the Bosnian Church which was different from both the Catholic and Orthodox Church”. Dijana Pinjuh, *Vjerske prilike kod katolika u Hercegovini (od turskog osvajanja do konca 17. stoljeća)* [*Religious Situation at Catholics in Herzegovina since the Ottoman Empire Conquest by the end of 17th Century*] (doctoral thesis), Repozitorij, Zagreb, 2013, 18.

than to a Catholic priest who used a foreign language in liturgy. A missionary, unless he was not from that people, also rarely knew the vernacular language. However, the Orthodox clergy used in liturgy almost the same language that the Glagolitic priests used before.”⁴³ The unfavourable stance of the Catholic Church towards the Old Slavonic liturgy was undoubtedly a significant factor contributing to the conversion of Catholics to Orthodoxy, a subject that will be explored in greater detail towards the conclusion of this paper.⁴⁴ In addition to the use of an intelligible language, effective preaching needed to be reinforced by a consistent and exemplary lifestyle, ensuring it did not fall short of the rigorous standards upheld by the ‘perfect’ Krstjani. This necessitated the presence of friars who were not only exemplary in their conduct but also closely connected to their communities, resourceful, and resilient in the face of numerous challenges. Although the circumstances were often arduous — leading at times to deviations from their ideals, as will be discussed later — the Franciscans earned profound respect among the people for their unwavering dedication and zeal.

At the General Chapter held in Santa Maria degli Angeli near Assisi, on June 29, 1514, the Bosnian Vicariate was divided in two provinces: one within the Ottoman Empire, known as Bosna Srebrena (*Provincia Bosnae Argentinae*), and another outside the empire’s borders, called the Province of Bosna Hrvatska (*Provincia Bosnae Croatiae*). The primary reason for this division was the Ottoman authorities’ refusal to allow their subjects to be governed by another state. The Province Bosna Srebrena retained the monasteries that originally belonged to the Bosnian Vicariate, while the Province of Bosna Hrvatska acquired monasteries in Klis, Solin, Knin, Skradin, and Karin.⁴⁵ Notably absent from this list were the monasteries in Sinj and Visovac, likely because the monastery in Sinj had been destroyed and the one on Visovac abandoned.⁴⁶ The omission of the Visovac monastery from inclusion in the Province of Bosna Hrvatska

⁴³ M. Bogović, *Katolička Crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za mletačke vladavine* [*The Catholic Church and Orthodoxy in Dalmatia during the Venetian Rule*], 13.

⁴⁴ Conf. Ibid, 12-13.

⁴⁵ Conf. S. Bačić, *Visovački franjevci* [*Franciscan from Visovac*], 17.

⁴⁶ Conf. Stanko Bačić, *Pastoralno djelovanje visovačkih franjevaca u vrijeme Osmanlijske okupacije* [*Pastoral activities of the Franciscans from Visovac during the Otto-*

might appear insignificant at first glance, but it is of critical importance for the history not only of Visovac and its surrounding district but also for the faithful across a broad region of Dalmatia and Lika. Had the Visovac monastery been legally transferred to the Province of Bosna Hrvatska and the Trsat Custody in 1514, as were the other monasteries, its pastoral role and historical significance would have been markedly different, and possibly even tragic, as was the case with the other aforementioned monasteries. Given that Visovac was not legally joined to the Province Bosna Hrvatska in 1514 and remained part of the Bosnian Vicariate, the Franciscans from Bosna Hrvatska were unable to settle on Visovac, unlike their counterparts who settled in the monastery in Karin. This circumstance allowed the Bosnian Franciscans to return to Visovac in 1522, following the fall of Drniš and Skradin to the Ottomans, if not earlier. They reestablished themselves on the islet, adapting to the conditions of the time, much like their fellow Franciscans in other monasteries within the Ottoman Empire. The monasteries in Dalmatia that were assigned to Bosna Hrvatska (Klis, Solin, Knin, Skradin, and Karin) following their capture by the Ottomans in the early 16th century (Klis and Solin in 1537) were doomed to disappear. In contrast, the fact that the Visovac monastery remained part of the Province of Bosna Srebrena ensured the continued presence of Franciscans on the islet. This was made possible under the terms of the Adhnamī capitulation of 1463, which will be discussed further later, allowing them to provide pastoral care across a vast area of continental Dalmatia and southern Lika.

2.1. The Visovac Franciscans

The Franciscans arrived at Visovac around 1455 from what is now Bosnia and Hercegovina, more precisely from Kreševo, following the departure of the Augustinian hermits from the islet. From Visovac, the Franciscans — who, due to the complex historical circumstances, were the only clergy who remained with the people—provided pastoral care for nearly the entire western and central part of continental Dalmatia, as

man occupation], in: Miroslav Ivić - Šime Samac (ed.), *Visovački zbornik [Visovac Proceedings]*, Franjevačka provincija Presvetog otkupitelja, Visovac, 1997, 229.

well as the southern part of Lika.⁴⁷ The monastery on Visovac effectively served as the sole religious and cultural beacon for this vast region.⁴⁸ Initially, the Franciscans conducted their mission as itinerant missionaries, but over time, they assumed roles as parish priests, vicars and chaplains.⁴⁹ The pre-Ottoman parish boundaries were erased, and for an extended period, the Franciscans continued their mission as itinerant preachers and moral guides, ministering both to the native population and to the newly arrived settlers following the liberation of Dalmatia from the Ottomans at the end of the 17th century. Throughout the entire period of Ottoman occupation, Franciscans from Visovac were responsible for the pastoral care of the faithful in southern Lika and a large part of the Dalmatian Zagora. In the regions of Cetina, Imotski, Vrgorac, and Neretva, pastoral

⁴⁷ Conf. Josip Ante Soldo, Samostan majke od Milosti na Visovcu [The monastery of the Mother of Mercy on Visovac]; in: Miroslav Ivić - Šime Samac (ed.), *Visovački zbornik. Zbornik simpozija u prigodi 550-te obljetnice franjevačke nazočnosti na Visovcu (1445.-1995.)* [*Visovac Proceedings. Proceedings of the Scientific Meeting on the Occasion of the 550th anniversary of Franciscan Presence on Visovac*], Visovac, 1997, 178.

⁴⁸ K. Kužić writes about the importance of the Visovac Franciscans: "The [Visovac] friars preserved the people during the 160 years of Ottoman occupation, so the number of converted Christians in Zagora could be counted on the fingers of one hand, unlike the neighbouring Cetina region where Muslims populated entire villages". Krešimir Kužić, *Povijest Dalmatinske zagore* [*The History of the Dalmatian Zagora*], 118; This is how a portrait of a Franciscan from the era of Ottoman occupation looks like written by the great Croatian poet and a careful researcher of the time, Antun G. Matoš: "Horrible conditions (...) were raging in our land, and in Bosnia for six centuries the *ujak* (uncle), and only the *ujak*, a Franciscan friar belted with iron discipline, a hero and a saint, a teacher and a martyr, a diplomat and a priest, a soldier of a mendicant church and a prisoner of a begged people, could have endured the eternities of those hells (...) Those folk shepherds were no even-tempered and hypocritical worshipers, separated from its people, but heroes and folk-people who we can still see today through Šimunović's stories". Antun G. Matoš, *Feljtoni, impresije, članci (Sabrana djela, XVI)* [*Feuilletons, Impressions, and Articles (Collected Works, XVI)*] Zagreb, 1973, 130-131.

⁴⁹ On the occasion of his visit to Visovac in 1640, friar Pavao Pelizer, the visitor general from Rovinj, writes that, at the moment, 14 priests and 8 seminarians were living in the monastery, and that the monastery had 16 horses. Conf. Stipan Zlatović, Izvještaj o Bosni g. 1640. o. Pavla iz Rovinja [The report on Bosnia from 1640, by fr. Pavao from Rovinj], *Starine* 23, Zagreb, 1890, 11; S. Kovačić, *Crkva na skradin-sko-kninskom području u XVII. stoljeću...* [The Church in the Skradin-Knin area in the 17th century...], 24-25.

care was provided by Franciscans from the monasteries in Rama, Imotski, Makarska, Zaoštrog, and Živogošće, as well as by the Glagolitic priests from Poljica.⁵⁰

Thanks to four key documents — a Report of the Bosnian Province to the *Congregation de Propaganda fide* from 1623, a report by Friar Ante Matić, the Bishop of Skradin, from 1624, a report of Friar Toma Ivković, the Bishop of Skradin, from 1630, and a report by Fozza, the vicar General of Zadar, from 1633 — we know that the Visovac Monastery served an extensive area encompassing nine parishes at the beginning of the 17th century. These parishes included Lika (extending to Senj), Knin, Kistanje (covering the entire Bukovica area up to Zadar), Županovići, Kožulovo Polje (east of Benkovac), Skradin, Petrovo Polje, Zmino (Muć), and Drniš (specifically the chapel of St. John in Badanj).⁵¹ It is important to note that the term “parish” as used here does not correspond to the modern understanding of a parish community, as these parishes covered vast territories, sometimes including several dozen villages. This distribution was heavily influenced by the extraordinary circumstances of the Ottoman occupation, which led to a diminished number of the faithful, an insufficient number of priests, pervasive insecurity, and the inability of clergy to reside permanently with their congregations.

In the eastern part of Dalmatia, pastoral activities were conducted by Franciscans from the regions of Primorje and Imotski, specifically from the Proložac Monastery. According to a report by Friar Bartol Kačić, the Bishop of Makarska, dated 1626, the Diocese of Makarska contained four Franciscan monasteries: the St. Mary Monastery in Makarska, the Holy Cross Monastery in Živogošće, and the monasteries in Zaoštrog and Imotski.⁵² These monasteries played a crucial role in the pastoral care of

⁵⁰ Conf. I. Marković, *Sinj i njegovo slavlje* [*Sinj and Its Celebration*], 19-20; Josip Grbavac (ed.), *Franjevačka provincija Presvetog Otkupitelja (shematizam)* [*The Franciscan Province of the Most Holy Redeemer (Schematismus)*], Zbornik Kačić, Split, 2007, 78, 79, 134, 159, 255.

⁵¹ Conf. K. Kosor, *Drniška krajina za turskog vladanja* [The Drniš region during the Ottoman rule], 117-118; S. Bačić, *Pastoralno djelovanje visovačkih franjevaca* [The pastoral activities of the Franciscans from Visovac], 231-232.

⁵² Conf. Karlo Jurišić, *Crkve biokovsko-neretvanskog područja u doba turske vladavine (16.-17. stoljeće)* [The churches of the Biokovo-Neretva area during the Turkish

the expansive Imotski and Vrgorac regions, as well as the entire Hercegovina. Due to various persecutions following the Ottoman occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, many priests, along with the local populace, sought refuge in the relatively safer territory of Primorje. For instance, the Franciscans from Ljubuški, after the destruction of their monastery, joined their fellow friars in Zaoštrog at the end of the 16th century, while the Franciscans from Mostar took refuge in Živogošće, where they established the Church and Monastery of the Holy Cross. The precise date of the Franciscans' arrival in Živogošće remains uncertain, but according to Karlo Jurišić, it occurred either in 1584 or 1614. Owing to the spiritual dedication of the Franciscans from these two monasteries, the Catholic faith was preserved in Hercegovina.⁵³

2.2. The importance of the Ahdnama

To facilitate coexistence between the Franciscans, representing the Catholic community, and the Ottoman authorities, a capitulation was signed in 1463 in Milodraž, located between Fojnica and Visoko. In

rule (16th-17th century), in: Karlo Jurišić (ed.), *Zbornik Kačić*, II, Split, 1969, 120.

