

Davor Salihović

AN INTERESTING EPISODE:

NICHOLAS OF ILOK'S KINGSHIP IN BOSNIA 1471 - 1477

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Central European University

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May 2016

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by

Davor Salihović

(Croatia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

Chair, Examination Committee

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I, the undersigned, **Davor Salihović**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

The Ottoman invasion of the Kingdom of Bosnia in 1463 marked the end of the rule of the local Kotromanić dynasty whose members ruled Bosnia both as bans and kings for more than two centuries. However, the Bosnian polity continued to exist under the intensified Hungarian control after King Matthias initiated a counterattack in the same year and recaptured Jajce and other important Bosnian fortresses. Initially under the control of bans, this territory was in 1471 given to Nicholas of Ilok (Miklós Újlaki), who was made King of Bosnia simultaneously.

By challenging the conclusions of previous scarce scholarship on this issue, and by reinterpreting the sources and introducing sources never consulted before, this thesis analyses the historical preconditions which allowed for Nicholas's kingship to take place. Furthermore, the source information is contextualized within the contemporary political-historical framework to offer a detailed analysis of the nature, causes and administrative and archontological implications of Nicholas's rule. The historical context itself is questioned, since the analyses show and the author proves that Bosnia did not lose its royal identity after 1463 as was thought previously.

The analysis presented in the thesis largely refutes the claims of previous scholarship by showing that the kingship was a result of several long-standing factors, both those on a personal and a broader political level. The kingship emerged from a decade-long agenda planned by the two close allies, King Matthias and Nicholas of Ilok, who were brought together by their mutual political interests within the Kingdom of Hungary. The thesis finally evaluates Nicholas's kingship as a real and firm rule over the Bosnian territory handed to him, albeit Hungarian-appointed and very specific.

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Table of contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter I: Remarks on Previous Scholarship	5
Chapter II: The Background of the Bestowal	12
2.1 The Establishment and the Organization of the Territorial Base: The “Bosnian banate” or “the Kingdom of Bosnia”?	12
2.2 Why Nicholas? A Mutual Effort?	27
Chapter III: Nicholas’s Kingship	49
3.1 Questioning the Authority.....	49
3.2 The “Preconditions of Rule”	58
3.3 The Rulership.....	62
Final Remarks	81
Sources and Bibliography.....	88
Primary sources.....	88
Secondary sources.....	90
Appendices.....	104

List of Figures

Figure 1 - Map of Nicholas's Kingdom of Bosnia in 1471. Davor Salihović, p. 104.

Figure 2 - Map of the territory controlled by Nicholas as the ban of Slavonia and Croatia, and the King of Bosnia 1471-1473 (1477). Davor Salihović, p. 105.

Figure 2 – Gazetteer of the most important fortresses and towns mentioned above. Davor Salihović, p. 106.

Figure 4 - The tombstone of Nicholas of Ilok depicting the coat-of-arms of Bosnia and the coat-of-arms of the family. Image reproduced from Mladen Radić. “Prilozi rasvjetljavanju heraldičke ostavštine iločkih knezova 15. i 16. stoljeća“ [Contributions to the research of the heraldic legacy of the dukes of Ilok]. *Osječki zbornik 29* (2010): 136, p. 107.

Figure 5 - The fresco depicting King Nicholas before Sixtus IV. Image reproduced from Florio Banfi, “Romei ungheresi del Giubileo del 1475: Niccoló Ujlaki Re di Bosnia in un affresco nell’Ospedale di Santo Spirito dell’Urbe” [Hungarian pilgrims of the 1475 Jubilee: Nicholas of Ilok, king of Bosnia, in the fresco in the Hospice of Santo Spirito dell’Urbe], *Corvina – Rassegna Italo-Ungherese 3* (1941): 507, p. 108.

Figure 6 - An example of Nicholas's official intitulation after May 1472 (Nos Nicolaus dei gratia Rex Bozne). Detail from MNL OL, DL 100822, p. 108.

Figure 7 - Genealogical table of the Újlaki family (members not closely related to Nicholas are omitted). Davor Salihović, p. 109.

Introduction

The political histories of medieval Hungarian kingdom and the Bosnian state – the banate and later the kingdom – were closely related from the early period of the Árpád Hungary and from the introduction of the first Bosnian ruler known by his personal name, ban Borić, in the twelfth century to the complete collapse of the Bosnian statehood and the southern Hungarian territories under the Ottoman pressure in the early sixteenth century.¹ The relationship of the two states, its quality and form varied through the centuries from the complete cooperation, different levels of Bosnian vassalage and continuous Hungarian pretensions to the supreme rule over Bosnia, to the open animosities and even conflicts, during the rules of most of the Hungarian dynasties and individual rulers, from the Árpáds to Matthias Corvinus.² Nevertheless, regardless of its immediate qualities, Bosnian political-historical development during its medieval period was in its large part directly dependent on the political agendas and forces stemming from the territory of the local “superpower” - Hungary, just as were the situations in other neighboring political entities, both Croatia and Serbia, as well as Dubrovnik.³ The justification the Hungarian rulers delivered in an effort to subjugate the land

