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BETWEEN ISLAM AND CATHOLICISM: BOSNIAN FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES IN TURKISH HUNGARY, 1584-1716

BY

ISTVÁN GYÖRGY TÓTH*

The work of the Bosnian Franciscan missionaries represents a peculiar episode in the history of Catholic renewal in Central Europe. By studying these developments, we may become acquainted with the manner in which the various denominations and nationalities coexisted in the Carpathian basin. In the following, I shall examine the work of the Bosnian missionaries on the basis of documents preserved in the Rome archives of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith (de Propaganda Fide), a body of cardinals founded by Pope Gregory XV in 1622 to direct Catholic missions throughout the world. Until recently most of the documents used in this study were unknown; they are soon to be published.¹

After the battle of Mohács (1526) and the fall of Buda (1541), the middle third of the medieval kingdom of Hungary was occupied by the Turks. Large numbers of southern Slavs moved into the Turkish-occupied areas of Hungary. While many of these people were Catholics, overall the Catholic Church in Hungary was significantly weakened by the effects of the Reformation. The Catholic bishops were appointed by the Holy Roman Emperor acting as the king of Hungary. The Emperor was the main enemy of the Turkish Sultan, and thus the Hungarian bishops

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¹For the general religious development of the region in the early modern period see Gábor Barta and Katalin Péter, *History of Transylvania*, trans. Adrienne Chambers-Makkai et al. (Budapest, 1994); István György Tóth and István Bitskey, *A Cultural History of Hungary*, ed. László Kósa (2 vols.; Budapest, 2000). On the Catholic renewal in Western and Central Europe see Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770* (New York, 1998), *passim*.

were refused access to the Turkish territories. After the Reformation and the Turkish conquest the fate of the Catholic Church became increasingly uncertain in Turkish Hungary. For this reason, the arrival of Bosnian Franciscan friars from the Balkans had a great effect upon the lives of Hungarian, Croatian, Romanian, and Bosnian Catholics living in the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Compared with other Catholic priests working in the Turkish sovereign area, the Bosnian Franciscans established a far more "intimate" relationship with the Ottoman authorities. This special relationship, where it led the Bosnians to persecute their rivals within the Catholic Church using Turkish military force, rightly outraged the Ragusan, Italian, and Hungarian priests who were the potential victims. Still, it did provide the Franciscans with far greater room for manoeuvre in their missionary work.²

Franciscan friars appeared in Bosnia at the end of the thirteenth century. They were given the task of challenging the Bogomil heretic church. The Pope declared the whole of Bosnian Kingdom to be a missionary territory and appointed the Franciscans as local inquisitors. Friars arrived in Bosnia from many different countries: English, German, Italian, and Aragonese Franciscans converted the Bosnian heretics, and here too the famous inquisitor, Saint Jacob of Marche, worked. During the golden age of the order in Bosnia in the middle of the fifteenth century, Franciscan friars were living in about sixty monasteries throughout the country. Owing to the popularity of the Bogomil heresy, the number of Catholic secular priests in the country was very small. Thus, contrary to the traditional ecclesiastical model, according to their papal privileges the Franciscans in Bosnia also worked as parish priests. From the sixteenth century on, they continued to occupy the parishes also in Turkish Hungary.³

²The most important works on the Bosnian Franciscan missionaries are Eusebius Fermentžin, *Acta Bosnae potissimum ecclesiastica* (Zagreb, 1892); Mijo Vjenceslav Batinić, *Djelovanje Franjevacu u Bosni i Hercegovini za prvih šest vjekova njihova boravka*, Vol. II (Zagreb, 1883); Julijan Jelenić, *Kultura i bosanski franjevci*, Vols. I-II (Sarajevo, 1912-1915); István György Tóth, *Relationes missionariorum de Hungaria et Transilvania 1627-1707* (Budapest-Rome, 1994), pp. 79-101, 177-182; second and third volumes, *Litterae missionariorum de Hungaria 1572-1717* (Budapest-Rome, 2002).

³Anto Slavko Kovačić, *Biobibliografija franjevaca Bosne Srebrene* (Sarajevo, 1991), *passim*. Srećko M. Džaja, *Konfessionalität und Nationalität Bosniens und der Herzegovina: Voremanzipatorische Phase 1463-1804* (Munich, 1984), *passim*.

The Bosnian Franciscans and the Turkish Occupation

The end of the golden age of the Bosnian kingdom and the Franciscan order in Bosnia came with the occupation of the country by the Ottomans, which was completed by 1463. The Turkish occupation divided the Franciscan order in Bosnia into two parts. One part fell under Turkish rule (its territory grew constantly with the advance of the Turks), while the other part remained part of the Christian world.

Following the incorporation of Bosnia into the Sultan's empire, local Franciscans stayed on rather than fleeing. The Turkish administration tolerated and even assisted the Bosnian Franciscans because it needed them in order to keep the peace and to control the tax-paying Catholic populations and prevent their emigration. At the same time, the Turks also had an interest in provoking differences between Christians of the various denominations, especially the Catholics and the Orthodox. For this reason, they made no attempt to establish a lasting peace between the various churches and were also quite willing to adjudicate in church affairs. Bitter rancor among the non-Muslim populations reduced the likelihood of a united Christian uprising against Ottoman rule. A united stand by Christians that ignored denominational differences was a constant fear of the Turks. Events during the great wars at the end of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries proved that this fear was not without foundation.⁴

The Franciscans in Bosnia thus preserved their influence even after the country fell under Ottoman rule. Indeed in certain respects they even benefited from the fact that the kingdom no longer had a Christian ruler. Similarly to the Bosnian merchants, for whom the Turkish advance meant the creation of a uniform commercial territory without frontiers and custom barriers stretching from Buda to Istanbul, the Bosnian Franciscans—as members of the only Catholic institution in the Balkans that was recognized by the Turks—were also able to extend their influence under Ottoman rule. At the heart of the Turkish Balkans, in the area between Belgrade and Istanbul, the Bosnian Franciscan order was the only Catholic institution to be tolerated by the Turks. Even though the Bosnian Franciscan province was itself in difficulties, following the loss of numerous monasteries and the conversion of large numbers of local Catholics to Islam, the Bosnian Franciscans began to expand their missionary activity in the second half of the sixteenth century. They trav-

⁴Eusebius Fermendžin, *Acta Bulgariae ecclesiastica* (Zagreb, 1887), pp. 28–35.

eled to areas situated far away from Bosnia. Indeed, by the middle of the seventeenth century, Bosnian Franciscans were operating in Transylvania, Moldavia, and Bulgaria, as well as in Buda and Pest in Hungary. In this way they upheld the Catholic faith in areas that were also subject to Turkish taxation but were situated far from the borders of the medieval kingdom of Bosnia. Whereas in Bosnia the Franciscans were the sole representatives of the Catholic Church and were undisturbed by other orders or secular priests, in Turkish Hungary and Transylvania they faced stiff competition. Indeed the Bosnian Franciscans had constant quarrels with other Catholic priests, with the archbishops of Esztergom in the same way as with the Jesuit priests, or with simple secular parish priests.