⁵³ Conf. Robert Jolić, *Franjevci na prostoru Hercegovine u osmanlijsko doba* [The Franciscans in the Hercegovina region during the Ottoman era], in: *Zbornik radova Franjevci i Hercegovina* [Proceedings from "Franciscans and Herzegovina"], Mostar, 2009, 84; D. Pinjuh, *Vjerske prilike kod katolika u Hercegovini (od turskog osvajanja do konca 17. stoljeća)*, [Religious Situation at Catholics in Herzegovina since the Ottoman Empire Conquest by the end of 17th Century] 73. According to the reports from bishops from the middle of the 17th century, we know that in the monastery of the Holy Cross in Živogošće lived eight priests, six seminarians, two brothers and eight novices, and the monastery served three parishes: Blato, Broćno, and Primorje. In Zaoštrog lived 10 priests, 6 seminarians, two brothers and fourteen novices. They served four parishes: Čitluk, Ljubuški, Vrgorac and Zajezerje. The monastery in Imotski served four parishes: Podbila, Sovići, Drinovci and Kamen Most, and in the monastery lived seven priests, two seminarians and brothers, and ten novices. Conf. Slavko Kovačić, *Najstariji izvještaji o stanju makarske biskupije u Tajnom vatikanskom arhivu (1626.-1658.)* [The earliest reports on the state of the Diocese of Makarska in the Vatican Secret Archive (1626-1658)], Nadbiskupski arhiv Split, Split, 1975, 32; Marko Jačov, *Spisi Kongregacije za propagandu vere u Rimu o Srbima 1622-1644*. [Documents on Serbs of the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith 1622-1644], vol. I., SANU, *Zbornik za istoriju, jezik i književnost srpskog naroda*, II. odeljenje, knj. XXVI., Beograd, 1986, 69-73.

response to a request from Friar Anđelo Zvizdović, who petitioned for the freedom to perform religious rites and for broader religious freedom, the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II, issued a solemn charter—known as the Ahdnama. This imperial letter of guarantee ensured the Franciscans' freedom to carry out their pastoral activities within the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁴ While the Ahdnama should not be viewed as a precursor to modern human rights charters, its significance is undeniable. Following the widespread destruction of churches and monasteries, this document allowed Catholicism to endure in Bosnia and Herzegovina throughout centuries of Ottoman rule. The provisions of the Ahdnama also extended to the occupied territories of Dalmatia and Lika. Notably, this charter enabled the Franciscans from Bosnia and Herzegovina to expand their activities into the conquered areas in Croatia, from which priests — primarily Glagolitic priests — had been forced to flee due to the Ottoman occupation. The aforementioned capitulation, or ferman, issued by the highest political authority, did not apply solely to a single monastery but extended to the broader Franciscan community. As such, it became a central document underpinning the activities of the Franciscans of Bosna Srebrena throughout the entire Ottoman era. Due to its foundational role in establishing the state-legal basis for their activities, the Bosnian Franciscans referred to it as the "*Magna Charta libertatum*".⁵⁵ Given its critical importance, the

⁵⁴ Conf. Jozo Džambo, *Franjevci u Srednjovjekovnoj Bosni* [*Franciscans in the Medieval Bosnia*], Kulturno-povijesni institut Bosne Srebrene, Sarajevo, 2022, 259–260; Jure Brkan, Osnivanje župe Promina i njezini župnici [The establishment of the parish of Promina and its parish priests], in: Edi Maletić i dr. (ed.), *Promina: Slavlje spomena kao sjeme budućega, 330 godina Župe Promina. Zbornik radova* [*Promina: The Celebration of Memories as the Seed of Future Ones. Proceedings*], Župni ured sv. Mihovila Promina, Općina Promina, Oklaj, 2022, 175.

⁵⁵ Conf. J. Džambo, *Franjevci u Srednjovjekovnoj Bosni* [*Franciscans in the Medieval Bosnia*], 259; The well-known historian, fra Andrija Zirdum, does not agree with the stated, and points out: "The Ahdnama is an important, but a conditioned legal document. It is no sort of *magna carta libertatum*, as some lesser experts on the matter unfoundedly say. Ahdnama is an enforced act in the framework of standard Islam (Sharia) provisions, in which the sultan directly to the Bosnian Franciscans, and indirectly to the Catholics, guarantees safety, inviolability of property and free movement in the Ottoman Empire". Fra Andrija Zirdum, *Osmanlije su, osvojivši Bosnu, porušili 464 katoličke crkve i 48 franjevačkih samostana* [*The Ottomans, after conquering Bosnia, destroyed 464 Catholic churches and 48 Franciscan monasteries*],

Ahdnama was frequently invoked as a primary document in various proceedings before the Ottoman authorities, resulting in nearly all monasteries maintaining multiple copies or transcripts of this charter for reference.

The issuance of the Ahdnama granted the Franciscans, and by extension Catholics, legal status as citizens of the Ottoman Empire. However, this recognition did not guarantee uninterrupted pastoral activity. A significant issue was that the document was often not interpreted in accordance with its intended legal spirit but was instead influenced by the prevailing political circumstances and the financial demands of corrupt officials. Furthermore, it is important to note that no Sharia document, including contracts or privileges, was considered permanent; they required reconfirmation with the ascension of each new sultan.⁵⁶ In practice, this

in: <https://www.ktabkbih.net/hr/izdvajamo/osmanlije-su-osvojevsi-bosnu-porusili-464-katolike-crkve-i-48-franjevskih-samostana/37813>, (November 20, 2023); Mile Babić writes the following about the significance of the Ahdnama: “The actions of friar Anđelo Zvizdović should be viewed in that context. He promises loyalty to Mehmed II the Conqueror on the behalf of his Franciscan community and the Catholic people (where that intimate superhistorical Franciscan loyalty throughout time will refer to the “once-glorious Kingdom of Bosnia”), and the Sultan promises him and those whom he serves his protection and thereby ensures their return and existence in their own country. Both act politically pragmatic, but with significantly different goals: the Sultan provides himself with subjects to rule, and Zvizdović saves his people from imminent disappearance. One policy serves ruling and imperial will for conquering, and the second serves the preservation of bare life on the ground of its own rootedness. However, the Ahdnama, despite being frequently violated by the Ottoman authorities, was the last defence line to various claims and even attempts by the Orthodox Church to bring Bosnian Catholics under its jurisdiction. Advantage was given to staying on one’s own path, regardless of the government”. Mile Babić, *Život i politika u graničnoj situaciji* [Life and politics in borderline situations], in: *Svjetlo riječi*, 2010, Posebni prilog, 3.

⁵⁶ On the issue of the authenticity of the Fojnica Ahdnama of Mehmed II from 1463, i.e. the lack of it, see: Michael Ursinus, *Ferman sultana Bajazida II. iz 1483. i fojnička ahdnama (izdana u Milodražu)* [Edict of sultan Bayezid II. from 1483. and Ahdnama from Fojnica (issued in Milodraž)], *Bosna franciscana* 51 (2019), 9-26; Michael Ursinus, “Ne služi aman sada ništa”: preporod ahdname iz Milodraža u Beogradu na prijelazu u 17. stoljeće [“It doesn’t serve much right now”: the revival of Ahdname of Milodraž in Belgrade at the turn of 17th century], *Bosna franciscana* 53 (2020), 7-19; Michael Ursinus, *O osmanskim dokumentima ranog 17. stoljeća iz Arhiva franjevačkih samostana Bosne Srebrene; ili kako razumjeti njihove priče*

imposed considerable financial burdens on the Franciscans, necessitating costly journeys to Constantinople and the payment of bribes to officials at all levels, from the lowest to the highest, to secure the revalidation of their rights.

Despite the nominal freedom for pastoral activity and the protection ostensibly guaranteed by the Ahdnama, the Franciscans and Catholics frequently faced persecution under Ottoman rule, with significant pressure exerted upon them to convert to Islam. In both Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in Dalmatia, monasteries and churches were often destroyed, and the faithful were subjected to various forms of persecution.⁵⁷ This was particularly pronounced during the early stages of the Ottoman invasion of Dalmatia in the 16th century, continuing until the Ottomans consolidated their territorial gains in 1522, and later with the fall of Klis in 1537 and Neorić in 1538. Similar incidents occurred in 1715, when the Ottomans ravaged the area around Sinj and Drniš prior to their historic and final defeat at Sinj.⁵⁸ A ferman issued by Sultan Mehmeda IV in Edirne in 1672 (preserved on Visovac as ferman no. 10) reveals that Fran-

[On Ottoman Documents of the Early 17th Century from the Archives of the Franciscan Monasteries of Bosna Srebrena; or How to Understand Their Stories], *Bosna franciscana* 59 (2023), 128-137.

⁵⁷ Conf. Gašpar Vinjalić, *Kratki povijesni i kronološki pregled zbivanja koja su se dogodila Slavenima u Dalmaciji, Hrvatskoj i Bosni 1514.-1769., preveo, dodao podnaslove i uputnice na vrela Bruno Pezo, uskladio s izvornikom i popratio objašnjenjima Vicko Kapitanović* [*A Brief and Chronological Overview of Events Which Happened to the Slavs in Dalmatia, Croatia, and Bosnia, 1514 – 1769*] (arr. Bruno Pezo, matched with the original and accompanied by explanations by Vicko Kapitanović), Književni krug, Split, 2010, 29-30, S. Zlatović, *Franovci Države Presvetog Odkupitelja... [The Franciscans of the Province of the Most Holy Redeemer]*, 38; On the destruction of monasteries and churches in Dalmatia see: Krešimir Kužić, *Sudbina kršćanskih i islamskih bogomolja na prostoru Dalmatinske zagore od 1415. do 1717. godine* [Fate of Christian and Islamic oratories in the area of Dalmatinska Zagora from 1415 to 1717], in: Mate Matas - Josip Faričić (ed.), *Zagora između stočarsko-ratarske tradicije te procesa litoralizacije i globalizacije [Zagora Between the Pastoral and Agricultural Tradition and the Process of Littoralization and Globalization]*, Sveučilište u Zadru, Kulturni sabor Zagore, Matica hrvatska, Split-Zadar, 2011, 355-374.

⁵⁸ Conf. K. Kosor, *Drniška krajina za turskog vladanja* [The Drniš region during the Turkish rule], 160-161; Conf. Dispacci (urgent reports) of governor general Alviso Mocenigo 1718-19, bk. II, l. 69-75, *Historijski arhiv u Zadru*; D. Božić-Bužančić, *Prilog poznavanju stanovništva i antroponima Mučko-lečevićke zagore*

ciscans from the monasteries Fojnica, Kraljeva Sutjeska, Kreševo, Olovo, and Visovac had lodged complaints about serdars, janissaries, and other authorities who would occupy their monasteries, consume food and drink without compensation, and generally engage in disruptive and abusive behaviour. The Sultan, in response, ordered an end to such practices with the issuance of this ferman.⁵⁹ Numerous Ottoman documents preserved at Visovac similarly address the protection of the Franciscans from various forms of exploitation and abuse by lower-level administrative authorities, who, under the pretext of restoring order, frequently abused their power and appropriated the monastery's material resources. The Franciscans from the Zaoštrog Monastery also reported similar grievances, noting that "many people from outside come to our church, sleep here and commit various kinds of violence, they trample our gardens and use our horses as an ulak"⁶⁰ despite existing decrees and documents that were supposed to protect them from such transgressions.