¹ For the general characteristics of the relations of the two states throughout the Middle Ages see Pál Engel, “Neki problemi bosansko-ugarskih odnosa” [Some problems of the Bosnian-Hungarian relations], *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti HAZU* 16 (1999): 57-72; Nada Klaić, *Srednjovjekovna Bosna: Politički položaj bosanskih vladara do Tvrtkove krunidbe (1377. g.)* [Medieval Bosnia: The political status of Bosnian rulers until Tvrtko's coronation (1377)], (Zagreb: Eminex, 1994), especially the latest and seminal work on the topic; Dubravko Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti. Sveta kruna ugarska i Sveta kruna bosanska 1387.-1463.* [The landslide of history. The Holy crown of Hungary and the Holy crown of Bosnia 1387-1463], (Sarajevo - Zagreb: Synopsis, 2006); Lajos Thallóczy [Ludwig von Thallóczy], *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens und Serbiens im Mittelalter* (Munich – Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1914); idem, *Povijest (banovine, grada i varoši) Jajca 1450.-1527.* [The history of the banate, castle and town of Jajce 1450-1527], tr. Milan Šufflay (Zagreb: Kraljevska zemaljska tiskara, 1916).

² Mladen Ančić, *Na rubu zapada: Tri stoljeća srednjovjekovne Bosne* [At the edge of the west: Three centuries of medieval Bosnia] (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Dom i svijet, 2001), 9-139; idem, “Od zemlje do kraljevstva: mjesto Bosne u strukturi *archiregnuma*” [From land to kingdom: Position of Bosnia within the structure of *archiregnum*], *Hercegovina* 26 (2015): 9-88; [Sima Ćirković] Сима Ћирковић, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе* [History of the medieval Bosnian state] (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1964), 153-156, 204-213; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 119-393.

³ See Ćirković, *The Serbs*, tr. Vuk Tošić (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004); Tomislav Raukar, *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovlje: prostor, ljudi, ideje* [The Croatian Middle Ages: Space, people, ideas], (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1997), 61-110; idem, “Hrvatska u dinastičkoj zajednici s Ugarskom” [Croatia in the dynastic unity with Hungary], in *Hrvatsko-mađarski odnosi 1102.-1918.*, ed. Ante Birin (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2004); 27-36.

they considered to be their vassal anyway differed from period to period and from one ruler's ambitions to another one's. However, by the time of the Angevine dynasty's rule in Hungary, i.e. the fourteenth century, a system of buffer states was developed and later particularly improved by King Sigismund and Matthias Corvinus within their plans to defend the southern and eastern boundaries of the Kingdom from the ever-rising Ottoman threat. By subjugating the surrounding states, they envisaged the defense to take place even before the enemy reaches the territory of Hungary "proper." Bosnia and generally the territories on the right bank of Sava played a particularly important role in the Hungarian defensive system.⁴ Such an importance of those southern adjacent lands was best expressed by Matthias Corvinus's invasion of Bosnia late in 1463. The goal of the invasion was to liberate the territory occupied by the Ottoman forces earlier in the year when they finally, after decades of alternating between smaller clashes and Bosnian vassalage, dealt with the remnants of the Kingdom of Bosnia by occupying the most of its territory and executing the last ruler of the Bosnian royal Kotromanić dynasty – Stephen Tomašević.⁵ King Matthias's reaction in 1463 and 1464 resulted in the creation of the so-called Bosnian banate on the previously liberated territory, a land which was incorporated into the existing defensive system, and which would in 1471 become the basis of one of the "reborn" Bosnian kingdoms⁶ under the rule of Nicholas of Ilok (Miklós Újlaki), a man of an

⁴ Attila Bárány, "The Expansion of the Kingdom of Hungary in the Middle Ages (1000-1490)," in *The Expansion of Central Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. Nora Berend (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012.), 365-371; Erik Fügedi, "Medieval Hungarian Castles in Existence at the Start of the Ottoman Advance," in *From Hunyadi to Rákóczy: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. János M. Bak and Béla K. Király (Brooklyn: Brooklyn College Press, 1982), 61-62; Richárd Horváth, "The Castle of Jajce in the Organization of the Hungarian Border Defense System under Matthias Corvinus," in *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.-1463.): Slom srednjovjekovnoga Bosanskog Kraljevstva*, ed. Ante Birin (Zagreb-Sarajevo: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Katolički bogoslovni fakultet Sarajevo, 2013), 89-93; Ferenc Szakály, "The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System and its Collapse," in *From Hunyadi to Rákóczy: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. János M. Bak and Béla K. Király (Brooklyn: Brooklyn College Press, 1982), 141-158.

⁵ On the fall of Bosnia and the aftermath see Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 107-139; Ćirković, *Ucmopuja*, 309-341; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 339-393; *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.-1463.): slom srednjovjekovnoga Bosanskog Kraljevstva* [Stephen Tomašević (1461-1463): The fall of the medieval Bosnian kingdom], ed. Ante Birin (Zagreb-Sarajevo: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Katolički bogoslovni fakultet Sarajevo, 2013).