Bosnian Franciscans in Turkish Hungary

After the strengthening of Turkish rule in the middle part of the medieval kingdom of Hungary in the middle of the sixteenth century, the Bosnian Franciscans moved ever further northward into the occupied territories. Their progress was made easier by the fact that the Catholic Church in this region had been extremely severely weakened by the Reformation and the Turkish advance. Consequently, there was a real vacuum of ecclesiastical power in Turkish Hungary. Meanwhile, the influx of Southern Slav Catholics into the region had led to a gradual northward shift of the language boundary between the Southern Slavs and Hungarians; thus the Bosnian missionaries found Croatian-speaking faithful even in territories earlier inhabited by Hungarians.

After the Turkish occupation of Hungary, the Bosnian Franciscans crossed the Sava river, which had previously formed the northern border of the Bosnian Franciscan province. With the permission of the Turkish authorities, they then took possession of three deserted monasteries in Slavonia. The three monasteries—at Velika, Nasice, and Sarengrad—became a basis for their further expansion. In addition to the three monasteries, Bosnian Franciscans also settled in the vacant parishes of southern Hungary. These parishes had been abandoned by their former priests after the persecution by the Turks.

In 1580–81, Boniface of Ragusa (Bonifacije Drakolica), an Observant Franciscan, former guardian in Jerusalem, and bishop of Stagno, traveled to Turkish Hungary after having visited the Bosnian Franciscan province, for which he had been commissioned by the Pope. In the village of Babska to the north of Belgrade, he called together the local parish priests. He found that four of them were Franciscan friars, of

whom at least two were certainly Bosnians, for they signed their names using the Cyrillic script. Boniface's travelling companion, Antun Matković, was the Bosnian Franciscan provincial and Bosnian bishop. Matković accompanied the papal visitor to Timisoara, where Boniface died; after that Matković returned to Rome in the spring of 1582.⁵ In his great work on the Franciscan order written in 1587, Francesco Gonzaga, the Franciscan general, provided surprisingly numerous details about the Bosnian province of the order. For this reason, scholars have traditionally thought that Gonzaga must have visited Turkish Bosnia. There is no evidence for this, but Gonzaga was obviously acquainted with the account given by Matković, and with the notes of Bishop Boniface, who died in the course of his visitation.⁶

Turkish Hungary was important for the Bosnian Franciscans not just because they could convert many souls in the area. Despite the apparent poverty of the Turkish-occupied zone, it was still considerably richer than the villages of the Bosnian mountains. Income from the parishes held by the Bosnian Franciscans, above all in the region to the north of Bosnia, was used for the upkeep of the monasteries in Bosnia itself. Although the Pope had granted these monasteries—unlike other Observant Franciscan provinces in Europe—the right to own smaller vineyards and mills, the Franciscans did not, of course, own any landed property on Turkish territory.

Missions throughout the world expected to receive money from their center, but the Bosnian Franciscan missions represented a strange and interesting exception. Indeed, donations collected by the Bosnian Franciscans' missions in Hungary were sent back to the Bosnian monasteries.

In the 1620's the most interesting figure among the Bosnian Franciscans working in Turkish Hungary was Paolo Papich (Pavel Papić). He worked as a missionary in the region of Bácska, around Bács, north of

⁵Archivio storico della Sacra Congregazione de Propaganda Fide, Rome (hereafter APF), Miscellanea Varie, Vol. I/a, fols. 53, 67, 70, 269, 386–387, 432, 436, 482, 502. Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Rome, Archivum Arcis I–XVIII (1851–1854). Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Rome, Vol. Germania 160, fols. 221–223; Vol. Italia 156, fols. 90^r, 169–170^r. Agustín Arce, O.F.M., “Bonifacio de Stephanis (c. 1504–1582). Último guardián de Monte Sión y obispo de Ston,” *Archivum Historicum Franciscanum*, 76 (1983), 296–341. Amnon Cohen, “The Expulsion of the Franciscans from Mount Zion. Old Documents and New Interpretation,” *Turcica* (Paris), XVIII (1986), 147–157.

⁶Franciscus Gonzaga, *De origine Seraphicae religionis Franciscanae eiusque progressibus* (Rome, 1587), p. 511. Basilije Pandžić, “Bosna Argentina,” in *Historia Missionum OFM*, Vol. IV (Rome, 1974), pp. 109–127.

Belgrade. The town of Bács had been the seat of an old archbishopric before the Turkish conquest. More importantly, it was also the location of the ruined Franciscan monastery of the Virgin Mary. Papich sent to Propaganda Fide a detailed account describing his trials in this area, which appeared so wild and peculiar to the missionaries coming from mountainous Bosnia exactly because the Hungarian plain was “completely flat, without hills.” In Bosnia the hills had been places of refuge for the Franciscans, whereas in this region there was nowhere for them to flee to on the plain. As his correspondence shows, Papich worked in this region among the Calvinists, Lutherans, Antitrinitarians, and Orthodox. His success was due not only to his sermons—which were understood by the ever-increasing local Slav populations—but also in large part to his reputation as an exorcist capable of dealing with evil spirits. The possessed were brought to him in chains from far and wide. Papich began to translate the Bible into Croatian, and translated into Croatian a popular work by Bartolomeo da Saluthio, an Italian Franciscan, mystical writer, and preacher from Rome who had died in 1617.⁷ The original title of this apocalyptic work was “Le sette trombe per risvegliar peccatori” (“The seven trumpets to awaken sinners”). Despite his great efforts, however, Papich’s translation was not published and remained in manuscript until 1991.

In the first half of the seventeenth century, the Bosnian Franciscans covered an ever greater area of Turkish Hungary. Exploiting their good relations with the Turkish authorities, they took away a whole series of parishes in southern Hungary from the secular priests. As the vicar-general, Pietro Sabbatini from Zadar, complained to Rome, in Hungary the Bosnian Franciscans arrived with papers issued by the Turkish authorities and thus occupied the parishes. The vicar was right: this practice did not really accord with the regulations issued by the Council of Trent.

In 1651–1656 the newly appointed bishop of Belgrade, the Bosnian Franciscan Matteo Benlich (Matej Benlić), traveled through the parishes of Turkish Hungary as far to the north as Esztergom and Gyöngyös. Excluding the friars living in the monasteries at Velika and Nasice, he found a total of thirty-eight Bosnian Franciscans in the parishes in Hungary. Usually there was just one friar in a parish, but in the larger parishes there were sometimes two. The Bosnian Franciscans thus ex-

⁷APF, Scritture originali riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali (hereafter cited as SOCG), Vol. 148, fol. 323. István György Tóth, “The Missionary and Devil: Ways of Conversion in Catholic Missions in Hungary,” in *Frontiers of Faith. Religious Exchange and the Constitution of Religious Identities 1400–1750*, ed. Eszter Andor and István György Tóth (Budapest, 2001), pp. 79–87.

erted a very important influence on the fate of the Catholics in Turkish Hungary. Meanwhile, for the Bosnian Franciscan province, comprising more than three hundred friars, Turkish Hungary was of no more than secondary importance. Still, the fact that the Franciscans spread from Bosnia northwards across the Sava into Turkish Hungary did increase their prestige and above all their incomes.