3. SPECIFICITIES OF PASTORAL ACTIVITY

3.1. The life of the faithful in Ottoman society

In the Ottoman Empire, Christians had the status of *zimmî*, a status that recognised them as protected individuals permitted to live within the Ottoman state's territory. This protection was contingent upon their adherence to Islamic law and their abstention from actions that might contravene Islamic principles. The position of Christians was established back in the 7th century through the Pact of Umar, which outlined 24

[Contribution to the knowledge of the population and anthroponyms of the Muć-Lečevica Zagora], 35-36.

⁵⁹ Conf. Sulejman Bajraktarević, *Turski dokumenti u splitskom Arheološkom muzeju i u franjevačkom samostanu na Visovcu* [Turkish documents in the Archaeological Museum in Split and the Franciscan monastery on Visovac], *Starine*, knj. 44., Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Zagreb, 1952, 54.

⁶⁰ *Acta turcica* (further AT), Z, 31. *Acta turcica* are original documents which have not been published (15th-17th century) in Franciscan monasteries in Makarska, Zaoštrog and Omiš. The translation of the documents were done by Hazim Šabanović. The translations are kept in the library in the monastery in Makarska. *Miscellanea, Državni arhiv u Zadru*.

points enacts regulations on the rights of Christians. In this pact, among other things, it is determined that “Christians and Jews are not allowed to build monasteries, churches, and eremite settlements, they are not allowed to repair their churches, (...) they are obligated to welcome strangers for three days [in monasteries], they are strictly forbidden to take in spies, and if they find out about them, they should report them to the Muslims, their mutual agreement is not valid, they must treat Muslims with respect and leave their seats to them, their clothing must be different from that of a Muslim, they must not ride a horse or carry any weapon either inside or outside the house, they must not carry a cross or holy books in public.”⁶¹

In the theocratic structure of the Ottoman Empire, Christians were subordinated to Muslims, who enjoyed various privileges. This social and legal inequality was evident in several ways. For instance, Christians were excluded from participation in the social and political life of the Empire, were subjected to numerous taxes, and often faced persecution.⁶² While Christians were exempt from military service, they were required to pay the jizyah (Turkish: cizye; Arabic: ġizya, meaning tribute, tax), a tax that Muslim subjects were not obligated to pay. Additionally, the construction of new churches was prohibited, and crosses along roads were mandated to be removed. Churches erected after the Ottomans' arrival were also subject to demolition.⁶³ The conversion of Christians to Islam was actively encouraged through various means, while reconversion from Islam to Christianity was met with severe punishment.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Srećko Džaja, *Katolici u Bosni i zapadnoj Hercegovini na prijelazu iz 18. u 19. stoljeće. Doba fra Ilijića Varešanina (1783-1813)* [*Catholics in Bosnia and Western Herzegovina on the turn of the 18th and 19th century. The era of friar Ilija Varešanin (1783-1813)*], Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 1971, 20.

⁶² Conf. Marko Karamatić, preface I, in: Fra Mato Krstičević, *Enhiridion*, Franjevački samostan Fojnica, Fojnica, 2019.

⁶³ Conf. Srećko M. Džaja, *Konfesionalnost i nacionalnost Bosne i Hercegovine. Predemancipacijsko razdoblje 1463.-1804.* [*Confession and nationality of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Pre-emanicipation period 1463-1804*], Ziral, Mostar ²1999, 130; Nenad Moaćanin, *Turska Hrvatska, Hrvati pod vlašću Osmanskog Carstva do 1791.* [*Turkish Croatia, the Croats under the rule of the Ottoman Empire*], Preispitivanja, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 1999, 119-120.

⁶⁴ Conf. S. Barjaktarević, *Turski dokumenti u splitskom Arheološkom muzeju i u Franjevačkom samostanu na Visovcu* [*Turkish documents in the Archaeological*

The Franciscans were frequently accused of espionage. For example, in 1525, Balija, the zaim of Cetina, permitted two Franciscans, Friar Jure and Friar Frančisko, to visit churches and fairs in the Cetina nahija, stipulating that they were “not allowed to go in the enemy side and pass on any news”⁶⁵. In a related document, Mustafa, the sanjak-beg of Klis, instructed the qadis of Imotski and Ljubuški to take all necessary measures to protect the Franciscans from harm and emphasised that the aghas, emins, and others should adhere to the provisions of the Ahdnama, warning that failure to do so would be reported to the Porte. ⁶⁶ Numerous other documents reveal similar efforts by higher political bodies authorities to safeguard the Franciscans and their activities. However, in practice, many violations were committed by arbitrary local rulers.⁶⁷ Bishop Bartol Kačić of Makarska, in a 1630 report, noted “that the Franciscans had to waste the money collected as alms on Turkish junkets.”⁶⁸ It was not uncommon for Turks to arrive at a monastery in groups of ten or more and stay for up to eight days.⁶⁹ A travel writer observed the following about

Museum in Split and the Franciscan monastery on Visovac], 51-59.

- ⁶⁵ AT, Z, 19. Conf. Pinjuh, *Vjerske prilike kod katolika u Hercegovini (od turskog osvajanja do konca 17. stoljeća)* [*Religious Situation at Catholics in Herzegovina since the Ottoman Empire Conquest by the end of 17th Century*], 88.
- ⁶⁶ Conf. AT, O, 29. The same beg writes to the emin in Makarska: “An imperial ferman arrived which states that you are doing various misconducts and injustices to the religious of the monastery which is in the area of your jurisdiction. Based on this, I am sending you this letter to let you know that you are not allowed to do anything that is contrary to the imperial emer (decision) or ahdnama, you are not allowed to sleep over in monasteries, nor send any of your associates there to stay the night there”. AT, M, V-a, 25.
- ⁶⁷ Freedom of action was guaranteed to the Franciscans also by the sultan Ahmed I, then by sultan Osman II in 1618, as a response to the Franciscan’s complaints regarding injustices and persecutions. Conf. Acta franciscana Hercegovinae, sv. I, 198-199; AT, M, V-a 7., AT, Z, 140.
- ⁶⁸ Slavko Kovačić, *Najstariji izvještaji o stanju makarske biskupije u Tajnom vatikanskom arhivu (1626.-1658.)* [*The earliest reports on the state of the Diocese of Makarska in the Vatican Secret Archive (1626-1658)*], Split, 1975, 36. In 1636, the Franciscans of the monasteries in Imotski and Makarska also complained to the Porte that people from outside were coming to them and asking them for sheep, lambs, honey, chickens and wine. onf. AT, O, 6; M, VI-27.
- ⁶⁹ For example, the visitator friar Pavao from Rovinj, during his stay on Visovac during lent in 1640 was witness to an event where 12 softas (Muslim religious) came

their treatment towards the Franciscans: "If they do not host them well, they treat the Franciscans in such a way that Christians would not treat a donkey".⁷⁰ The monastery chronicles of Kraljeva Sutjeska and Fojnica record that in 1524, Ottoman forces destroyed the monasteries in Kreševo, Fojnica, Visoko, Sutjeska, and Konjic. This destruction was prompted by the Sultan's belief that the Franciscans were the primary enemies of Islam in Bosnia and that Bosnia could not be fully Islamised as long as Catholic monasteries and churches remained. Consequently, these monasteries were razed, Franciscans were subjected to various forms of torture, and twelve were murdered.⁷¹ In the same century, the monasteries in Jajce (1528), Zvornik (1533), Modriči (1579), and D. Tuzla (1580)⁷² were destroyed or burned. Friar Nikolu Ugrinovića, the Bishop of Duvno, was killed near Kluč in Bosna or near Klis in Dalmatia, due to his efforts as a native of Poljica (from Dubrava), to persuade the people of Poljica not to pay harač (tax) to the Ottomans.⁷³

to Visovac and feasted for two days, and they left only after the Franciscans gave them wax, soap and money. Conf. K. Kosor, *Drniška krajina za turskog vladanja* [The Drniš region during the Turkish rule], 109. On the "privileges", i.e. privileged status of monasteries as compensation for the fact that monasteries, especially those along main roads, offered food and drink to Islamic soldiers when they were on an imperial campaign or to other travelers when they performed other important services and duties, see: Michael Ursinus, *O osmanskim dokumentima ranog 17. stoljeća iz Arhiva franjevačkih samostana Bosne Srebrne; ili kako razumjeti njihove priče* [On Ottoman Documents of the Early 17th Century from the Archives of the Franciscan Monasteries of Bosna Srebrena; or How to Understand Their Stories], in: *Bosna franciscana* 59 (2023), 152-160.

⁷⁰ Ignacije Gavran, *Sputnici bosanske povijesti. Sedam stoljeća djelovanja bosanskih franjevac* [Companions of Bosnian History. Seven Centuries of activities of the Bosnian Franciscans], Svjetlo riječi, Sarajevo - Zagreb, 2007, 71.

⁷¹ Conf. Leonardo Čuturić, *Franjevci među hrvatskim pukom: kroz sedam stoljeća* [Franciscans among the Croatian People: Through Seven Centuries], Hrvatska tiskara d.d., Sarajevo, 1926, 28.

⁷² Conf. *Kronološki pregled događaja Bosne Srebrene* [The chronological overview of events in Bosna Srebrena], <https://www.bosnasrebrena.ba/node/574> (December 16, 2023)

⁷³ Conf. Josip Dukić – Marko Trogrlić (ed.), *Turski izvori u Srednjoj Dalmaciji: Poljica 1: izabrani dokumenti 1548 – 1689* [Turkish sources in Central Dalmatia: Poljica 1: selected documents 1548–1689], prepared for publication by Michael Ursinus; Centar za epigrafička, paleografska i povijesno-teološka istraživanja "Don Frane Bulić" - Katolički bogoslovni fakultet - Sveučilišni centar za hrvatske, mletačke i osmanske

Despite facing significant persecution, the Franciscans remained steadfast their mission.⁷⁴ During the Venetian-Ottoman conflict over the island Crete in 1645, there was widespread hope for liberation from Ottoman rule. One of the principal figures behind a rebellion in the Makarska primorje was Bishop Friar Petar Kačić. His report during the *ad limina* visit in 1650 vividly illustrates the harsh conditions under which Catholics lived. The decision to join Makarska and Primorje with the Venetian side resulted in intense anger among the Ottomans, who retaliated by burning the city and 23 renegade villages, as well as destroying all the monasteries except for the one in Imotski, which was spared through the intervention of some notable Turks.⁷⁵ In fear, many residents fled in various directions, with some seeking refuge on the neighboring islands

studije, Split, 2021, 81; Vicko Kapitanović: Društveni i religiozni život katolika na području današnje Hrvatske i Bosne i Hercegovine na prijelazu iz XVI. u XVII. stoljeće [The social and religious life of Catholics in the area of present-day Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina from the end of the 16th century to the beginning of the 17th century], in: Ivan Basić - Marko Rimac (ed.), *Spalatumque dedit ortum*, Zbornik povodom desete godišnjice Odsjeka za povijest Filozofskog fakulteta u Splitu [*Spalatumque dedit ortum*, Proceedings on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the History Department of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split], Filozofski fakultet u Splitu – odsjek za povijest Split, 2014, 314.