⁶ The plural is used to indicate the existence of at least three different Bosnian kings and their at least two different adjacent kingdoms after the fall of the Kotromanić dynasty in 1463. One of them, Nicholas's kingdom, is of the primary interest of this thesis, but the other two will be discussed in more detail later, as well.

already well-established reputation, a personal friend, ally and enemy of the Hunyadi family, previous Hungarian kings and queens, as well as the emperor Frederick himself, a godfather to his son Maximilian and a holder of numerous and powerful honors within the kingdom.⁷

By granting the royal title to Nicholas, one of the most powerful men in the fifteenth-century Hungary, Matthias Corvinus created a kingship which would in that form last until the death of its first and only king in 1477, but would leave an important “loophole” in history and historiography of the medieval Southeastern Europe. Despite the importance it contains not only in its political identity, but also in the greater picture of the late fifteenth-century Hungarian-Ottoman relations, domestic and foreign Hungarian political history, social history, history of the nobility and the history of the Újlaki family itself, the issue of Nicholas’s kingship was rather neglected in the historiography. Thus, the main goal of this thesis is to analyze the kingship itself in more detail than has been done previously, and to depart from the generic and not always convincing knowledge about the problem diligently perpetuated in the historiography.

By minutely analyzing the primary sources, mainly the diplomatic, but also some narrative and visual sources, questioning the existing historiography and contextualizing the kingship within the broader diachronic and synchronic political situation of the period, the following chapters will examine the preconditions of the bestowal, investigate its relation with the Hungarian *regnum*, question the sources of Nicholas’s royal authority, define the territory the kingdom implied, analyze the archontological characteristics of Nicholas’s government, question his and its international recognition and royal identity, and reconstruct Nicholas’s

⁷ For general information on Nicholas, whose political career will be discussed in more detail later, see Tamás Pálosfalvi, “Miklós Újlaki,” in *Matthias Corvinus the King: Tradition and Renewal in the Hungarian Royal Court, 1458-1490: exhibition catalogue*, edd. Péter Farbaky and András Vég (Budapest: Budapest History Museum, 2008), 267; Ede Reiszig, “Az Újlaki-család” [The Újlaki family], *Turul* 57 (1943): 56-60; Moriz Wertner, “Nikolaus von Ilok (Ujlak) “König“ von Bosnien und seine Familie”, *Vjesnik Kraljevskog hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskog zemaljskog arkiva* 8 (1906): 250-273.

royal politics to give a first detailed scholarly analysis of a six-year-long kingdom. Furthermore, by reinterpreting and interpreting known and newly found sources, the thesis will confront the existing perception of the kingship, and question its characterization as merely an empty title bestowed by the king for the sake of pacifying the nobility and left with no real and important political role. Thus, a more generic research question could be left for the end: Was Nicholas a true king or a petty and unsuccessful official?

Chapter I: Remarks on Previous Scholarship

As was mentioned earlier, the problem of Nicholas's kingship and the whole kingdom territorially vague, but certainly stretching on the south side of the river Sava following its flow from east to west in what is today mostly northern Bosnia, was up to now neglected in national historiographies of several present-day countries in the region. The lack of more interest is a result of several factors, namely trends within the local political historiographies and within the historiography in general which created a topical void which is the peculiar political entity with no detailed scholarly analysis, i.e. with no history.

Firstly, in their perseverance to historically justify the political identities of the contemporary states, local positivistic historians from the turn of the nineteenth century onwards gravitated towards great historical syntheses which interpreted political history from a certain "central" point of view, defining the main past forces of development within the activity of the central "national" government gathered around the *regnum* proper. Anything else apart from the activities of the Árpád, Anjou, Hunyadi or Trpimirović and Kotromanić rulers and dynasties and the governing estates gathered around the *corona regni* is viewed as provincial, less important issue often interpreted as the byproduct of the main royal politics. The great political *historiae*, i.e. the historical syntheses, a genre often reserved in that period for the historiography of the political history, tended to project the contemporary socio-political situation onto the medieval circumstances in an effort to construct a historical right for the existence of the modern-day political and national rights. Thus, for a topic to become one of the historians' interest, it had to fulfill several criteria which justified it from a national-historical point of view. Since Nicholas's kingdom never achieved to become a basis for the future nation-building processes, it failed to fulfill such criteria, both in Croatian or Hungarian historiography. Furthermore, historiographies dealing with medieval Bosnia, primarily the

Bosnian “national” historiography, abruptly close the political history of medieval Bosnia with the fall of its last “domestic” and “national” Kotromanić king, Stephen Tomašević, in 1463.⁸ The political identity of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Bosnia was, and still is, rooted in the medieval history of its “original” form which existed before the fall of the Kotromanić dynasty in 1463, leaving Nicholas’s kingdom completely out of the Bosnian historiography’s primary interest. The next historical period of interest for modern historiography is the period of the Ottoman rule in Bosnia and the subsequent Islamization, processes which defined the country’s further development and influenced the modern ethnic situation.