The Mission in the Region of Timisoara

The first mission of the Bosnian Franciscans to be established under the direction of Propaganda Fide was the mission in the region of Timisoara. The establishment of the mission meant that the Bosnians were once again moving into an area of power vacuum from the Catholic perspective. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Timisoara region belonged partly to the Turkish empire and partly to the Principality of Transylvania, ruled by Calvinist princes. The population of the area was very mixed and included Romanians, Hungarians, and southern Slavs. Apart from a majority of Orthodox believers and a minority of Calvinists, Catholics were also numerous. In 1626 the Bosnian Franciscan Marco Bandini (Bandulović), who was later to become the apostolic administrator of Moldavia, began a mission with another Bosnian Franciscan in Karasevo in Turkish territory. The two Bosnian Franciscans were sent to the area by Alberto Rengjich, the bishop of Belgrade and Smederevo, who had been shocked to see the distress of local Catholics during a visitation to the Timisoara region. He had found twelve villages close to Timisoara where, although the inhabitants were proud Catholics, local priests had been absent for many years. Therefore, the local Catholics baptized their children by taking them to the Protestant pastors or to the Orthodox priests. Rengjich visited the surrounding areas and found to his dismay that a Gypsy who knew the four letters of the alphabet (!) was calling himself a priest and baptizing in the villages. Marco Bandini also gave an alarming impression of Catholics in the area, who still used the old calendar (i.e., the Julian, not the Gregorian) and where close relatives married because there were no local priests to forbid this practice. He even mentions the presence of a number of bigamists who, taking advantage of the rivalry between the various denominations, remarried in a different religion while their first spouses were still alive.

The ethnic-linguistic map of the missionary area was very diverse, but the missionaries were able to cope with their task. They wrote that they could converse with the Calvinist nobles in Latin. The Bosnian

Franciscans and the local southern Slav populations could easily converse with each other, for they all used the same Croatian language, while contact with the Romanians was facilitated by the fact that Bandini—like most of his fellow friars—had a good knowledge of Italian. Many of the Bosnian Franciscans were in fact Dalmatians, while some of the non-Dalmatian Bosnian missionaries, including Marco Bandini, had learnt Italian while studying in monasteries in Italy. Bandini's successor at the Timisoara mission, the Dalmatian Giovanni Desmanich, seems to have learnt Romanian very quickly. At the beginning of his stay, Desmanich informed the Congregation that he had no knowledge of Romanian and was therefore obliged to keep a Romanian-speaking servant. But some time later, he argued in front of the cardinals that he and his companions (the Bosnian missionaries) had a good knowledge of Romanian, which could not be said of the secular priests. In the course of his time at the Timisoara mission, Marco Bandini also appears to have learnt Romanian, for when he returned to the area for a brief visit in 1639, he heard the confessions of nine persons who spoke Romanian in one of the villages. Later as the apostolic vicar of Moldavia he could well use his Romanian learned in the Timisoara mission.

The Bosnian Franciscans informed Rome that the inhabitants of the Timisoara region had the morals of wild and barbarian peasants. This did not only mean that they were ignorant of the Catholic rites and spent three days at Christmas and Easter in revelry, drunkenness, and dance. Another disturbing factor for the Bosnian missionaries was that local congregations were unwilling to give alms, claiming that they were not responsible for looking after the priest. At the start, therefore, the missionaries were indeed reliant upon assistance from Rome, which was always difficult to obtain. Even though the Catholic congregations saw nothing but Protestant and Greek Orthodox priests for decades on end, they nevertheless retained their Catholic identity. As the Bosnian Franciscan Andrea da Camengrado reported to Rome in 1630, local Catholics used to say "our beautiful faith is in Rome," by which they meant that the head of their faith, the Pope, was in Rome.⁸

In 1630 the prospering mission fell into difficulties because its head, Marco Bandini, became very ill. He traveled for several months to Vi-

⁸*Documenta Hungarorum in Moldavia, 1467-1706*, ed. Kálmán Benda (Budapest, 1989), I, 267-454. Marko Jačov, *Le missioni cattoliche nei Balcani durante la guerra di Candia (1645-1669)* (Rome, 1992), I, 126-128, 139-140, 500-502.

enna, where he had himself cured. From there he went on to serve as parish priest in Belgrade. The mission in Timisoara was abandoned for ten years.

One decade after Bandini's departure, another Bosnian Franciscan, Giovanni Desmanich (Ivan Desmanić), arrived at the mission. In 1640 the Franciscan general invited Desmanich and one of his fellow friars to Rome in order to send the two Franciscans, who were well acquainted with Turkish affairs, on a mission to the Holy Land. In the end the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith decided that there was a greater need for the two Franciscans in the Timisoara region. By that time, not only were the Catholic prayers and rites becoming forgotten in Krassóvár, but also the small wooden church built by Bandini in 1626 was on the verge of collapse. Because Mass had not been celebrated in the church for a decade, local peasants were using it as a pigsty and pigs were butchered here.⁹ After the ten-year interval local inhabitants were initially rather distrustful of the missionaries. At first they accepted only the most important celebrations, such as baptism and marriage from the priest and did not want to listen to his sermons. Desmanich, therefore, traveled to Bosnia to find more friars who would join the mission.

Not only did Desmanich travel in the Timisoara region, preaching, hearing confessions, and converting as he went, but he also went on longer journeys. Each year he traveled round Transylvania, where he collected donations for the mission in Timisoara from local Catholics. Given that Desmanich's mission was situated on Turkish territory, his opponents argued that he was taking the Transylvanians' money off to Turkey. Desmanich's baptismal register demonstrates just how successful he was as a missionary; he not only baptized large numbers of people (adults as well as children) in the Timisoara region, but also went off to baptize in Transylvania and even in Wallachia and Moldavia.¹⁰

After the death of Desmanich in 1652, the mission in Timisoara fell apart. Some of the Bosnian Franciscan missionaries left the mission, while others gave notice and declared themselves independent of the mission. In 1658, following the disastrous Polish campaign of the Transylvanian prince, György Rákóczi II, the Turkish troops that had been sent to punish the prince, ravaged and occupied the eastern half of the Timisoara region. The town of Karánsebes, which had previously be-

⁹APF, SOCG, Vol. 87, fol. 190.

¹⁰APF, SOCG, Vol. 406, fol. 349. Tóth, *Relationes*, pp. 79–107.

longed to Transylvania, became part of Turkish Hungary, and the Turkish magistrate or kadi moved into the former Jesuit college. The Turkish and Tatar troops swept the Timisoara mission away and the missionaries felt the war at first hand. In 1661 the Bosnian friar Antonio Suglich reported to Pope Alexander VII that he had lost everything in the war, including the communion cup used during the Mass. He also informed the Pope that in spite of being a friar he had joined the Christian armies, encouraging them in their struggle against the Turks. He too had borne arms, killing several "infidels."¹¹

After the withdrawal of the Turkish armies, the cardinals of Propaganda Fide entrusted the Bulgarian observant Franciscan Paolo da Cinquefonti (Pavel ot Petokladenci) with the reorganization of the embattled Timisoara mission. He was appointed as the new mission prefect and arrived in Lipova in October, 1659, with four other Franciscans. Da Cinquefonti remained in the post until 1664, when he was elected as *custos* in Bulgaria.¹²

Following a proposal by Paolo da Cinquefonti, in 1667 Propaganda Fide appointed Giovanni Braenovich a Derventa, a Bosnian Franciscan and former parish priest of Sarajevo, as the vice-prefect of Timisoara region. Derventa began his work as a missionary in the very next year. Within a period of seven years—according to his own report—he baptized no less than 620 individuals, including many adults. He freed three Hungarians held captive by the Turks, as well as one boy captive who was being taken by the Turks to Oradea for circumcision. He also helped four young Catholics, who had already converted to Islam, to escape back to Transylvania.