⁷⁴ Four Franciscans were murdered on Visovac: friar Stipan Skopljanac in 1610, in 1646 two elderly Franciscans were murdered, both definitors of the Province of Bosna Srebrena, and a younger Franciscans. Their names remain unknown. Conf. Hrvatin Gabrijel Jurišić, *Uzorni i sveti redovnici visovačkoga samostana* [Exemplary and holy friars of the Visovac monastery], in: Miro Ivić - Fra Šime Samac (ed.), *Visovački zbornik* [Visovac proceedings], Visovac 1997, 253; During the governorship of the Bosnian begler-bega Seidi-Ahmed pasha, the Turks in 1658 hit a Franciscan from the monastery in Imotski 400 times on the soles of his feet, after which he died a few days later. Conf. D. Pinjuh, *Vjerske prilike kod katolika u Hercegovini...* [*Religious Situation at Catholics in Herzegovina...*], 92. Monasteries were often easy targets for Turkish oppressors, so in 1682 Turkish soldiers plundered the Makarska monastery. Conf. D. Pinjuh, *Vjerske prilike kod katolika u Hercegovini...* [*Religious Situation at Catholics in Herzegovina...*], 100.

⁷⁵ Conf. S. Kovačić, *Najstariji izvještaji...* [*The Earliest Reports...*], 50-52; Bonifacije Pandžić, *Izvjestaji makarske biskupije sačuvani u tajnom Vatikanskom arhivu* [Reports of the Diocese of Makarska kept in the Vatican Secret Archive], *Nova et vetera* 30 (1980) 1, 150-151; D. Pinjuh, *Vjerske prilike kod katolika u Hercegovini...* [*Religious Situation at Catholics in Herzegovina...*], 77.

of Brač and Hvar. The Diocese of Makarska, which had a population of 15,000 faithful before the Cretan War, was reduced to just 5,000.⁷⁶ The Franciscans were constantly vigilant and often had to resort to bribery, not only to ensure their own safety but also to protect the wider Catholic community. While Catholics and Franciscans were, in principle, granted religious freedom, this freedom was frequently restricted and largely dependent on the goodwill of the local Ottoman authorities.

3.2. The ways of pastoral work

The activities of the Franciscans of Bosna Srebrena were markedly distinct from those of their counterparts in Western countries and in regions not under Ottoman rule, where a regular Church structure and hierarchy were present. In contrast to the regular in which the life and pastoral work of Franciscans were typically centred around monasteries—distinct from parish pastoral duties — the extraordinary circumstances and unique mission in the Ottoman-controlled areas necessitated an expansion of their activities beyond the confines of the monastery.⁷⁷ This represents the first and the most important specificity of the pastoral work carried out by the Franciscans of the missionary Province of Bosna Srebrena, and later the Province of the Most Holy Redeemer (established in 1735). One of the privileges granted to the Franciscans, which further highlights the specificity of their pastoral work, was their ability to celebrate mass outdoors using a portable altar. This allowed them to conduct religious services wherever circumstances permitted, whether in

⁷⁶ D. Pinjuh, *Vjerske prilike kod katolika u Hercegovini...* [*Religious Situation at Catholics in Herzegovina...*], 78. Among the more interesting documents is the one from 1610 in which the Imotski qadi writes to the guardian and friars in Proložac: “You are not allowed to have meetings in villages according to your religious rites, rather do everything so that fares take place so that the Muslims can benefit from this”. AT, M, IV, 6.

⁷⁷ Conf. Emanuel Hoško, Pastoralno djelovanje provincije Sv. Ladislava na području zagrebačke biskupije u vremenu potridentske obnove [Pastoral activities of the Province of St. Ladislaus in the area of the Diocese of Zagreb in the period of the post-Tridentine renewal], *Bogoslovska smotra* 46 (1976) 4, 442.

private homes, fields, mountains, caves, or other locations.⁷⁸ The primary mission of the Franciscans, both as priests and religious figures, was to proclaim the Gospel through both word and example. In the beginning, after arriving in Bosnia, they worked hard to convert the Bosnian Krstjani. Initially, upon their arrival in Bosnia, they focused on converting the Bosnian Krstjani. However, following the arrival of the Ottomans, the Franciscans became, for centuries, the sole pastoral clergy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in parts of Croatia under Ottoman control. Living under arduous conditions, the Franciscans forged deep connections with the Croatian people, sharing in all the hardships of daily life. Their loyalty and the protection they offered from the Ottomans earned them the affectionate title of *ujaci* (uncles), a term that is still used in some regions today.⁷⁹

Due to challenging circumstances, bishops infrequently visited areas in Dalmatia under Ottoman occupation. This is evident in the 1624 report by Antun Matić, the Bishop of Skradin. During his visit to Drniš, he administered the sacrament of confirmation to 500 believers, nearly all of whom were elderly, highlighting the prolonged absence of episcopal presence in the area.⁸⁰ Similar situations were noted in subsequent visits. Msgr. Stjepan Cosmi, the Archbishop of Split (1678 - 1707), conducted four visitations of his archdiocese, though unfortunately, the records of these visits have been lost.⁸¹ His successor, Msgr. Stjepan Cupilli (1708 - 1719), His successor, Msgr. Stjepan Cupilli (1708-1719), provided a detailed account of his visit to Sinj in 1709, where he confirmed a significant number of both elderly and younger individuals; these records have

⁷⁸ Conf. Acta franciscana Hercegovinae (arr. Bazilije S. Pandžić), I., 1209.-1699., Ziral, Mostar, ²2009, 245.

⁷⁹ An image of a Franciscan who, as Ignacije Gavran states, “must be close and faithful to his people, resourceful and enduring in times of trouble, loyal to the faith and the Church” was set as a role model”. I. Gavran, *Suputnici bosanske povijesti* [*Companions of Bosnian History*], 40.

⁸⁰ Conf. S. Kovačić, *Crkva na skradinsko-kninskom području...* [*The Church in the Skradin-Knin area...*], 25.

⁸¹ Conf. J. A. Soldo, *Sinjska krajina u 17. i 18. stoljeću* [*The Sinj Region in the 17th and 18th Century*], I, 130.

been extensively documented, particularly by Don Lovre Katić.⁸² Later visitations, particularly those by the bishops of Trogir, reveal that in some parishes, which often encompassed several villages or an entire region, the Franciscans lacked established parish houses.⁸³ Instead, they resided in various homes, announcing from the altar where they would visit next, before returning to their monasteries.⁸⁴ When the monastery was distant, the Franciscans would stay with families for extended periods.⁸⁵ Religious education was regularly provided before mass, which was frequently celebrated outdoors due to the destruction of churches.⁸⁶ Under such circumstances, divine service celebrated in open plains or cemeteries became crucial opportunities for Catholics to receive both religious instruction and spiritual nourishment, shaping their daily Christian lives.

⁸² Conf. Lovre Katić, Prilike u splitskoj okolici poslije odlaska Turaka [Conditions in the Split area after the departure of the Turks], *Starine* 47, Zagreb, 1957, 237-277.

⁸³ For example, friar Bonaventura Biloglav, while he was the parish priest in Zmino (1679.1684) covered the wide area practically from Petrovo polje (Moseć) to Kozjak, from Unešić to the Cetina region. The entire (old) Zagora was still in 1710 divided in only three parishes: Nevest (Sitno, Svratok, Visoka, Nevest, Divojeviće, Kladnjice, Čvrljevo, Utoje and Vinovo), Prapatnica (Prgomet, Labin, Primorski Dolac, Prapatnica, Bristivica, Mitlo, Vrsno, Podlužje, Mravnica) and Brštanovo (Nisko, Brštanovo, Dugobabe, Korušće, Vučevica, Radošić). Conf. S. Bačić, Pastoralno djelovanje visovačkih franjevaca u vrijeme osmanlijske okupacije [Pastoral activities of the Franciscans from Visovac during the Ottoman occupation], 236-237. The parish priest of Prugovo and Brstivica (in 1709) did not have a parish house, so he stayed at people's houses. Conf. J. A. Soldo, *Sinjska krajina u 17. i 18. stoljeću* [The Sinj Region in the 17th and 18th Century], I, 144-146.

⁸⁴ Conf. Stipan Bešlić - Božo Gulić, Katoličke župe i župnici (franjevci) vjekovni čuvari i promicatelji vjere u Boga i čovjeka i nacionalnog ponosa [Catholic parishes and parish priests (Franciscans), centuries-old guardians and promoters of faith in God and man and national pride], in: Vicko Kapitanović, Nedjeljko Marinov and Mate Matas (ed.), *Župa Ogorje, Putovima života i vjere između Svilaje i Moseća* [Parish of Ogorje, The Roads of Life and Faith between Svilaja and Moseć], Kulturni sabor Zagore; Franjevačka provincija Presvetoga Otkupitelja; Župa sv. Jure mučenika, Ogorje; Župa sv. Franje Asiškog, Crivac; Odsjek za povijest Filozofskog fakulteta u Splitu, Split, 2017, 636-637.

⁸⁵ Conf. Vizitacije Trogirske biskupije 1723., 1726., 1733., 1736. [Visitations of the Diocese of Trogir 1723, 1726, 1733, 1736], Nadbiskupski arhiv Split, T/36, 37, 38.

⁸⁶ Conf. Vizitacije Trogirske biskupije 1733. [Visitations of the Diocese of Trogir 1733], T/38.

The Franciscans traveled on horseback, carrying portable altars and liturgical vessels, baptising children, officiate marriages, educating the youth, and visiting the sick.⁸⁷

According to the directives established by the Synod of Split in 1688, parish priests were mandated to provide clear and concise explanations of the Gospel, the Our Father, the Creed, the Decalogue, and the sacraments—particularly penance and the Eucharist—in the vernacular.⁸⁸ Records from visitations following the liberation from Ottoman rule indicate an improvement in the construction of churches and parish houses, though these structures remained largely modest. During the visitation of Archbishop Stjepan Cupilli of Split in 1709 to the interior regions of his archdiocese, he reported an absence of any dwelling sufficiently adequate for habitation. The churches he encountered were rudimentary, often roofed with bullrush and hay, some constructed of wood, and rarely featuring bells or bell towers.⁸⁹ A similar situation was observed by Bishop Ivan Dominik Calegari of Šibenik during his 1712 visitation to the inland parishes of his diocese, as well as by Bishop Didak Manola of Trogir during his visitations in 1756 and 1760.⁹⁰ Up until the late 17th century, the number of churches remained limited, and those that existed were typically modest.⁹¹ However, after the liberation at the end of the 17th century and the resettlement of populations from Bosnia and Herzegovina

⁸⁷ Conf. V. Kapitanović, Društveni i religiozni život katolika na području današnje Hrvatske i Bosne i Hercegovine na prijelazu iz XVI. u XVII. stoljeće [The social and religious life of Catholics in the area of present-day Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina from the end of the 16th century to the beginning of the 17th century], 320.