Finally, recent trends in historiography which abandoned the projects focused on the political history in general by denigrating the research of the political structures of *courte durée* and turning towards the issues of the “new histories” finally sealed the scholarly faith of Nicholas’s kingship leaving it in the back alleys of scholarly interest. Nevertheless, the century long scholarly production did notice Nicholas’s kingdom and perpetually reported on the same characteristics of this political phenomena, and only one minor effort has been made to discuss the issue in more detail.

Even though the topic was introduced into the historiography by much earlier chronicles,⁹ the first notable scholarly efforts were made by the early professional generations

⁸ To name only few scholarly works which consider the year 1463 to be the very end of the Bosnian “political” Middle Ages: Ćirković, *Istoppuja*; Vjekoslav Klaić, *Poviest Bosne do propasti Kraljevstva* [History of Bosnia until the collapse of the Kingdom] (Zagreb, 1882); even the relatively new publications such as Dubravko Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti; Пад босанског краљевства 1463. године* [The fall of the Bosnian Kingdom in 1463], ed. [Neven Isailović] Невен Исаиловић (Belgrade – Sarajevo – Banja Luka: Istorijski institut Beograd – Filozofski fakultet u Sarajevu – Filozofski fakultet u Banjoj Luci, 2015); *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.-1463.) – Slom srenjovjekovnog Bosanskog kraljevstva* [Stephen Tomašević (1461-1463) – The fall of the medieval Bosnian kingdom], ed. Ante Birin (Zagreb - Sarajevo: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Katolički bogoslovni fakultet u Sarajevu, 2013).

⁹ Such as Antonio Bonfini's *Rerum Ungaricum decades in IV tomis*, edd. I. Fógel, B. Iványi, and L. Juhász (Leipzig: Teubner, 1936-1976), used here as a primary narrative source.

of Croatian and Hungarian historians. Vjekoslav Klaić (1849-1928) includes information on Nicholas's rise to prominence, his role in the domestic quarrels over the Hungarian throne during the reigns of Władysław Warneńczyk, Ladislaus Posthumous and Matthias Corvinus and eventual bestowal of the Bosnian kingship in two of his volumes of *Povijest Hrvata*.¹⁰ By doing so, he becomes one of the first scholarly authorities that introduces the later perpetuated evaluation of Nicholas's reign. Lajos Thallóczy (1856-1916), a Klaić's contemporary and a specialist in Bosnian medieval issues, dealt with the problem in two of his complementary seminal studies, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens und Serbiens im Mittelalter*, and *Jajcza (Bánság, vár és város) története*, published in 1914 and 1915, respectively.¹¹ Even though the two differ in some details, both offer the similar characteristics of the reign, and the information their under-referenced studies contain are still diligently copied in the historiography which surpasses their work only by minor, almost negligible contributions.

Sima Ćirković (1929-2009), a Serbian medievalist, proved it to be a case with his interpretation of the problem in his historical synthesis of the medieval Bosnian state published in 1964,¹² and another one focusing on Serbian history published in 2004 in English.¹³ His promisingly entitled, but otherwise disappointing paper on the Bosnian kings and aristocracy after 1463 primarily focuses on the Ottoman-appointed vassal kings of Bosnia in the '60s and '70s.¹⁴ The first further notable contribution was, however, done by Vladimir Ćorović's (1885-

¹⁰ Vjekoslav Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata od najranijih vremena do svršetka XIX. stoljeća* [History of the Croats from the earliest period to the end of the nineteenth century], vols. 3 and 4 (Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, 1975).

¹¹ Lajos Thallóczy [Ludwig von Thallóczy], *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens und Serbiens im Mittelalter* (Munich – Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1914); idem, *Jajcza (Bánság, vár és város) története 1450.-1527.* [The history the banate, the castle, and the town of Jajce 1450-1527] (Budapest: Hornyánszky Viktor, 1915) The book was translated into Croatian and published a year later as *Povijest (banovine, grada i varoši) Jajca 1450.-1527.*, tr. Milan Šufflay (Zagreb: Kraljevska zemaljska tiskara, 1916).

¹² Ćirković, *Историја*.

¹³ Idem, *The Serbs*.

¹⁴ Idem, "Властела и краљеви у Босни после 1463." [The aristocracy and kings in Bosnia after 1463], *Istoriski glasnik* 3 (1954): 123-131.