The Timisoara region was the only piece of Hungary to remain sovereign Turkish territory after the Peace of Carlowitz (1699). The Bosnian Franciscans continued to care for the Catholics in the area. The last parish priest in Turkish Hungary, Michele Kokich, was also a Bosnian Franciscan; he came from the monastery of Bosnian friars in Buda, spoke German and Hungarian as well as Croatian, and even knew some Turkish. This last parish priest arrived in Turkish-held Timisoara in

¹¹APF, SOCG, Vol. 127, fol. 386; Vol. 406, fol. 271; Vol. 412, fols. 129, 432, 363, 360, 345; Vol. 218, fol. 377.

¹²*Acta Bosnae*, p. 510. Tóth, *Relationes*, pp. 212–225. APF, SOCG, Vol. 218, fols. 97, 409–410; Vol. 306, fols. 64–67; Vol. 481, fol. 235; APF, FV, Vol. 6, fols. 111–119; Vol. 310, fols. 173–175, 189.

1715, that is, just one year before the town was retaken by the Christian army.¹³

Bosnian Missionaries in Pest and Buda

In the seventeenth century the Bosnian Franciscans also cared for the Catholic inhabitants of the medieval Hungarian capital of Buda and for those living in Pest on the other side of the Danube. In the second half of the sixteenth century southern Slav, Bosnian, and Ragusan priests had also been present in Buda, but the Turks later banned the Catholic priests, whom they considered to be enemies, from living in Buda, which was their most important fortress and was also under constant threat from the Christian soldiers. Thus, when, in 1623, the titular abbot of Bács, Paolo Torelli, who headed the missionary work in Turkish Hungary, came to Buda in search of the bequest of his brother, who had been a wealthy merchant from Ragusa (Dubrovnik), he was able to celebrate Mass only in great secret and in a private home. Still, no fewer than 135 of the faithful gathered together for his Mass. The Catholics of Buda had not seen a priest for many years, and it would seem that many in the congregation also came from Pest and the surrounding areas.

In 1633 two Bosnian Franciscans, Filippo a Camengrado and Paolo a Clamice, established a mission here. The two Bosnian friars were also denied access to Buda, but they proceeded to take over the Calvinist chapel in Pest (the only Christian church in Pest and Buda) and convert seven Calvinist families. (In their letters, the Bosnian friars stated that instead of Pest, their mission was located in Buda. As the former capital of the kingdom of Hungary, Buda was obviously better known in foreign parts than Pest, but the claim of the friars later confused historians.) According to the account that Fra Filippo sent to Rome, the two Bosnian Franciscans managed to deal with the Protestants of Pest by engaging them in a religious dispute in the presence of Mussa, Pasha of Buda. We are unable to verify the accuracy of Fra Filippo's statements concerning this dispute, but we may assume that the Bosnian Franciscans, who were well versed in Turkish affairs, gained the support of the Pasha of Buda less through their theological arguments than by bribing him with a large sum of money. This method had already been used to effect by other members of their order.

¹³APF, Lettere SC, Vol. 97, fol. 414.

At the end of 1634, Dzafer, the new Pasha of Buda, began a great persecution of the Catholic priests. Instigated by the Patriarch of Constantinople, Cyril Lukaris, who was flirting with Calvinism, the persecution ran into "Diocletian" proportions. Catholic parish priests, driven to Buda from the southern villages of Turkish Hungary, were tortured in the castle dungeons, and it would seem rather likely that the ground under the feet of the two Bosnian Franciscans also grew rather hot. In 1635 the two friars returned to Bosnia where, however, Fra Filippo was attacked by the provincial, Nicolo Braikovich a Foinica, and the former provincial, Andrea a Camengrado; they tore up his missionary permit, which he had received from the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, confiscated his books and clothes, and even attempted to expel him from the province and the order. Nevertheless, after the execution of the raving Dzafer pasha in May, 1635, Fra Filippo returned to Buda, whence he sent an account of his trials in Bosnia to the cardinals in Rome.

Filippo a Camengrado found high-ranking patrons living outside Turkish Hungary for his mission. The Transylvanian Catholic lords offered their support, while other supporters included two commanders of the imperial army that was battling against the Turks. One of these men was the imperial commander Count Michael Althan, the most ardent supporter of the Catholics in Turkish Hungary, while another was István Balogh, captain-general of Tata, who sought perhaps to please his superior.¹⁴

The two Bosnian friars could not have stayed in Buda for long. When the bishop of Drivasto, Geronimo Luchich, made his visitation to Turkish Hungary in October, 1637, Filippo a Camengrado was already serving as the parish priest of Djakovacki Selci near Belgrade. According to his friends among Bosnian Franciscans, he had to leave because of persecution by Protestants, while his enemies stated that because of his relations with Turkish women, the Pasha of Buda wanted him to be burned.

In subsequent periods, two Bosnian Franciscans were generally working in Pest. The Catholics of Pest were also visited by the bishops of Belgrade, Marino Ibrishimovich a Posega and Matteo Benlich, in the

¹⁴APF, SOCG, Vol. 160, fol. 308; Vol. 75, fol. 285. Antal Gévay, *A budai pasák* [The Pashas of Buda] (Vienna, 1841), p. 31. E. Fermendžin, *Chronicon*, pp. 35-38, 49-50, 52. J. Buturac, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88, 111, 133, 139, 176. *Acta Bosnae*, pp. 420, 487. APF, SOCG, Vol. 306, fols. 64-67. Krista Zach, "Die Visitation des Bischofs von Belgrad, Marin Ibrishimovic in Türkisch-Ungarn (1649)," *Ungarn Jahrbuch*, 8 (1977), 1-31.

course of their visitations. Both missionary bishops were Bosnian Franciscans. The presence of the Bosnian bishop of Belgrade in Pest was a good opportunity for the Turks to blackmail the local Catholics by playing off the various Christians communities against each other. In June, 1656, when bishop Benlich visited Pest, the Calvinists of Pest began a movement to reacquire half of the church of Pest. After a great amount of squabbling, the Calvinists "sold" half of the church to the defterdar (Turkish treasurer) of the Pasha of Buda for 260 Thallers, whereupon the Turks declared their intention to convert the church into a mosque. Preaching to the congregation "in tears," Bishop Benlich then requested the Catholics to contribute to the recovery of the church in accordance with their financial means. Finally, in return for a deposit of three hundred Thallers the Turks cancelled their plans (which in all likelihood they had never considered to be serious) and thus the Catholics of Pest found themselves, though poorer, in the same situation as before the arrival of Benlich; now the church was only theirs.¹⁵