⁸⁸ In practice it looked like this: after the Gospel, there were prayers for the souls in purgatory, for the pope and the doge, then the Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed, Decalogue, seven deadly sins, works of mercy, prayer of sorrow were recited... afterwards the sermon would be given. Conf. Luka Tomašević, *Il comportamento religioso nella Craina di Sign (Dalmazia) nell settecento*, Omiš, 1993, 70, 75;

⁸⁹ Conf. L. Katić, Prilike u splitskoj okolici poslije odlaska Turaka [Conditions in the Split area after the departure of the Turks], 272.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Conf. L. Katić, Prilike u splitskoj okolici poslije odlaska Turaka [Conditions in the Split area after the departure of the Turks], 243–244; Lovre Katić, Povijesni podaci iz vizitacija trogirске biskupije u XVIII. stoljeću [Historical data from visitations of the Diocese of Trogir in the 18th century], *Starine* 48, Zagreb, 291–296.

into the largely depopulated regions, efforts began to restore destroyed churches and construct new ones throughout the extensive areas of Lika and the interior of Dalmatia. In locations where churches were absent — such as Skradin, Drniš, Knin, Sinj, Vrlika, and Klis—mosques were repurposed into churches.⁹² It is notable that in Skradin, Knin, Sinj, and Klis, these structures had originally been churches before the Ottoman occupation.⁹³ The Franciscans gathered the dispersed populace, accepted converts from Islam, integrated them into the Catholic Church, and taught them the truths of the Catholic faith. As noted by Bishop Ivan D. Calegari of Šibenik in 1712, the persistence of Catholicism in these regions was largely due to the zeal of the Franciscans. Without their efforts, the presence of Catholics in these areas would have been minimal or nonexistent.⁹⁴

Following the liberation and the subsequent repair and construction of new churches, pastoral activities primarily took place within these sacred spaces. On Sundays, catechesis for adults was regularly conducted in the churches before Mass, while instruction for the youth was systematically organised according to the catechetical method of brief questions and answers, known as *dotrina*. Additionally, catechetical sessions for young people were arranged during the weekdays.⁹⁵ The sacrament of Confirmation was typically conferred at the age of seven, as this age was considered the threshold for the use of reason.⁹⁶ In urban areas, thematic sermons were organized during Lent, along with popular missions known

⁹² Conf. K. Kosor, *Drniška krajina za turskog vladanja* [The Drniš region during the Turkish rule], 166.

⁹³ Conf. K. Kužić, *Sudbina kršćanskih i islamskih bogomolja na prostoru Dalmatinske zagore od 1415. do 1717. godine* [Fate of Christian and Islamic oratories in the area of Dalmatinska Zagora from 1415 to 1717], 355-369.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 166-167.

⁹⁵ Conf. S. Zlatović, *Franovci države Presv. Odkupitelja i hrvatski puk u Dalmaciji* [*The Franciscans of the Province of the Most Holy Redeemer and the Croatian People in Dalmatia*], 148.

⁹⁶ Conf. *Constitutiones Synodi Dioecesanæ Spalatensis editæ ab Illustrissimo ac Reverendissimo D.D. Stephano Cosmo Archiepiscopo Spalatensis, alias Salonitano, Primate Dalmatiæ, ac totius Croatiæ, In sua prima Synodo habita Spalati in Ecclesia Metropolitana diebus 9.10. et 11. Martii 1688, Patavii 1690.* (Ristampa Spalato, 1755), 26.

as le missions ad populum. These missions were special efforts aimed at reaching the general population with the message of the Church.⁹⁷ The pastoral care extended beyond confession and preaching to include the spiritual assistance provided by the Secular Franciscan Order, the pastoral care of soldiers, and the leadership of various movements, particularly confraternities and ecclesial communities. The divine services were often accompanied by simple folk chants, reflecting the musical traditions of the local community. During the summer months, monastery guardians sent special chaplains to visit herdsmen in the hills, where they would gather the faithful, conduct catechesis (*dotrina*), administer sacraments, and celebrate the divine service.⁹⁸ Parish priests were supported in the management of parish property and the execution of their regular duties by procurators and confraternities.⁹⁹ Among the synodal recommendations from 1688 was a directive to establish a confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament in every parish.¹⁰⁰ Parishes also provided assistance to monasteries, particularly those with formation institutions. Although religious practice often remained within the bounds of traditionalism, it was deeply infused with piety and a devotion to the will of God. The Franciscans played a pivotal role in spreading specific devotions among the people such as the devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament, the devotions to the Most Holy Name and Heart of Jesus, the devotion of the Stations of the Cross, devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary, particularly the rosary. In addition, they emphasised celebrating Christmas, the display of the Nativity scene, and the singing of Christmas songs.¹⁰¹ The impor-

⁹⁷ Conf. J. A. Soldo, *Sinjska krajina u 17. i 18. stoljeću* [*The Sinj Region in the 17th and 18th Century*], I, 145.

⁹⁸ Conf. S. Zlatović, *Franovci države Presv. Odkupitelja i hrvatski puk u Dalmaciji* [*The Franciscans of the Province of the Most Holy Redeemer and the Croatian People in Dalmatia*], 148.

⁹⁹ Conf. L. Tomašević, *Između zemlje i neba* [*Between Earth and Heaven*], 102-104; L. Katić, Povijesni podaci iz vizitacija trogirске biskupije u XVIII. stoljeću [Historical data from visitations of the Diocese of Trogir in the 18th century], 300, 315, 324.

¹⁰⁰ Conf. Constitutiones Synodi Dioecesanæ Spalatensis, 30.

¹⁰¹ Conf. Danijel Patafta, Franjevački utjecaj na liturgiju i pučku pobožnost [Franciscan impact on liturgy and folk devotion], *Služba Božja* 57 (2017) 4, 451-457; The devotion towards Mary was especially spread by friar Petar Knežević (†1768) with his simple songs which were truly imbued with love towards Our Lady, who in his col-

tance of prayer was consistently emphasised. Without prayer a believer is powerless and completely unprotected in the world. Friar Josip Banovac poignantly illustrated this sentiment, stating, de “Without prayer, we are like a city in a lowland without ramparts, which can be entered by enemies without any difficulty. Just like that, sins can enter a soul that is not protected by prayer.”¹⁰²

3.3. The selection of parish priests

After the liberation from Ottoman rule at the end of the 17th century, life in the newly freed territories gradually began to revert to the structures that existed before the occupation. In alignment with the guidelines established by the Council of Trent, bishops endeavoured to reorganise pastoral structures and establish regular pastoral activities within these liberated regions. During this period, a significant influx of people, primarily Catholic Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina, settled in the depopulated areas. Accompanying them were the Franciscans, who had served as their spiritual leaders throughout the long period of Ottoman domination. The Franciscans, prepared to continue their pastoral work within the new Christian surroundings, willingly operated under the authority of the local bishops.¹⁰³ They organised parishes, preserved their traditional privileges, and sustained their pastoral mission.¹⁰⁴ The Republic of Venice held the Franciscans in high regard, particularly because of their contributions during the war against the Ottomans, where they played a

lections “Spiritual songs” (Venice 1759) and “Various spiritual songs” (Venice 1765) sang about Mary’s feast days and some of her sanctuaries, especially the one in Sinj.

¹⁰² Josip Banovac, *Predike od svetkovine doscascija Isukarstova* [Sermon from the Feast of the Ascension of Jesus Christ], Venecija, 1759, 51.

¹⁰³ On the rights of the Franciscan Province of the Most Holy Redeemer on parishes and organising pastoral activities see: Ivan Marković, *Le parrochie francescane*, Tipografia “Kat. Hrv.”, Zadar, 1885, 53-90; Petar Čapkun, *De organisatione cura pastoralis franciscanorum apud Croatorum gentem*, Sibenici, ex Typographia “Kačić”, 1940; Jure Brkan, Pravo Franjevačke provincije Presvetoga Otkupitelja u Dalmaciji na župe u vrijeme fra Ivana Markovića [The right of Franciscan Province of the most Holy Redeemer in Dalmatia to parishes at the time of fr. Ivan Marković], *Služba Božja* 55 (2015) 3-4, 275-305.

¹⁰⁴ Conf. I. Marković, *Le parrochie francescane*, 22-23.

crucial role in leading the people in the struggle for liberation. Acknowledging the Franciscans' esteemed reputation among the populace, Venice affirmed their rights to spiritual leadership while also recognising the bishops' authority to confirm the appointment of parish priests proposed by the Franciscan guardians. Danijel Dolfin, the Governor-General, capitalized on the privileges granted to the Franciscans of Bosna Srebrena by assigning them the pastoral care of the newly acquired subjects. The Venetian Senate ratified this decision in 1701 and again in 1714.¹⁰⁵ Exercising its right of patronage, the Republic allocated parishes, endowments, and properties to the Franciscans and assisted in the restoration of monasteries and churches.¹⁰⁶ Occasionally, tensions and conflicts arose between the Franciscans and local bishops due to the privileges enjoyed by the former; however, these conflicts were typically resolved swiftly due to the prudence and cooperative spirit displayed by both parties.¹⁰⁷ Venice exerted pressure on the monasteries and Franciscans under its jurisdiction to sever ties with their province in Bosnia, with the aim of establishing a new Franciscan province headquartered in Dalmatia. This objective was achieved in 1735 with the establishment of the Province of St. Caius, which was later renamed the Province of the Most Holy Redeemer.

¹⁰⁵ Conf. I. Marković, *Le parrocchie francescane*, 35, 97-98; L. Tomašević (ed.), *Gospodin vam dao mir [May the Lord Give You Peace]*, 27; On conflicts between Nikola Bijanković, the bishop of Makarska and Ivan Dominik Calegari, the bishop of Šibenik, regarding the jurisdiction over the Diocese of Skradin see: Slavko Kovačić, *Crkva na skradinsko-kninskom području u...* [The church in the Skradin-Šibenik area in...], 27-32; K. Kosor, *Drniška krajina za turskog vladanja [The Drniš region during the Turkish rule]*, 161-167.

¹⁰⁶ Conf. Arhiv Franjevačkog provincijalata Split-Dobri [Archive of the Franciscan Provincialate Split], S/1, fol. 104v.-105r; J. Brkan, *Osnivanje župe Promina i njezini župnici [The establishment of the parish of Promina and its parish priests]*, 177.

¹⁰⁷ Here we can only briefly mention the issue of the parish priest in Knin and Neorić. Conf. K. Kosor, *Drniška krajina za turskog vladanja [The Drniš region during the Turkish rule]*, 161-167; Slavko Kovačić, *Župa Svih svetih u Neoriću do sredine devetnaestoga stoljeća [The parish of All Saints in Neorić until the middle of the 19th century]*, in: Zvonimir Veić - Nedjeljko Marinov (ed.), *Zbornik o Zagori, Knjiga 7, Zbornik radova, Neorić i Sutina [Zagora Proceedings, Book 7, Neorić and Sutina Proceedings]*, Općina Muć, Split, 2004, 242-245; J. A. Soldo, *Sinjska krajina u 17. i 18. stoljeću [The Sinj Region in the 17th and 18th Century]*, I, 128-129, L. Tomašević, *Između zemlje i neba [Between Earth and Heaven]*, 66-67.