1941) *Historija Bosne* published in 1940.¹⁵ The study introduces new information on Nicholas's foreign policy as confirmed by the source material, and the same information can be found in Veljan Atanasovski's *Pad Hercegovine* published in 1979.¹⁶ Being Nicholas's ultimate achievement and a personal characteristic, the kingship is mentioned in scholarship dealing with topics close to the Újlaki family or Nicholas himself, but does not primarily focus on the last decade of his life. Other historical synthesis, monographs, papers on the archeological findings in Ilok, Orahovica, Ružica-grad, Várpalota and other towns in the family's possession, historiographical contributions to the history of the whole family, biographical and encyclopedic entries, papers on any issues of political, economic, ecclesiastic or social history of the period, kindred studies and so on, as well as the often less useful contributions of amateur local historians, contain sporadic information on Nicholas and his kingdom.¹⁷ All the references to Nicholas's kingship contain information from previous scholarship considered to be the authority in the topic, even though itself lacks any detailed analysis. Such is the case, furthermore, with the most recent efforts in assessing the Újlakis - *Architectural Prestige Representation in the Mid-Fifteenth Century: Nicholas Újlaki and the Castle of Várpalota*, a Master thesis defended in 2015 by Szabolcs Balázs Nagy,¹⁸ and a PhD dissertation by Mladen Radić entitled *Povijest velikaškog roda Iločkih u svjetlu arheoloških*

¹⁵ [Vladimir Ćorović] Владимир Торовић, *Istorija Bosne: Prva knjiga* [The history of Bosnia: Volume one] (Belgrade: Srpska kraljevska akademija, 1940).

¹⁶ [Veljan Atanasovski] Вељан Атанасовски, *Pad Hercegovine* [The fall of Hercegovina] (Beograd: Narodna knjiga – Istorijski institut u Beogradu, 1979).

¹⁷ For example: Stanko Andrić, “Oporuka Nikole Iločkog iz 1471. godine” [The last will of Nicholas of Ilok from 1471], *Godišnjak Ogranka Matice hrvatske Vinkovci* 14 (1996): 45-54; idem, *The Miracles of St John Capistran* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000); Tamás Fedeles, “Egy középkori főúri család vallásossága: Az Újlakiak példája” [The piety of a medieval Hungarian aristocratic family. The case of the Újlakis], *Századok*, 145 (2011): 377–418; idem, “Opsada Iloka 1494. godine” [The siege of Ilok in 1494] *Scrinia Slavonica* 12 (2012): 7-20; idem, “Dux Laurentius: Újlaki Lőrinc boszniai herceg pályafutása” [Dux Laurentius: The career of the Bosnian duke Lawrence of Ilok], *Bácsország* 68 (2014): 40-48; András Kubinyi, “A kaposújvári uradalom és a Somogy megyei familiárisok szerepe Újlaki Miklós birtokpolitikájában” [The role of the estate of Kaposújvár and the familiars in Somogy county in the territorial policies of Nicholas of Ilok], *Levéltári évkönyv* 4 (1973): 3–44; Reiszig, “Az Újlaki-család”, 1-13, 65-65; Wertner, “Nikolaus von Ilok”, 250-73.

¹⁸ Szabolcs Balázs Nagy, “Architectural Prestige Representation in the Mid-Fifteenth Century: Nicholas Újlaki and the Castle of Várpalota”, MA thesis (Budapest: Central European University, 2015).

istraživanja s osobitim osvrtom na Ružicu grad i Ilok defended in 2014.¹⁹ None of the two, primarily archaeological studies, is exclusively interested in the kingship itself, but such an achievement need not be omitted, and the information from the existing historiography is once more automatically repeated.

Important contribution was delivered by Florio Banfi's (1899-1967) paper on Nicholas's travel to Rome during the Jubilee year of 1475, published in 1941.²⁰ The episode was recently revisited by Stanko Andrić and in more detail by Tamás Fedeles.²¹ Contributions of a similar importance, directly focusing on his kingship, are the numismatic analyses of coins produced by Nicholas, while enjoying his royal coinage prerogative. These were published by Ivan Rengjeo and Ladislav Korčmaroš in 1930 and 1989, respectively.²² Nevertheless, regardless of their immense importance for the research of the kingship, none of these efforts aimed to clarify the Nicholas's reign itself, and the basic narrative about the problem remained almost identical within the historiography for a whole century. Thus, even the most recent synthesis of the Hungarian medieval history by Pál Engel (1938-2001) published in 2001 does not differ from its predecessors in evaluating Nicholas's reign, neither methodologically nor

¹⁹ Mladen Radić, "Povijest velikaškog roda Iločkih u svjetlu arheoloških istraživanja s osobitim osvrtom na Ružicu grad i Ilok" [History of the noble Iločki kindred in the light of the archaeological research with a special reference to Ružica grad and Ilok], PhD dissertation (Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet, 2014).

²⁰ Florio Banfi, "Romei ungheresi del Giubileo del 1475: Niccoló Ujlaki Re di Bosnia in un affresco nell'Ospedale di Santo Spirito dell'Urbe" [Hungarian pilgrims of the 1475 Jubilee: Nicholas of Ilok, king of Bosnia, in the fresco in the Hospice of Santo Spirito dell'Urbe], *Corvina – Rassegna Italo-Ungherese* 3 (1941): 499-512.

²¹ Stanko Andrić, "Od Iloka do Rima: talijansko putovanje Nikole Iločkog" [From Ilok to Rome: the Italian voyage of Nicholas of Ilok], *Hrvatska revija* 1 (2015), accessed February 15, 2016, <http://www.matica.hr/hr/446/Od%20Iloka%20do%20Rima%3A%20talijansko%20putovanje%20Nikole%20Ilo%C4%8Dkoga/>; Fedeles, "'Bosniae... rex... apostolorum limina visit.' Die Rohmwallfahrt von Nikolaus Újlaki im Jahre 1475", *Ungarn - Jahrbuch* 31 (2011-2013): 99-117.