In 1679, during the final stages of the Turkish occupation of Buda, a Franciscan who had run off from the Bosnian province, Fra Luca Maruncich, made an appearance as the vicar-general of the archbishop of Esztergom, György Szelepcsényi. Fra Luca, who had been peddling for some kind of bishopric seven years earlier in Rome—though his ambitions had been fiercely opposed by the Bosnian province—proceeded to forge documents, tear up other friars' ecclesiastical documents, and come to blows with the vicar-general of the Belgrade bishopric. The Bosnian Franciscan Giovanni Braenovich a Derventa had sent another Bosnian Franciscan—as his representative and a vicar-general—to Pest. The argument between Fra Luca, who had been sent as vicar-general by the archbishop of Esztergom, and the other Bosnian Franciscan, who was sent by the missionary bishop in Belgrade, reflected the most important issue of Hungary in the Turkish era: To whom did Turkish Hungary belong? Was it simply territory of the Kingdom of Hungary which had been temporarily occupied and would soon be freed from the Turks, that is, territory that belonged to the bishops and archbishops of Hungary? Or was it a Turkish province like any other, for example the Balkan territories or the Holy Land that had been occupied for centuries, in which case the bishoprics of Hungary were just empty titles of no real substance, bishoprics *in partibus infidelium*, in the lands of the infidel, and local Catholics would have to be looked after by missionary bishops, given the long-term nature of Turkish rule?¹⁶

¹⁵APF Scritture riferite nei Congressi, Bosna, Vol. 1, fols. 36–38.

¹⁶*Acta Bosnae*, p. 487.

Even Pope Innocent XI and the Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, who later became Pope Alexander VIII, concerned themselves with this dispute. The nuncio in Vienna, Francesco Buonvisi, was charged with demanding from the archbishop of Esztergom that he immediately dismiss his vicar-general of Buda and recognize the right of the missionary bishopric of Belgrade to exercise its power in Buda, because the town was a missionary area just like Bosnia. Archbishop Szelepcsényi was of a different opinion. In his view, Buda was a temporarily occupied but integral part of his diocese of Esztergom. The Pope did not agree with him, but only seven years later, in 1686, did the Christian armies finally reoccupy the Hungarian capital, and from that time on there really was no mission any more.¹⁷

Friars Armed to the Teeth

From the middle of the sixteenth century until the conclusion of Turkish rule in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Bosnian Franciscans generally wore the clothes of laymen rather than their habits, because the Turks could immediately recognize the wearer of a religious habit as an "infidel" churchman. As the repeated issuing of prohibitions by provincials and guardians demonstrates, many of the friars chose not to wear simple peasant clothing. Indeed, their opponents were highly critical of their bright red garments. Meanwhile the carrying of arms, for which they received special permits from the Turks, was indispensable, given the lack of public safety in the Balkans. Both the Bosnian Franciscans as well as Jesuit missionaries, for example, traveled in this way. In 1612 armed Jesuit missionaries set out from Ragusa on a dangerous Balkan journey to Belgrade through the Bosnian hill country. Shot-guns, sabers, and other arms were carried not just by the merchants and Turkish janissaries (!) who accompanied the missionaries, but also by the missionaries themselves. The weapons were intended to scare off robbers on the road. In 1651 an Observant Franciscan from Belgrade, Fra Bernardino a Belgrado, died while on his way home from Ragusa to Belgrade. The cause of his death was a pistol carried at his side that went off and the wounded friar fell from his horse. However

¹⁷Samostan Sveti Duh, Zagreb, Archivum provinciae Dalmatiae O.F.M. Conv., Registrum provinciae Dalmatiae, Acta Congregationis provinciae annorum 1655., 1662., 1664., 1666., 1669., 1670., 1673., 1674. Archivum generale ordinis fratrum minorum conventualium, Convento Santi Apostoli, Roma, prov. Ungheria S/XXX: A. 1, busta 1, fasc. 1. István György Tóth, "Un missionario italiano in Ungheria ai tempi dei turchi," in *Annuario: Studi e documenti italo-ungheresi* (Accademia d'Ungheria in Roma), ed. József Pál, I (Rome, 1997), 201-218.

much the figure of an armed man on horseback deviated from the ideal of the founder of the order, Saint Francis of Assisi, the missionaries in the Balkan Turkish provinces could not really travel in any other way.¹⁸

Bosnian Missionaries and the Turks

For missionaries coming from the kingdom of Hungary or from Italy, the most surprising feature of the Bosnian Franciscans was their unimaginably close relationship with the Turkish authorities. Compared with other Catholic missionaries, the Bosnian Franciscans were far better acquainted with the world of the Turkish authorities, where in the seventeenth century justice could be bought from the judges by whoever was able to pay the larger sum. Issues of the Church in Turkish territory were not decided in the Curia in Rome. Instead the local Turkish beys were the ones who decided which priest could preach, celebrate Mass, and collect donations in any given location. For this reason, the Bosnian Franciscan missionaries had an advantage over missionaries coming from the Habsburg Empire or Italy.

A common feature of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century ecclesiastical history in both Habsburg Hungary and Turkish Hungary was that churches and priests were authorized and banned by the local authorities. Thus in Royal Hungary the religious map of any given area was determined according to the will of the local large landowners rather than on the basis of the laws that had been agreed upon with such difficulty by the diet (national assembly). Similarly, in Turkish Hungary the issue of whether an Orthodox priest, a Jesuit missionary, or a Franciscan friar would be allowed to work in a certain village was determined neither by the clauses of the peace treaties nor by the charters issued by the sultan or grand vizier in the distant Ottoman capital. Instead the deciding factor was the goodwill of the local beys, which always came at a price.

For this reason, on his travels in Turkish Hungary the parish priest of Mohács, Don Simone Matkovich, who was better acquainted with conditions in the occupied territories than perhaps any other missionary, adopted a policy of "showing two charters, one from the Holy Church and one from the Sultan," as the Bosnian Franciscan Tommaso Ivkovich alleged.

Since many members of the Ottoman elite—and in Hungary probably the majority—were Islamicized southern Slavs rather than ethnic Turks,

¹⁸Ivo Andrić, *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia under Influence of Turkish Rule* (London, 1990), p. 45. *Acta Bosnae*, pp. 343–345.

the Bosnian Franciscans had no language problems when they wanted to converse with the "Turks." This was the case despite the fact that we know of only a very few friars who could actually speak Turkish. Those who did speak the language were, for example, the Franciscan Giovanni a Piombo in the Timisoara region and another Bosnian, Francesco Braenovich da Derventa, in Transylvania. The "language of the Turks" was, however, understood by the other Franciscans, too, who were well acquainted with Turkish customs and very much aware that one was ill-advised to visit the Turkish lords without generous gifts. In about 1620, the above-mentioned parish priest of Mohács, Don Simone Matkovich, accompanied by the bishop of Prizren (in fact, of Belgrade), Pietro Catich, paid a visit to Hasan, the bey of Smederevo, bringing him many presents. Hasan was a Southern Slav who had been given to the Turks in *devshirme*, i.e., child tax. Hasan bey had not forgotten his original roots; he spoke with good will with the Catholic priests; they had a long and animated conversation, first in Turkish and then in the bey's mother language, "Dalmatian" (i.e., Croatian). Acting with the missionaries like "a father with his sons," the bey warned them to be careful in their travels lest they should fall into the dangerous company of the Janissaries. The Bosnian Don Simone was quite able to converse with the sanjak bey; indeed, he had a long conversation with the handsome, softly-spoken, and gray-bearded bey, and concluded that Hassan was missing his Christian faith, into which he had been baptized as a child in Dalmatia.