According to the regulations of the period, the monastery itself functioned as the true parish priest of a given parish — recognized as a legal and moral entity — while a Franciscan friar, as a natural person, was appointed by the bishop to serve as the parochial vicar. Although these friars were legally designated as parochial vicars and acted on behalf of a particular monastery, they were commonly referred to by the people as parish priests.¹⁰⁸ Under the organizational structure of the time, the guardian of the monastery would select a friar and propose him to the diocesan bishop for appointment as the parochial vicar of a specific parish. This system for appointing parish priests and parochial vicars persisted within the Province of the Most Holy Redeemer until the end of the First World War. Thereafter, the provincial minister assumed the responsibility of proposing a friar to the diocesan bishop for the role of parish priest or parochial vicar. The guardian played a pivotal role in shaping the pastoral work within the parishes. Essentially, he acted as the coordinator of pastoral activities and served as the liaison between the bishop and the “parish priest” or parochial vicar. Given the extraordinary circumstances under which pastoral work was conducted, the guardian often assumed responsibilities akin to those of a provincial minister in more typical situations. This was particularly true for the guardian of Visovac, whose monastery’s pastoral reach extended over a vast area from Lika to Cetina. The same applied to guardians of other monasteries, such as those in Živogošće, Makarska, Imotski, and Zaoštrog. It is worth noting that, in contrast to contemporary practices, during the period in question, parish priests in the Archdiocese of Split were elected by the faithful for a term of one year, with the archbishop confirming their appointment at the beginning of each year.¹⁰⁹ To remain faithful to the Franciscan charism of communal life, Franciscan parish priests were not permitted to serve in the same parish for more than three consecutive years.¹¹⁰ However, from

¹⁰⁸ Conf. J. Brkan, Osnivanje župe Promina i njezini župnici [The establishment of the parish of Promina and its parish priests], 180.

¹⁰⁹ According to the documents of the visitations of bishops we are familiar with the cases in the parishes of Bisko, Muć and Neorić. Conf. J. A. Soldo, *Sinjska krajina u 17. i 18. stoljeću* [The Sinj Region in the 17th and 18th Century], I, 205, 215, 217.

¹¹⁰ Conf. L. Tomašević, *Između zemlje i neba* [Between Earth and Heaven], 74, 88; S. Kovačić, *Župa Svih svetih u Neoriću do sredine devetnaestoga stoljeća* [The parish of All Saints in Neorić until the middle of the 19th century], 273.

a pastoral perspective, this practice was suboptimal due to the brevity of the term, which often led to unnecessary administrative complications, particularly in the initial case.

3.4. Conversions to Islam and the issue of the Hajduks

Conversions to Islam were actively encouraged and viewed favourably by the Ottoman authorities, who sought to integrate their subjects into society as loyal and compliant members. Conversely, conversions from Islam to Catholicism were almost impossible and were met with severe punishment. Even the suspicion or mere thought of attempting such a conversion was considered a serious offense by the Ottoman authorities. Franciscans, when accused of attempting to convert Muslims to Catholicism, were required to prove their innocence. These accusations, whether true or false, often served as a lucrative source of income for the Ottoman authorities. A notable example from Makarska illustrates this practice: in 1642, Mehmed-aga issued a certificate to the friars of Zaostrog, confirming that they had not converted a Muslim boy to Christianity. This certificate, however, came at a significant cost, as Mehmed-aga charged a substantial fee for its issuance.¹¹¹ Conversions to Islam were relatively rare, particularly in the western part of Dalmatia. Most researchers agree that one of the primary motivations for converting to Islam was the alleviation of tax burdens and the potential for advancement within the civil service.¹¹² Additionally, widespread famine and poverty, exacerbated by high taxes, served as further incentives for conversion. Despite these factors, the phenomenon of conversion to Islam in Dalmatia and Herzego-

¹¹¹ Conf. AT, Z 243.

¹¹² Nedim Filipović, Osvrt na pitanje islamizacije na Balkanu pod Turcima [Review of the issue of Islamization in the Balkans under the Turks], in: *Godišnjak* [Yearbook], ANUBiH, knjiga XIII, Centar za balkanološka ispitivanja, knjiga 11, Sarajevo, 1976, 392; Behija Žlatar, Bosna i Hercegovina u okvirima Osmanskog Carstva (1463.-1593.) [Bosnia and Herzegovina within the Ottoman Empire (1463-1593)], in: Ibrahim Tepić (ed.), *Bosna i Hercegovina od najstarijih vremena do kraja Drugog svjetskog rata* [Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Earliest Times to the Second World War], Bosanski kulturni centar, Sarajevo, 1998, 97-131.

vina did not reach the widespread levels observed in Bosnia, and thus cannot be characterised as a mass movement in these regions.¹¹³

In addition to the challenges posed by the Ottomans, the hajduks also inflicted significant hardships on Catholics living under Ottoman rule.¹¹⁴ They frequently engaged in raids during which they abducted men, women, and children, subsequently selling them into slavery to either the Ottomans or the Venetians, where they were often forced to serve as rowers (*galeotto*) on ships. The Venetians did not penalise the slave trade,¹¹⁵ but rather profited from it. Numerous documents testify to the severity of this problem.¹¹⁶ Zlatović provides a detailed account of the difficulties caused by the *hajduks* and describes the efforts of the Franciscans in Makarska to counteract this pressing issue. For instance, after the *hajduks* sold approximately one hundred Christians as slaves to a Venetian galley: “the friars jumped to their feet, and kicked them out of the church, them

¹¹³ The pressure was relentless, which is testified even by a letter from citizens, the Christians of Mostar in 1695 (around 2,600 of them) who begged Daniel Dolfin, the governor general, to take over Mostar, because the Turks are forcing them to convert to Islam. Conf. Gligor Stanojević, *Dalmacija u doba morejskog rata (1684-1699)* [*Dalmatia during the Morean War (1684-1699)*], Vojno delo, Beograd, 1962, 126.

¹¹⁴ On the hajduk/krajisnik guerilla warfare see: G. Vinjalić, *Kratki povijesni i kronološki pregled zbivanja... [A Brief and Chronological Overview of Events]*, 76-82. On the causes and effects of the looting of mostly Christian Croats in Ottoman territory see: K. Kosor, *Drniška krajina za turskog vladanja* [The Drniš region during the Ottoman rule], 130-133, 140-142, 147-157.

¹¹⁵ Conf. Lovorka Čoralić, *Kraljica mora s lagunarnih sprudova: Povijest Mletačke Republike* [*The Queen of the Sea from the Lagoon Sands: History of the Republic of Venice*], Izdavačka kuća Meridijani, Samobor, 2004, 28.

¹¹⁶ Stjepan Krsić, *Izveštaj iz 1589. godine. Splitski dominikanac fra Daniel piše papi Sikstu V. o prilikama u kojima su živjeli katolici u istočnoj Hercegovini* [Report from 1598. The Split Dominican friar Daniel writes to Pope Sixtus about the circumstances in which Catholics lived in western Hercegovina], in: *Mostariensia*. Časopis za humanističke znanosti Sveučilišta u Mostaru 9 (1998) 110; Bogumil Hrabak, *Napadi senjskih uskoka na Zažablje, Popovo i Trebinje (1535.-1617.)* [Attacks of the Senj Uskoks on Zažablje, Popovo and Trebinje], in: *Zemaljski muzej Tribunia* [*National Museum Tribunia*], 7, Trebinje, 1983, 103-105, 109, 112; Stipan Zlatović, *Kronika o Pavla Šilobadovića o četovanju u Primorju (1662-1686)* [Chronicles of fr. Pavao Šilobadović on guerilla warfare in Primorje (1662-1686)], *Starine*, JAZU, book XXI., Zagreb, 1889, 90-93.

and their wives, and everyone who assisted them”.¹¹⁷ The enslaved Christians were predominantly sold to Naples. Friar Donat Jelić was particularly active in efforts to secure the freedom of these captives, whose names were often altered (usually to Turkish names) to obscure their origins and facilitate their sale. Jelić reports that by 1659, there were over 350 Christians in Naples who had been sold into slavery.¹¹⁸ It is profoundly troubling that the hajduks were as formidable an adversary to the Catholics in the occupied territories as the Ottomans themselves, a situation that was especially acute in the Herzegovina region. The primary objective of the *hajduks'* raids—of which there were many toward the end of the 17th century—was to steal cattle, showing little regard to whom it belonged.¹¹⁹ In addition to cattle, they also abducted people, primarily Catholics, and sold them into slavery. The Franciscans vocally opposed these actions, often organizing efforts to raise funds to ransom the captives.¹²⁰

3.5. Pretensions of the Orthodox Church

The Orthodox Church occupied a more favorable position within the Ottoman Empire compared to the Catholic Church. While the Catholic Church had a basic legal status that permitted it to carry out its mission, it was regarded with suspicion by the Ottoman authorities. In contrast to the Catholics, the Orthodox Church possessed a centralized authority in Constantinople, sanctioned by the Sultan. Catholic bishops, however, were subordinate to the pope and consistently refused to accept Ottoman investiture, unlike the Orthodox bishops. Additionally, Catholic priests were often suspected of being potential spies, largely because the Pope was

¹¹⁷ S. Zlatović, *Kronika o. Pavla Šilobadovića o četovanju u Primorju (1662-1686)* [Chronicles of fr. Pavao Šilobadović on guerilla warfare in Primorje (1662-1686)], 104.

¹¹⁸ Conf. *Acta franciscana Hercegovinae*, vol. I, 460.

¹¹⁹ Conf. Josip Ante Soldo, *Makarski ljetopisi 17. i 18. stoljeća* [*Makarska Chronicles from the 17th and 18th Century*], Književni krug Split, Split, 1993., 64; G. Stanojević, *Dalmacija u doba morejskog rata (1684.-1699.)* [*Dalmatia during the Morean War (1684-1699)*], 79, 91, 96, 98.

¹²⁰ Conf. L. Tomašević, *Između zemlje i neba* [*Between Earth and Heaven*], 226-227.

seen as a key instigator of anti-Ottoman wars.¹²¹ This mistrust contributed to the differing legal status of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches under Ottoman rule. One manifestation of this inequality was that the patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church was viewed by the Ottoman Porte not only as a spiritual leader but also as a temporal authority over his people.¹²² Tensions between the Catholic and Orthodox communities were exacerbated by the efforts of the Serbian Orthodox Church to assert control over the Franciscans and Catholics, primarily to levy annual taxes from them. From the time of the restoration of the Patriarchate of Peć in 1557, the bishop of Peć sought to extend his jurisdiction over all Slavic Christians within the Ottoman Empire.¹²³ It all began when the Orthodox Church received certain privileges, the most significant of which was that it attained “authority over all the Christians in the Ottoman Empire.”¹²⁴ This led to proselytism and demands by the Ortho-

¹²¹ Conf. Krunoslav Stjepan Draganović, *Masovni prijelazi katolika na pravoslavlje hrvatskog govornog područja u vrijeme vladavine Turaka* [*Mass Conversions of Catholics to Orthodoxy in Croatian-speaking Area during the Turkish Rule*], Mostar, 1991, 88-90.

¹²² The ecclesiastical autonomy of the Serbian Orthodox Church largely represented the national autonomy as well. In other words, the patriarch was also the ethnarch; an ethnic leader who was considered as such by the authorities in Constantinople and the people entrusted to him. Conf. Ljubomir Stojanović, *Stari srpski zapisi i natpisi* [*Old Serbian Records and Inscriptions*], I, Srpska kraljevska akademija, Beograd, 1902, 340, 368; Mile Bogović, *Katolička Crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za mletačke vladavine* [*The Catholic Church and Orthodoxy in Dalmatia During the Venetian Rule*], KS, Zagreb, 1982, 82-83.

¹²³ Conf. M. Bogović, *Katolička Crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za mletačke vladavine* [*The Catholic Church and Orthodoxy in Dalmatia During the Venetian Rule*], 13.