²² Ladislav Korčmaroš, "Nepoznat dinar Nikole Iločkog" [An unknown denar of Nicholas of Ilok], *Numizmatičke vijesti* 31 (1989): 47-50; Ivan Rengjeo, "Novci Nikole Iločkog: Prilog hrvatskoj numizmatiki" [Coins of Nicholas of Ilok: A contribution to the Croatian numismatics], *Napredak* 19 (1930): 98-111.

by its results.²³ The situation is completely the same in the case of the recently published seminal study on the Hungarian-Bosnian medieval political relations.²⁴

The first and to this day only focused effort in investigating the kingship is András Kubinyi's rather ambitiously entitled paper *Die Frage des bosnischen Königtums von Nikolaus Újlaky* published in 1958.²⁵ Even though it does analyze several diplomatic sources not assessed previously and is an important contribution to the topic, Kubinyi omitted crucial information already published in previous, mostly "South Slavic" scholarship, but also the information known to the Hungarian historiography at the time. Regardless of the (re)interpretation of the available but not all source material, Kubinyi's rather short essay joined the already existing historiography in its interpretation and definition of Nicholas's kingship and has only contributed to the further affirmation of the constantly perpetuated characteristics of the entity under Nicholas's rule, especially by becoming the authority in the topic. Namely, the conclusions of the early generations of scholars which were further affirmed by Kubinyi's contribution and their repetition in the scholarship constructed a set of the definitive characteristics which are taken for granted even though the scholarship established it lacks a proper scholarly analysis and contains mostly the chronological narratives:

- Nicholas's bestowal was primarily the result of the Matthias Corvinus's domestic policy of pacification after the rebellion of 1471;
- His rule and kingdom were defined by a document which confirms Nicholas's personal fidelity to Elizabeth Szilágyi and Matthias himself;

²³ Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895-1526* (London-New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001).

²⁴ Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 380-383.

²⁵ Kubinyi, "Die Frage des bosnischen Königtums von Nikolaus Újlaky," *Studia Slavica Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae* 4 (1958): 373-84; the article was later made more accessible to a wider audience when it was translated into Croatian: "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva Nikole Iločkog," *Županjski zbornik* 4 (1973): 48-57.

- Apart from the initial expression of will to liberate the Bosnian territory, Nicholas was mostly completely passive and his rule was a peculiar, but generally unsuccessful endeavor;
- Otherwise, the kingship had merely a symbolic importance;
- It was undoubtedly and exclusively a result of the Matthias's personal politics which strived to pacify this old and untrustworthy baron;
- Nicholas never ruled over Jajce or any Bosnian territory outside of the small enclave on the northeast defined by the surroundings of Teočak and the Ottoman borderline at Zvornik;
- He enjoyed a coinage prerogative and has ruled his kingdom "as his own private estate";²⁶
- It was "merely an interesting episode... which is of biographic importance only."²⁷

These several conclusions often found in previous scholarship contain all the information about and the current evaluation of Nicholas's kingship. Therefore, the following chapters will use them as the starting point and try to question them on the basis of the contextualized source data and, finally, offer a reinterpretation and a first detailed analysis of the issue.

²⁶ Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva", 52.

²⁷ Thallóczy's final qualification of Nicholas's reign; „Interesantnom epizodom ostade to naslovno kraljevstvo, koje imade samo biografsko znamenovanje“; *Povijest*, 109. My translation.

Chapter II: The Background of the Bestowal

The kind of detailed analysis described above implies the examination of the broader contemporary political situation within the Kingdom of Hungary, its foreign policy, especially that pertaining to Bosnia and the defense system, as well as Nicholas's political career, path to the kingship and his personal relations to the king himself. The bestowal which occurred sometime in the second half of 1471 was a result of several historical causes which engendered of favorable circumstances for the bestowal. These include the fall of Bosnia and the eventual counterattack in 1463 and 1464, Nicholas's personal political role in the Kingdom, especially in its southern parts, Matthias's domestic and foreign policy, the situation in the Ottoman Bosnia as well as the administrative, military and political role of Bosnia in the Kingdom of Hungary after 1463. As the kingship is the result of these circumstances, they deserve great attention and will contribute to the final evaluation of King Nicholas.