There were some Bosnian Franciscans who spent most of their time in the company of Turks. Such a man was Fra Stefano a Posega, who, according to the complaint made by the secular priests to Rome, was too ashamed to wear the habit of the Franciscans, dressing instead in the Turkish manner. He spent all his time with the Turks, and used up the alms he had received from the Catholic faithful in the company of Turks, eating and drinking all the time.

Such friendships with Turkish soldiers more than paid off where there were disputes within the Catholic Church or where the ownership of a parish church was disputed. In such cases, it often happened that both a secular parish priest and a Bosnian Franciscan missionary would march out with a group of Turkish soldiers. The dispute would be won by whichever of the two had the greater number of men. A similar incident occurred at the parish festival in the village of Babska, where the secular priest had been due to give a sermon. Helped by the Turkish soldiers, however, the Bosnian Franciscans quite simply occupied the parish church, and while the Turkish soldiers "secured" the church outside, the Bosnians celebrated a Mass and, of course, collected donations within.

Most of the Bosnian friars, however, did not drink and eat with the Turkish soldiers voluntarily. Although the privileges received from Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror at the time of the Turks' conquest of Bosnia in 1463 stipulated the opposite, in practice the Bosnian Franciscan monasteries were obliged to provide hospitality to Turks on the road. Such hospitality was far from being voluntary, and the Turkish looters often injured or even murdered the friars if they failed to fulfill their desires quickly enough.¹⁹

In 1631 the Franciscan friar Fra Marco at the monastery of Posega was unable to provide the servants of the Pasha of Kanizsa with sheep that could be roasted immediately, and thus he was beaten seven hundred times until he was half-dead. In 1662 some Turks stabbed the Father Superior of the monastery of Gradovár, who did not want to let them in, by jabbing a sword through the lower part of the door. In 1660 the Father Superior of the monastery of Visoko, Fra Bernardino, had his hand cut off by a group of Turks who were running amok in the monastery as he attempted to protect the treasury in the church.

In 1630 the Bosnian provincial Andrea a Camengrado complained bitterly to Rome that Turkish attacks against monasteries had recently become more frequent. The Turkish soldiers often set up camp in the monasteries, where they ate and drank to their hearts' content. When they left, they demanded a great number of "presents," beating any friars who resisted until they were half-dead. On one occasion, they even shot dead two Franciscans who "were making difficulties." Franciscans attacked on the road found that the Turks even took their clothes from them—the friars' habits being used to decorate the horse-cloths of the Turks.

While the Turks' religion forbade the drinking of wine, visits to the Franciscan monasteries nevertheless represented an excellent opportunity to get drunk. Sometimes, however, the excited Turkish soldiers wanted more than wine. Women were, of course, hard to come by in the Franciscan monasteries, but there were a few cases of the Turks' wanting to rape a young boy "in traditional Turkish fashion." In a letter written in 1633, Marino Ibrishimovich da Posega, who later became the Bishop of Belgrade, gives an account of the visit of seven Turks to the Monastery of Fojnica, the seat of the Bosnian Franciscan province. Once they had eaten and drunk substantial amounts—and were obviously quite intoxicated—the Turks attacked a young boy who was serving in

¹⁹Sebastianus Dolci a Ragusio, "Necrologium fratrum minorum de observantia provinciae S. P. Francisci Ragusii," *Analecta Franciscana*, VI (Quaracchi, 1917), 439.

the monastery and bound him so that they could commit sodomy upon him, whereupon the Father Superior of the monastery rushed to the scene with some other friars in order to free the victim. The Turks stabbed the Father Superior, who was still hovering between life and death when the letter was sent.²⁰

Franciscan Converts to Islam

Not only did the Bosnian Franciscans establish "familiar" relations with the Turks (although, as we have seen, these were generally rather one-sided), but—however surprising it may seem at first sight—considerable numbers of them even adopted the Islamic religion. The Franciscan missionaries were of course the propagators of the Catholic faith. Nevertheless, the Islamization of Bosnia, which had been underway for centuries, also reached them and their families. Of all the European provinces of the Sultan, it was in Bosnia that Islamization made the greatest progress—with a strength that was still to be felt at the end of the twentieth century. In the Middle Ages many of the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Bosnia had adhered to the Bogomil heresy. For this reason both Catholic and Orthodox churches were weaker in Bosnia than in the other Balkan countries and could put up less resistance to the spread of Islam. Those Bosnian peasants who converted to Islam under pressure or in order to avoid payment of the money and child taxes did, however, preserve the memory of the Christian religion for generations. As described with some feeling by Bartolomeo Sfondrato, a Jesuit from Dubrovnik who stayed with some Turkish (i.e., Muslim southern Slav) peasants while on a journey to Turkish Hungary in 1580, such Bosnians continued to observe Christian festivals, honor Christian saints, and give Christian-sounding names to their children. Sfondrato's Bosnian Muslim hosts questioned him about the exact date of Christmas and about the festivals and lives of the saints, because they still observed Christmas and the more important Christian holidays. Sfondrato learned that when circumcising their sons, the Bosnians attempted to choose non-Muslim names that would not, however, strike the Turks as being linked to the Christian religion.²¹

Muslim, Catholic, and Greek Orthodox believers lived alongside one another, even within single families, which resulted in a varied mixture

²⁰APF, SOCG, Vol. 218, fols. 3^{r-v}, 45.

²¹*Andrić, op. cit.*, p. 45. *Acta Bosnae*, pp. 343–345. APF, SOCG, Vol. 218, fol. 3^{r-v}, 45; 457^{r-v}, 462^r, 359; Vol. 93, fol. 289. Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Rome, Vol. Italia 156, fol. 169^{r-v}.

of religions and customs in everyday life. The Catholic Feast of the Assumption of Mary was attended by large numbers of Orthodox and Muslim inhabitants as well as the local Catholic population. The procession marking the most famous festival in Bosnia took place every year on August 15. Headed by the miraculous icon of Mary from the Monastery of Olovo, the procession was also attended by Muslims in search of healing. The icon was especially effective when it came to the healing of people possessed by evil spirits or the devil, and this attracted many Muslims. According to Catholic witnesses, Muslims who spoke badly of the Virgin Mary—telling their co-religionists to trust in the prophet—were immediately struck down; the devil left the possessed Muslims who were praying to the Virgin Mary, and entered into the doubting Muslims. They too began yelling with the rest of the afflicted.²²

We find individuals from Muslim families among not just the assistant friars but also the leaders of the province, the provincials, and the Bosnian Franciscan bishops. We know that many of the high-ranking Franciscans had close relatives, and even siblings, who were Muslims. Behrem, Ali, and Pervan, the brothers of the Franciscan bishop of Drivasto, Geronimo Luchich, were Muslims, but this did not prevent Luchich's appointment as bishop. In 1631 the Franciscan Martino Barguglianin was elected as provincial of Bosnia, and yet almost all the members of his family were followers of the faith of the prophet. Another Bosnian provincial, Andrea da Camengrado, made no secret of the fact that his relatives were Muslims. Indeed, he even threatened a fellow friar, the Observant Franciscan Alberto Rengjich from Ragusa, that if he continued to serve as bishop in his area, he would arrange with the help of his Muslim relatives for the Turkish authorities to have him impaled.