¹²⁴ Here, regarding only the ecclesiastical fief, considering the privileges, we can state the possibility to build churches and monasteries. Namely, many Catholic churches and monasteries were destroyed, and we not allowed to be repaired nor was it allowed to build new ones, but the Orthodox Church did not have such a prohibition. Conf. Andrija Nikić, *Mučenici Franjevačke provincije Bosne Srebrene između 1513. i 1613.* [Martyrs of the Franciscan Province of Bosna Srebrena between 1513 and 1613] in: *Tavelić* 21 (1981) 2, 38-41. Ibid, *Mučenici Franjevačke provincije Bosne Srebrene između 1513. i 1613.* [Martyrs of the Franciscan Province of Bosna Srebrena between 1513 and 1613], *Tavelić* 22 (1982) 1, 9-12. We can also state the certainly large influence of the first patriarch of Peć. Namely, Mehmed pasha Sokolović, the grand vizier, after embracing Islam and gaining great respect in the Empire, he installed his brother Makarije as the first patriarch of Peć. Conf.

dox clergy, which are documented in numerous complaints submitted to the Ottoman Porte. For instance, Sultan Suleiman II issued a ferman in 1566, directed to the qadis of Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Klis, to prevent Orthodox bishops from levying unauthorised taxes on Catholic priests—taxes that the Catholic clergy had never previously been required to pay.¹²⁵ Similarly, Sultan Murad III issued fermans in 1576 and 1594, prohibiting Orthodox patriarchs and bishops in the sanjaks of Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Klis from demanding taxes from Catholics.¹²⁶ In 1675, Sultan Mehmed IV also issued a ferman ordering the protection of the Franciscans from the coercion of the Patriarch of Peć and his successors.¹²⁷

The ferman of Sultan Murad IV, issued in Constantinople in 1626 and preserved at Visovac (ferman no. 33), articulates that Orthodox priests, described as “of different faith and people” (...) were explicitly prohibited by prior imperial decrees from imposing fees on Catholics for weddings, church services, and other levies.¹²⁸ Documents such as defters, along with records of qadi decisions and property-related lawsuits, are preserved in the City Library and Chapter Archive in Split, as well as in the monasteries of Živogošće, Makarska, and Visovac. These documents detail the ongoing efforts to protect Catholics from the financial demands of Orthodox priests.¹²⁹ The precarious position of the Franciscans was only

M. Bogović, *Katolička Crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za mletačke vladavine* [*The Catholic Church and Orthodoxy in Dalmatia During the Venetian Rule*], 11.

¹²⁵ “From the day of the great amiable lion sultan fatih Mehmed until today, the Latins (meaning Catholics, translator’s comment) living in the sanjaks of Bosnia, Herzegovina and Klis, did not pay any taxes for weddings and birth (baptismal) certificates to Serbian patriarchs and bishops. Therefore, immediately stop this...” J. Matasović, *Regesta Fojnicensia. Acta Turcica, Bosnensia et latina ex archivo conventus fratrum minorum de observantia spiritus S. Fojnicae, Bosnae Argentinae*, in: *Records of the Serbian Royal Academy*, Beograd, 1927, no. 61, 111.

¹²⁶ *Acta franciscana Hercegovinae*, vol. I, 151-152; J. Matasović, *Regesta Fojnicensia*, no. 97, 160.

¹²⁷ *Acta franciscana Hercegovinae*, vol. I, 518-519.

¹²⁸ Conf. Sulejman Bajraktarević, *Turski dokumenti u splitskom Arheološkom muzeju i u franjevačkom samostanu na Visovcu* [Turkish documents in the Archaeological Museum in Split and the Franciscan monastery on Visovac], *Starine*, JAZU, 44 (1952) 53.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* 60-61. It is similar with Turkish documents which are kept in the City Library in Split and the Chapter Archive in Split. Conf. Sulejman Barjaktarević, *Turski doku-*

partially and temporarily alleviated by the Ahdnama, a document that granted them certain rights. However, these rights required reaffirmation with each change of power, and even when reaffirmed, their enforcement often depended on the discretion of lower-level authorities. This is evidenced by thousands of Ottoman documents, stored in Franciscan monasteries, that reaffirm these rights. In contrast, similar documents are not found in Orthodox monasteries, reflecting the different treatment they received from the authorities.¹³⁰ Despite the legal protections ostensibly provided by the Ahdnama and other imperial decrees, the Franciscans frequently had to pay substantial sums of money to maintain their freedom and rights. Judicial rulings were inconsistent, sometimes favouring Catholics and at other times the Orthodox, creating a cycle of ongoing litigation. The primary beneficiaries of these disputes were the Ottoman officials, particularly the judges, who enriched themselves at the expense of both parties involved in the conflicts.

The pressure exerted by Orthodox patriarchs to bring the Franciscans under their jurisdiction persisted throughout the 18th century. Disputes were frequently resolved in court, where, as before, the outcome often favored the party that could afford to pay the most. The precarious nature of these conditions is perhaps best captured by Friar Bone BeniĆ, the provincial minister at the time, in his letter to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in 1768: “We in Bosnia are in between two wild fires, that always burn: on one side the Turks, and on the other the Greek Orthodox; the first say that if there were no friars in our coun-

menti Gradske biblioteke i Kaptolskog arhiva u Splitu [Turkish documents in the City Library and Chapter Archive in Split], *Ljetopis*, JAZU, 57 (1953) 147-154. The stated implies also to Turkish documents in Franciscan monasteries in Živogošće and Makarska. Conf. Sulejman Barjaktarević, Turski dokumenti franjevačkog samostana u Živogošću i u Makarskoj [Turkish documents in Franciscan monasteries in Živogošće and Makarska], *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 4 (1961), 383-392, Fehim Nametak, Turski dokumenti visovačkog samostana [Turkish documents of the Visovac monastery], in: Miroslav Ivić - Šime Samac (ed.), *Visovački zbornik [Visovac Proceeding]*, Franjevačka provincija Presvetog Otkupitelja, Visovac, 1997, 296.

¹³⁰ Conf. Michael Ursinus, Milodraška Ahdnama – pronalazak i preoblikovanje [The Milodraž Ahdnama – discovery and reshaping], *Svjetlo riječi* 42 (2024) 4, 22-23.

try, all of the people would be Muslim; and the others say that if there were no friars around all of the people how are now Catholics, would be Orthodox.”¹³¹ However, in the interest of historical accuracy, it is important to emphasise that this issue was far more prevalent in Bosnia and Herzegovina than in Dalmatia. Unlike in eastern Herzegovina, where conversions of Catholics to Orthodoxy occurred due to the scarcity of Catholic priests, Dalmatia did not experience such conversions.¹³²

3.6. Evaluation of the pastoral activities

Despite the challenging circumstances of life, the Franciscans endeavored in various ways to elevate the people to God, focusing primarily on the salvation of souls (*salus animarum*) and implementing the ecclesiology of the Council of Trent. Their theological and spiritual formation was significantly influenced by widely disseminated catechisms, particularly the *Dottrina breve* by Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, which was translated into Croatian by the renowned Jesuit Aleksandar Komulović under the

¹³¹ Conf. Anđelko Barun, *Franjevci u Bosni* [*Franciscans in Bosnia*], Ekološki glasnik d.o.o., Donja Lomnica, Livno - Zagreb, 2006, 35. (Translator’s comment: In the original text in Croatian the author uses the terms “latinski” and “grčki”. The literal translation would be “Latin” and “Greek”, but in our translation we opted for “Catholic” and “Orthodox” to make it more understandable.)

¹³² D. Andrijašević in 1627 brings us data on conversions to Orthodoxy, he says that in Popovo polje due to lack of priests and because there was no bishops, 360 Catholic families converted to Orthodoxy, and 4 out of 12 churches were taken over by Orthodox priests. “In questa erano (Popovo) no[n] sono 50 ain[n]i appresso 360 case, et per no[n] haver hauto lor pastore né Vescovo sono trabuchate nello Scisma; et delle dette 12 Chiese sono 4. usurpate et occupate dalli scismatici maxime quelle che sono trabuchate nello scisma, et tutto p[er] no[n] esser stato proprio Vescovo chi potesse diffender le raggi oni della S[anta] Chiesa.” Marko Jačov, *Spisi Kongregacije za propagandu vere u rimu o Srbima 1622-1644*. [Documents on Serbs of the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith 1622-1644], vol. I., Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, *Zbornik za istoriju, jezik i književnost srpskog naroda*, II. odeljenje, knj. 26, Beograd, 1986, vol. I, 75-76. Bazilije Pandžić, *De dioecesi Tribuniensi et Mercanensi*, Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, Rim, 1959, 117. Eighteen monks were in just two Orthodox monasteries in Trebinje and Zavala in 1668, while there were only two Catholic priests in the entire Diocese of Trebinje-Mrkanj, this information speaks for itself. Conf. M. Jačov, *Spisi Kongregacije...* [Documents on Serbs...], 672.

title *Nauch charstianschi chratak* [A Short Christian Doctrine] (Rome, 1603).¹³³ Other influential texts included the catechism by Friar Toma Babić, *Cvit razlika mirisa duhovnoga* [The Flower of Various Spiritual Fragrances] (Venice, 1726); a handbook on practical-moral theology by Antun Kačić, the Archbishop of Split, *Boslovje diloredno* [Regular Theology] (Bologna, 1729); a handbook for preachers by Friar Jeronim Filipović, *Propovidagne nauka karstjanskoga* [The Preaching of Christian Doctrine] (Venice, 1750, 1759, and 1765), published in three volumes; and works by Friar Josip Banovac and Friar Filip Lastrić.¹³⁴ Despite these efforts, the pastoral outcomes were not always satisfactory due to the difficult living conditions, which included a lack of regular church structures and consistent pastoral activity, as previously discussed.

Given the existential concerns of both the priests and the faithful, coupled with the scarcity of priests across expansive territories and the dispersed nature of the faithful—a shepherd's lifestyle—organising effective pastoral work was an immense challenge. Under such circumstances, fostering significant involvement of laypeople in the Church's mission was nearly impossible.¹³⁵ Consequently, traditional Christianity persisted for an extended period, but a deeper engagement with the mysteries of the faith was largely absent. The uneducated populace, frequently preoccupied with the daily struggle for survival, lacked both the time and the intellectual predisposition to delve into the complexities of Christian doctrine.

¹³³ On Aleksandar Komulović see: Tonči Trstenjak, *Aleksandar Komulović Split 1548. – Dubrovnik 1608.* [*Aleksandar Komulović Split 1548 – Dubrovnik 1608*], Književni krug Split, Split, 2023. Besides the translation of the catechism of Bellarmino, Komulović issued his own catechism in 1582 in Rome entitled *Nauch charstianschi za slovignschi narod, u vlaasti iazich – Dottrina Christiana per la nazione illirica nella propria lingua* [*Christian Doctrine for Slavic (Croatian, translator's comment) people, in their own language*], which was actually the first Croatian catechism.

¹³⁴ Conf. L. Tomašević, *Između zemlje i neba* [*Between Earth and Heaven*], 107-113.

¹³⁵ Conf. Tajni vaticanski arhiv [Vatican Secret Archive], S. Congr. Conc., Relat. visit. ad limina, Scardonien., 1761., taken from Vicko Kapitanović, *Religiozni život i međusobni odnosi katolika i pravoslavnih na području skradinske biskupije u XVIII. st.* [Religious life and mutual relationship between Catholics and Orthodox in the area of the Diocese of Skradin], *Titius* 4 (2011) 4, 90; L. Tomašević, *Il comportamento religioso nella Craina di Sign*, 78-81; J. A. Soldo, *Sinjska krajina u 17. i 18. stoljeću* [*The Sinj Region in the 17th and 18th Century*], II, 339-341, K. Kosor, Drniš pod Venecijom [Drniš under Venice], 229-232.