2.1 The Establishment and the Organization of the Territorial Base: The "Bosnian banate" or "the Kingdom of Bosnia"?

Medieval Bosnia, either the earlier banate or the later kingdom, was tightly connected to the Kingdom of Hungary throughout its whole medieval history, and its political structure, developing forces and its role in the Southeastern Europe was under the great influence of the Hungarian royal policy in different circumstances and with different goals.²⁸ From the Early Middle Ages it has been in a variously defined but steady vassal position in relation to Hungary, and its defensive role within the *archiregnum* became more important by the end of the

²⁸ Ančić, "Politička struktura kasnosrednjovjekovne Bosne" [The political structure of the late medieval Bosnia], in Mladen Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 9-88; idem, "Od zemlje do kraljevstva," 9-88; Klaić, *Srednjovjekovna Bosna*.

fourteenth century after the Ottoman threat encroached upon the Balkans and threatened the territory of Hungary proper itself. The system of buffer states, i.e. the vassal states surrounding the Kingdom of Hungary, was present in the royal policies of Hungarian rulers since the Árpád period, but was further developed under the Anjou dynasty and especially for the purpose of defense during the reign of the King Sigismund.²⁹ After the catastrophes of Kosovo polje in 1389 and Nicopolis in 1396 made clear the tactical and strategic advantages of the Ottoman army in the open battle, Sigismund intensified his efforts in creating an efficient defensive system, primarily by defining the vassal positions of Wallachia, Serbia and Bosnia and creating a defensive zone between the two “superpowers” in the Balkans.³⁰ However, the domestic conflicts over the throne, Sigismund’s concentration on the western, imperial issues as well as the strategic reasons brought about a change within the defensive policy and the introduction of several reforms, namely the further shift towards a defensive rather than offensive system.³¹ By the beginning of the fifteenth century, the conflicts within the Bosnian Kingdom and personal ambitions of the local Bosnian rulers, especially Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić, as well as Sigismund’s interest in Bosnia, resulted in the more permanent incursion of Ottoman troops on Bosnian soil, the troops which were summoned and used by the Bosnian rulers, even King Tvrtko II, in their personal interest.³² By 1415 the Ottomans even seized Vrhbosna, Višegrad, Sokol and Ključ, fortresses in Bosnia, and used them for further raids across the Sava.³³ Eventually, the conflicts resulted in the Battle of Lašva in 1415 where Hrvoje, supported by the Ottoman troops, heavily defeated the Hungarian army, as well as in the intensification of

²⁹ Horváth, “The Castle of Jajce”, 90-91; Ferenc Szakály, “The Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare before the Battle of Mohács (1365-1526)”, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae* 33 (1979): 65-85.

³⁰ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 231-238; Horváth, “The Castle of Jajce,” 91; Ivica Prlender, “Sporazum u Tati 1426. godine i Žigmundovi obrambeni sustavi” [The Treaty of Tata from 1426 and Sigismund’s defensive systems], *Historijski zbornik* 44 (1991): 24-29; Szakály, “The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System”, 141.

³¹ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 236-237; Horváth, “The Castle of Jajce”, 91; Szakály, “The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System,” 142.

³² Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 234-235; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata* Vol. 3, 66-77

³³ Szakály, “The Phases,” 79.

Ottoman incursions into Hungarian territory.³⁴ The situation, i.e. the “cracks” in the Bosnian part of the buffer-state defense, requested the modification of the defensive system. Such a reform implied, among other things, such as the establishment of the *militia portalis*, the renovation and construction of the border fortresses along the southern borders of the kingdom, i.e. along the rivers Sava and Danube, a task which was assigned to Sigismund’s close associate, Pipo Scolari (Pipó Ozorai).³⁵ Further improvements of the new fortress-based defensive system were made in 1426 after a further 17 fortresses were gained with the Treaty of Tata, a treaty signed with the contemporary Serbian despot Stefan Lazarević. During the last decade of Sigismund’s reign, even the Bosnian castle of Jajce was incorporated into the system for a short period.³⁶ The new defensive line eventually consisted of two stretches of fortresses extending from Szörény in the east to Klis in the west. Some fortresses on the right bank of the Sava were also included in the system as early as the first decade of the century, and especially after the Bosnian kingdom got closer to Sigismund in 1415 after the settlement of the dispute and again in 1427 after Tvrtko’s II agreement with Sigismund and the Cilli.³⁷

³⁴ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 235; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata* Vol. 3, 66-77; Szakály, “The Phases”, 77-80.

³⁵ András Borosy, “The *Militia Portalis* in Hungary Before 1526,” in *From Hunyadi to Rákóczy: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. János M. Bak and Béla K. Király (Brooklyn: Brooklyn College Press, 1982), 63-80; Erik Fügedi, “Medieval Hungarian Castles in Existence at the Start of the Ottoman Advance,” in *From Hunyadi to Rákóczy: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. János M. Bak and Béla K. Király (Brooklyn: Brooklyn College Press, 1982), 59-62; Geza Pálffy, “The Origins and the Development of the Border Defense System Against the Ottoman Empire in Hungary (Up to the Early Eighteenth Century),” in *Ottomans, Hungarians and Habsburgs in Central Europe: The Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest*, ed. Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 8-10; Martyn Rady, *Nobility, Land and Service in Medieval Hungary* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 136; Szakály, “The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System”, 142.

³⁶ Horváth, “The Castle of Jajce,” 91; Prlender, “Sporazum u Tati,” 23-41; Szakály, “The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System,” 142.