It was no rarity for the Bosnian Franciscans to convert to Islam, which at the time was the religion of the victorious side and the official faith of an enormous and apparently invincible empire. The attraction was great even among those Bosnians who had sought their place in life and existence as an "intellectual" in the order of Saint Francis.

Some Bosnian Franciscans converted to Islam in order to escape death. In 1647 the Bosnian Franciscan Marino Ibrishimovich da Posega visited Rome to discuss his nomination as the bishop of Belgrade. While in Rome, he wrote a report for Propaganda Fide concerning the conversion and reconversion of a Bosnian Franciscan friar named Giorgio

²²APF, SOCG, Vol. 148, fol. 325.

Loretich. Marino Ibrishimovich, whom we may consider to be a very reliable source based on the report of his visitation to Turkish Hungary as the bishop of Belgrade, wrote the following about Loretich: The Bosnian Franciscan Fra Giorgio Loretich had served as a priest in Bosnia for thirty years. While traveling between the monastery and a village, he was taken captive by the Turks, who threatened to impale him or burn him alive unless he converted to Islam. In order to save his life, the Franciscan had adopted the faith of the prophet. Like so many of the Bosnian Franciscans, Fra Giorgio had Muslim relatives. One of these relatives, a cousin, was the wife of the Pasha of Herzegovina. She told her husband in tears that she would drown or hang herself if Fra Giorgio was prevented from returning to the Franciscan order. The pasha reacted to his wife's threat by calling together the Turkish dignitaries, magistrates, and theologians and cross-examining the friar. "What's your name?" asked the Pasha, according to Ibrishimovich's extremely vivid account. "Mehmet," answered the friar. "You are lying," rebuffed the pasha, "because Fra Giorgio is your real name." The former friar admitted that he had adopted Islam under threat of impalement. He did not love the Turkish faith, because in his heart he had always loved Jesus. The pasha then requested the opinion of the Muslim magistrates and theologians. They decided that a person who converted to Islam out of fear was not a true Muslim. The pasha therefore instructed Mehmet-Giorgio to remove his Turkish clothes immediately and dress once more as a friar. Fra Giorgio should return to his monastery. If the pasha ever saw him again dressed in anything but his friar's habit, then he would really impale him. The friar was then absolved from the sin of betraying his faith by the Bishop of Makarska and readmitted to the Bosnian Franciscan order.²³

This short story, written by an educated Franciscan who generally submitted very reliable reports, once again demonstrates the importance of having Muslim relatives in the mixed religious world of Bosnia. Andrea da Camengrado threatened to use the assistance of his Muslim relatives to have a rival bishop impaled, while Fra Giorgio Loretich could have his conversion reversed thanks to the effective help of his Muslim supporters.

Nevertheless, other Bosnian Franciscans became Muslims voluntarily. In 1607 two Benedictine monks from Ragusa visited Turkish Hungary: Antonio Velislavi (who bore the title of abbot of the Monastery of San Sergio and San Bacco in Albania) and Ignazio Alegretti (who had been

²³APF SOCG, Vol. 151, fol. 398; Vol. 391, fol. 9.

converting in the occupied territories for two decades), who were monks of the Benedictine monastery on the island of Mljet (or Meleda in Italian) near Ragusa, and came to Hungary on the orders of the Pope, Paul V, and the Holy Office of the Inquisition. The rivals of the two Benedictine monks from Ragusa, that is, the Bosnian Observant Franciscans, told the Ottoman authorities that the two monks were papal spies. They were freed only after a large ransom had been paid by merchants from Ragusa. No wonder that the two Benedictine visitors later informed Rome with obvious satisfaction of the conversion to Islam of several Bosnian Franciscans. The converts had been made into knights by the Turks, i.e., they had obviously received *spahi* lands. Since even the Turkish soldiers did not always receive this distinction, the Turks clearly wished to emphasize the dramatic conversion to Islam of these Bosnian Franciscan parish priests and leaders of the local Catholic communities.²⁴

A typical representative of this double identity was the Observant Franciscan Vladislavo di Ragusa, who was from Ragusa but worked in Bosnia and Turkish Hungary. The friar traveled around Bosnia and Turkish Hungary as a lay Franciscan healer. He often became involved in stormy arguments with the superiors of the Bosnian Franciscan province. Despite being a friar, he was wedded twice by the Turkish magistrates or *kadis*. His opponents even suspected him of various robberies. He converted to Islam and joined the Turkish army (probably as an army surgeon). In 1647 he wrote "in tears" to Propaganda Fide from the Turkish fortress in Buda, asking them to accept him back into Christianity and the Franciscan order, because this was his wish. He signed the letter as "Vladislavo di Ragusa, lay Franciscan, also known as Suleyman Janissar." However, the cardinals never responded to this friar turned Janissar.²⁵

A very informative source in this respect is a letter written by the Bosnian Observant Franciscan Giorgio di Barto from Ancona in 1633. Fra Giorgio wrote to the cardinals that although it was true, as the cardinals already knew, that a Bosnian Franciscan had converted to Islam, the cardinals should also take into account that the archbishop of Sofia had caught the apostate renegade friar and imprisoned him for a period

²⁴Cf. Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia. A Short History* (London, 1994). John V. Fine, "The Medieval and Ottoman Roots of Modern Bosnian Society," in *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina, their historic development from the Middle Ages to the dissolution of Yugoslavia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1994), pp. 20–21. Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome, Ms. Cod., No. 2672. X, VI, 20, fols. 205–206'.

²⁵I. Gy. Tóth, "A Spy's Report about Turkish-occupied Hungary and Bosnia in 1626," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 51 (1998), 1–2, 185–218.

of twelve years. Moreover, the cardinals should not forget that there had been a Judas even among the apostles. Fra Giorgio not only defended a fellow friar, but he also made accusations concerning another: the cardinals should also consider the case of a Franciscan friar employed by Archbishop Pietro Massarecchi of Bari, who was directing affairs as apostolic vicar in Turkish Hungary (and was a staunch opponent of the Bosnian Franciscans). The friar in question had repeatedly renounced his faith, before finally fleeing to Turkey. We are unable to verify the accuracy of this particular allegation, but we may be certain that the conversion of Bosnian Franciscans was nothing exceptional.²⁶

In 1636 a list of offenses was sent anonymously to the secretary of Propaganda Fide, Francesco Ingoli. The sender, who was doubtless an older and aggrieved Franciscan of the Bosnian province, accused the Bosnian friars of various sexual misdemeanors. He even alleged that some friars had removed their habits and been wedded in public by the Turkish magistrates and kadis. This clearly meant that they had adopted the Islamic faith.²⁷

In 1646 a lay Franciscan called Pietro di Jajca, who had fled from his monastery in Bosnia, threatened that he would punish the friars of the Timisoara mission with the help of the Turks and even convert to Islam unless the friars left him in peace. And in 1660 the Bosnian Franciscan Matteo a Derventa reported to the cardinals of the Sacred Congregation that four Franciscans of the Bosnian order had renounced the Catholic faith and converted to Islam, following a great persecution by the Turks of Christians in Bosnia—a persecution that was obviously linked to the fact that the Ottoman Empire was at war both against Venice and in Transylvania.