For these individuals, God was perceived as a tangible and omnipotent force governing all aspects of human existence — a force that controlled the weather, determined the abundance of harvests, and determined the occurrence of droughts. This divine force was also believed to have the power to alleviate adversities affecting the people, their land, and their livestock, which was often their most valuable possession (referred to as *blago*, or “treasure”).¹³⁶ As a result, the faithful engaged in their religious practices with a sense of spontaneity, sincerity, and obedience, fully convinced that such devotion would bring benefits not only to themselves and their families but also to their property and the wider community.

For the faithful, God was perceived as present in every aspect of life, prompting them to pray for all matters and to seek His protection. However, this protection and these blessings were most frequently sought through various sacraments. During Epiphany, for example, water was blessed and taken home by the faithful, who then used it to bless their families, homes, land, animals, new endeavors, weddings, and other significant events. Interestingly, during the theological-pastoral period under investigation, regular calls to partake in the sacramental life — integral to nourishing faith and Christian practice—were not strongly emphasised. Instead, it appears that the faithful of that era sought and experienced God’s protection and blessings more commonly through sacramentals than through the sacraments themselves.¹³⁷ While they did attend to the salvation of their souls by diligently adhering to God’s commandments, there seems to have been an overemphasis on their own good deeds, as opposed to a reliance on God’s grace and mercy—topics that were not frequently addressed in church sermons or catechesis, which were irregular and not consistently aimed at preparing them for the reception of the sacraments.

Pastoral shortcomings are perhaps most evident in a sermon delivered by Friar Jeronim Filipović, one of the most prominent preachers of the mid-18th century.¹³⁸ In his discourse, Filipović identifies several moral

¹³⁶ Conf. L. Tomašević, *Između zemlje i neba* [*Between Earth and Heaven*], 129-131.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 133.

¹³⁸ Friar Jeronim Filipović wrote sermons for the needs of the parish priest, among which the best known are “*Sermons on the Christian Doctrine*” in three volumes (Venice, 1750, 1759, 1765) which were used for an entire century in Dalmatia and

failings, including pervasive swearing, alcoholism, and the mistreatment of women, particularly in relation to marital customs such as abduction and elopement.¹³⁹ Despite expressing deep concern over the widespread religious ignorance among the populace and vehemently condemning acts such as murder, adultery, and theft, as well as denouncing various superstitions — such as incantations, fortune-telling, the use of amulets, and belief in werewolves — Filipović himself remained susceptible to the belief in witches.¹⁴⁰ For contemporary individuals, particularly those residing in urban environments, it is challenging to fully comprehend the rural imagination of that era — a worldview that was insular, unchanged for centuries, and populated by both natural and supernatural entities.¹⁴¹ Living in a world with limited scientific and religious education, indi-

Bosnia and Herzegovina. They were reprinted in Sarajevo (1887 - 1894), and it was the official textbook for the Glagolitic theology school in Priko, and later in Zadar. Conf. Luka Tomašević (ed.), *Gospodin vam dao mir* [*May the Lord Give You Peace*], Franjevačka provincija Presvetog Otkupitelja, Split, 2017, 29; Karlo Kosor, Fra Jeronim Filipović kao kritičar vjere i morala svojih suvremenika [Friar Jeronim Filipović as a critic of the faith and morals of his contemporaries], *Kačić* 6 (1974), 123-140.

¹³⁹ Conf. L. Tomašević, *Između zemlje i neba* [*Between Earth and Heaven*], 189-193, 197-198, 228; K. Kužić, *Povijest dalmatinske zagore* [*The History of the Dalmatian Zagora*], 310-312.

¹⁴⁰ Conf. Emanuel Hoško, *Katehetske propovijedi i dijaloški katekizam Jeronima Filipovića* [Catechetical sermons and dialogic catechism of Jeronim Filipović], *Služba Božja* 24 (1984) 1, 73. On witches and other mythological creatures in the Dalmatian Zagora see: Vicko Kapitanović (ed.), *Kultovi, mitovi i vjerovanja u zagori: Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa održanoga 14. prosinca 2012. u Unešiću* [*The Cults, Myths and Beliefs in Zagora: Proceedings from the Scientific Meeting held on December 14, 2012 in Unešić*] Veleučilište u Šibeniku, Filozofski fakultet u Splitu – Odsjek za povijest, Kulturni Sabor Zagore, Split, 2013.

¹⁴¹ The famous French marshal Marmont writes in his memoirs about the people in the Dalmatian Zagora: "...this land which is so sad and poor is populated by such beautiful, hard-working and cheerful people; uneducated, simple, brave and ready to sacrifice themselves for their leaders; but as all cultureless people, they do not understand sapience (...) Due to their lifestyle and the misery, all of the weak and poorly built children die; only the strong and resilient survive. i loše građena djeca; prežive samo snažni i otporni. Thus, each generation experiences some kind of forced cleansing that creates a rugged and resistant race ...". Auguste V. Marmont, *Memoari* [*Memoirs*], translated by F. Baras, Logos, Split, 1984, 57.

viduals of that time were particularly vulnerable to various superstitions. Nevertheless, due to the inadequacy of pastoral care for adults and the insufficient theological formation of the priests, many of these beliefs persisted among the populace. Although the Franciscans actively combated practices associated with magic and superstition, some of these beliefs, such as those in fairies, witches, and mares, have endured to the present day.¹⁴² Regarding the virtues of the people, authors from the period under examination highlighted qualities such as friendship, loyalty, hospitality, and Christian love (solidarity).¹⁴³ The people were deeply religious, though, as noted earlier, often prone to superstition.¹⁴⁴ Their word was considered sacred, especially among the faithful of that era. For their faith, they were willing to suffer, sometimes even enduring true martyrdom.¹⁴⁵ However, it is important to recognise that their faith was understood and practiced in a manner that was “one’s own way” a practice that should not be uncritically accepted, though the difficult circumstances in which the faithful lived must also be taken into account.

The Franciscans, to the extent permitted by their circumstances, effectively combined pastoral activities with socio-charitable work. This self-sacrificial work often went largely unnoticed, as it was carried out without fanfare or extensive documentation comments in chronicles. Their efforts were primarily focused on caring for those whose human dignity was at risk.¹⁴⁶ This care manifested in various forms, including visiting the sick, administering sacraments, distributing medicine, utilizing remedies from renowned “Franciscan pharmacopoeias,” and providing assistance to impoverished families. The Franciscans’ generosity and their

¹⁴² On myths and beliefs see: Vicko Kapitanović, (ed.), *Kultovi, mitovi i vjerovanja u Zagori*, Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa održanog u Unešiću 14. 12. 2012. [*The Cults, Myths and Beliefs in Zagora: Proceedings from the Scientific Meeting held on December 14, 2012 in Unešić*], Veleučilište u Šibeniku, Filozofski fakultet u Splitu – Odsjek za povijest, Kulturni sabor Zagore, Split, 2013.

¹⁴³ Conf. L. Tomašević, *Između zemlje i neba [Between Earth and Heaven]*, 214-228.

¹⁴⁴ Conf. L. Katić, *Povijesni podaci iz vizitacija trogirске biskupije u XVIII. stoljeću* [Historical data from visitations of the Diocese of Trogir in the 18th century], 300, 315, 326.

¹⁴⁵ Conf. V. Kapitanović, *Društveni i religiozni život katolika...* [The social and religious life of the Catholics], 329-330.

¹⁴⁶ Conf. I. Marković, *Le parrocchie francescane...*, 52.

inherent charisma for service, particularly toward those most in need, became especially evident during periods of widespread illness. During such times, many religious figures assisted in health institutions within villages or city lazarettos, offering comfort to the sick. For example, when the plague struck Split in 1732, all neighbourhoods were affected except for the Dobri neighbourhood. When the plague recurred multiple times, with Dobri remaining unaffected on each occasion, the citizens of Split attributed this phenomenon to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, leading to the emergence of the devotion to Our Lady of Health in Split. The Franciscans from Dobri aided those suffering from the plague; one friar, Dujam Vuletić, even volunteered to be confined in the lazaretto with the afflicted, despite being healthy, “just so they do not lack spiritual service.”¹⁴⁷ During years of famine—a frequent occurrence in the rugged region of Dalmatia during the 17th and 18th centuries—the Franciscans were instrumental in aiding those most in need. A particularly notable instance occurred during the severe famine in the Drniš area in 1733, a consequence of the plague that had spread from Grahovo in 1731. The Franciscans from Visovac, in a remarkable act of charity, sold silver from their monastery in Zadar to purchase wheat. They milled this wheat at the Roški Slap waterfalls and distributed the flour to the people, ensuring their survival during this difficult period.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ S. Zlatović: *Franovci Države Presvetog Odkupitelja i hrvatski puk u Dalmaciji* [*The Franciscans of the Province of the Most Holy Redeemer and the Croatian People in Dalmatia*], 222.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 229. The famous French marshal Marmont noticed the Franciscan influence on the people and their erudition, so he writes in his memoirs the following about them: “These very enlightened friars, in every sense are far superior to the other clergy in the region, they live in eleven monasteries. Charitable, diligent in performing their duties, they served a large number of parishes. It was very useful winning them over, because having them as friends meant gaining for the government all the moral strength that they had”. Auguste V. Marmont, *Memoari* [*Memoirs*], 104.

CONCLUSION

In researching the pastoral activities of the Franciscans in Dalmatia under Ottoman rule, we have sought to elucidate the distinctive characteristics of their mission during this period. The history of Franciscan pastoral work in the region can be divided into two main phases: the period under Ottoman rule (approximately 1522 to 1687) and the post-liberation era (1687–1800). Within the latter, a further distinction can be made between the activities conducted under the Province of Bosna Srebrena (1687–1735) and the subsequent period following the establishment of the Province of the Most Holy Redeemer (1735–1800), initially known as the Province of St. Caius until 1743. The specificities of Franciscan pastoral activities were largely shaped by the extraordinary circumstances under which they were conducted. Unlike the Franciscans in Western Europe and in regions not under Ottoman control, the Franciscan mission within the Ottoman Empire assumed a fundamentally different character. In the former context, Franciscan life was centred around monasteries, characterised by regular activities such as fraternity, confession, preaching, the establishment and spiritual guidance of the Secular Franciscan Order, and the organisation of confraternities. In contrast, the Franciscan lifestyle in parishes spread over vast areas within the Empire was markedly different, necessitating a unique approach to their mission. This study highlights these specificities, offering critical observations where necessary. The Franciscans, who served as the primary spiritual leaders for over 160 years in Dalmatia and Lika, and for more than 400 years in Bosnia and Herzegovina, endeavored to preserve the faith and Croatian identity of the people entrusted to their care. Their efforts, though successful, were achieved at great personal sacrifice, as detailed in this paper. The Franciscans' self-sacrifice, cheerfulness of spirit, modesty, and simplicity forged an indissoluble bond between them and the Croatian people, endowing their mission in this region with a distinctive dimension characterised by a special closeness to the people and a dialogic openness to other religions and cultures. Over the centuries, the Franciscans shared the fate of a suffering, rather than a triumphant or privileged, Church with the people. The authenticity of the Franciscan mission in the future will likely continue to depend on their fidelity to God, their proximity to their fel-

low humans, and their commitment to giving a voice to those who have been silenced, whether by the powerful or by the distractions of a society indifferent to the struggles of ordinary people.