Turkish harassment of Bosnian Franciscans was far from being limited to the occasional drunken brawl. Indeed, the Turks kept a firm hand on the leadership of the Franciscan province. Permits had to be obtained from the pasha of Bosnia for the provincial chapters held every three years, and such permits were never issued free of charge. The Turks also interfered in elections for the Bosnian provincial; at the provincial chapter in 1637 the father superior of Sutjeska, Mariano Maravich, who later became bishop of Duvno and of Bosnia, was elected as provincial, after pressure from a relative of Maravich who was a Turkish dignitary. The relative, who was called Sinanovich, dispatched a Turkish officer to stand guard in front of the entrance to the monastery of Kres-

²⁶APF, SOCG, Vol. 320, fols. 146–147.

²⁷APF, SOCG, Vol 17, fols. 361–362^v.

sevo, where the chapter was holding session. The officer set up a tent and declared that he would stay put until Maravich had been elected—which then took place.²⁸

Both the Jesuits from Royal Hungary and the Franciscan missionaries from Italy were greatly surprised by the apparent intimacy of relations between the Bosnian Franciscans and the Turkish authorities. The Bosnian Franciscans were far more able to find their bearings amid the complexities of the Turkish authorities. The Bosnian friars knew that the beys could be persuaded with money or other gifts rather than by argument. It was necessary “to fill the lions’ mouths” (“ut obturentur ora leonum”), as a Franciscan from Kressevo once wrote. Nevertheless, the friars were quite aware that a letter of safe conduct from a high Turkish dignitary was of little value without the purchasable good faith of local Turkish officials. At the same time, a decision that was unfavorable for the Catholics could be changed at any time by obtaining a ruling from another Turkish bey or pasha in exchange for an even larger gift.

Andrea Stipanchich, a Bosnian Franciscan missionary working in the Timisoara region, made particularly good use of his relations with the Turks. This did not, however, prevent him from being taken captive by the Turks from time to time and flogged until he was half-dead. Faced with the opposition of one or another Turkish authority, Stipanchich sought protection at the next level in the hierarchy, where, however, even greater sums and even larger gifts were expected. For instance, faced with the opposition of the *alaybey* (local military commander) of Lipova, Stipanchich turned to the pasha of Timisoara, who was willing to provide protection, but only at considerable financial cost. On another occasion, the Turks were shooting with their cannon at a new church close to Lipova. While the repair of old churches was permitted by the Turks’ law, there was a ban on the construction of new Christian churches. Stipanchich went straight to the Ottoman capital of Istanbul, where he managed to obtain a favorable sultanic injunction from the grand vizier’s men in return for a large sum of money. The injunction was then read out by the Turkish magistrate (*kadi*) in Lipova, who showed great respect for the judgment.²⁹

It was only the Italians and the Hungarians who were surprised by the intimacy of the relationship between the Turks and the Bosnians, because the Turkish authorities were far better disposed toward the Orthodox Church than they were toward the Bosnian friars. Through the

²⁸APF SOCG, Vol. 94, fol. 103.

²⁹APF SOCG, Vol. 8, fol. 391.

Patriarch in Istanbul, the Orthodox Church was even much more dependent than the Franciscans upon the Turks. The Church had enjoyed special privileges within the Ottoman Empire ever since the occupation of Constantinople. Nevertheless, the Orthodox bishops and archbishops were required to strengthen these privileges every year by offering enormous gifts. For this reason, they also needed to tax the Catholics.³⁰

Thus, claiming to be the leaders of all Christians in Turkish Hungary (including Catholics), the Greek Orthodox bishops often demanded the payment of taxes from Catholics as well. When the Bosnian Franciscans resisted this policy, they were often accused in Turkish courts of a variety of misdemeanors, and therefore the Turks often imprisoned, beat, and tortured the Bosnian Franciscans accused by the Orthodox.³¹

Summary

The mission of the Bosnian Franciscans was successful, because it could fall back upon a large southern Slav population. The Bosnian missionaries were soon pushed out of Moldavia and Transylvania, provinces without Southern Slavs. In Bulgaria, however, they began an extremely successful mission that soon fell into the hands of Bulgarian friars who formed an independent separate province. In Bosnia, however, they never had any real rivals. In Turkish Hungary the Bosnian Franciscan mission was highly successful, owing to good relations with the Turks and the increasing numbers of southern Slavs. Of all the missionary initiatives supported by Propaganda Fide in Turkish Hungary, the conversion work of the Bosnian Franciscan missionaries was of by far the greatest effect. The mission in Turkish Hungary "employed" about only one-tenth of the friars of the province of Bosnia, but this external assistance was of vital significance for the Hungarian Catholic dioceses under Turkish rule.³²

The beginning of the long war in 1683 brought a fundamental change to the lives of the Bosnian Franciscans. It seemed that the final

³⁰APF SOCG, Vol. 17, fol. 361–362". Tóth, *Relationes*, pp. 79–113. APF SOCG, Vol. 179, fol. 125.

³¹APF SOCG, Vol. 176, fol. 233. APF SOCG, Vol. 218, fols. 148–149. Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 259–288. Bernard Heyberger, "Réforme catholique et union des Églises orientales," in *Homo religiosus. Autour de Jean Delumeau* (Paris, 1997), pp. 292–298.

³²APF SOCG, Vol. 127, fol. 386; Vol. 415, fol. 106; Vol. 417, fol. 3; Vol. 55, fol. 148; Vol. 96, fols. 281, 282; Vol. 218, fols. 148–149.

hour of Ottoman rule had struck in Bosnia, which would finally be free of the Turkish yoke, after two and a half centuries of occupation. The Bosnian Franciscans welcomed the Christian armies enthusiastically, and often gave them real help. Bishop Nicoló Ogramich and the vicar-general, Luca Ibrishimovich, both of whom were Bosnian Franciscans, served as field-chaplains among the Christian troops. They forwarded military information and encouraged the Christians to revolt against Turkish rule. While Christian troops did enter Bosnia, at the end of the war the country reverted to being a province of the Ottoman empire. Seeing that their rule was in danger, the Turks turned against the Bosnian Franciscans. In their ruthless anger, they destroyed most of the monasteries, forcing the friars to flee. At the time of the Peace of Carlowitz (1699), only five monasteries were left standing in Bosnia. They were inhabited by a total of twenty-six Franciscan priests and three lay brothers. Meanwhile the bishop of Bosnia moved to Djakovo in Hungary, which had once been the seat of a bishopric in the fifteenth century; there he lived in separation from his faithful, who continued to live under Turkish rule in Bosnia.

In the meantime Turkish Hungary was liberated from the Ottomans. The Catholic Church organization—which had been living in “exile” in Royal Hungary—“wanted to recapture” Turkish Hungary. The Hungarian bishops and Franciscans regarded the Bosnian friars as the concomitants of Turkish rule. They considered that the re-establishment of the medieval organization of the Church made their presence superfluous. Thus, the beginning of the eighteenth century saw tough battles between the Bosnians and the returning Hungarian Franciscans.

Still, the Bosnian Franciscans knew more about conditions in Turkish Hungary than anyone else and were repeatedly prepared to risk their own lives. For as long as a large part of Hungary was being held by the Turks, the Bosnian Franciscans were indispensable in keeping Hungarians, southern Slavs, and Romanians in Western culture.