³⁷ Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 21-23; Stanko Andrić, “Rijeka Sava kao protuturski bedem (do pada Bosne)” [The Sava river as a bulwark against the Turks (until the fall of Bosnia)], in *Rijeka Sava u povijesti*, ed. Branko Ostajmer (Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2015), 209-210; Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 236; [Jelena Mrgić] Јелена Мргић, *Северна Босна 13.-16. век* [Northern Bosnia 13th to 16th century] (Belgrade: Istorijски институт, 2008), 103-105; Szakály, “The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System”, 143.

The new system was well incorporated into the *honores* of the Hungarian Kingdom after Scolari's death and after the end of the Teutonic mandate in Szörény in 1435.³⁸ By the end of Sigismund's rule the bans of Croatia and Slavonia became the commanders of the western part of the defensive system, and the defense of the east was assigned to the count of Temes and the voivode of Transylvania whose activity depended on the revenues implied by the *honor*.³⁹

Even though the organization of the defensive system remained generally unchanged from Sigismund's times until its collapse in the sixteenth century, the constantly changing political circumstances within the kingdom and on its southern and southeastern borders, especially considering the buffer states, Bosnia and the Serbian despotate, brought about several modifications. The quarrels over the throne after King Albert's death in 1439 resulted, eventually, in John Hunyadi's rise to prominence and his leading role in the defense of the kingdom.⁴⁰ His personal rise was simultaneous with the rise of Nicholas of Ilok, John's longstanding ally and close associate, an issue which will be discussed in more detail later.

By assuming the *honor* of the voivode of Transylvania together with Nicholas for his personal efforts in Władysław Warneńczyk's party, Hunyadi was not only given the task of pacifying the eastern parts of the kingdom, but also the task of defending it against the Ottomans. From 1441 onwards, he commanded several invasions into the Ottoman-occupied territories, including the 1444 "Long Campaign", changing the defense policy into more

³⁸ Horváth, "The Castle of Jajce," 92-93; Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 238; Szakály, "The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System," 142-144.

³⁹ Horváth, "The Castle of Jajce," 92; Tamás Pálosfalvi, "Slavonski banovi u 15. stoljeću" [Slavonian bans in the 15th century], in *Hrvatsko-mađarski odnosi 1102.-1918.*, ed. Ante Birin (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2004): 45; Rady, *Nobility*, 136-137; ; Szakály, "The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System", 145-146.

⁴⁰ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 283-285. For Hunyadi's detailed biography see Joseph Held, *Hunyadi: Legend and Reality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

offense-oriented once again.⁴¹ In his personal quest for power, he even influenced the Hungarian-Serbian relations with the suspicious Treaty of Oradea in 1444, and in the same year brought the Bosnian kingdom, at least its king, Stephen Tomaš, closer to Hungary by confirming its vassal position by mediating in Władysław's confirmation of Tomaš's kingship in Bosnia.⁴² His further role implied his regency over the Kingdom after Władysław's death at the unsuccessful campaign of Varna, whereby he continued the offensive policy that brought the heavy defeat at the second battle of Kosovo polje in 1448, but has successfully defended the kingdom. Finally, during Hunyadi's period the organization of the defense system remained unchanged and the Bosnian kingdom and Serbia, the most important buffer zones between the two great rivals, carried on the dubious politics oscillating between the Ottomans and Hungary, but confirming, at least officially, their vassal status towards the Hungarian kingdom. Hunyadi's period, his early career as well as his regency had, however, an immense influence on Nicholas's rise to prominence, both in his political influence and his role in the defense of the kingdom, an important topic which will be, as was said, discussed in more detail below.⁴³

The defensive system described above, changed negligibly or not at all since the implementation of Sigismund's reforms at the beginning of the century awaited the reign of Matthias Corvinus. After assuming the reign in 1458 by election, Matthias was burdened with several domestic and foreign problems presented in the first years of his rule by his own uncle Mihály Szilágyi, Frederick III as well as the domestic league which opposed his election whose prominent member was Nicholas of Ilok himself.⁴⁴ At the same time, the situation in Bosnia

⁴¹ Engel, "János Hunyadi: The Decisive Years of His Career, 1440-1444", in *From Hunyadi to Rákóczy: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, ed. János M. Bak and Béla K. Király (Brooklyn: Brooklyn College Press, 1982), 106-107; idem, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 285-288; Szakály, "The Phases", 86-91.

⁴² Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 23; Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, idem, 286-288; "János Hunyadi," 107-112.

⁴³ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 282-285; idem, 118-119; Szakály, "The Phases", 87.

⁴⁴ Borislav Grgin, *Počeci rasapa: Kralj Matijaš Korvin i srednjovjekovna Hrvatska* [The beginning of the disintegration: King Matthias Corvinus and the medieval Croatia] (Zagreb: Ibis grafika – Zavod za hrvatsku povijest, 2002), 24-28; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata* Vol. 4, 3-32; Tamás Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background in Hungary of the Campaign of Jajce in 1463", in *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.-1463.): slovo srednjovjekovnoga Bosanskog Kraljevstva*, ed. Ante Birin (Zagreb-Sarajevo: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Katolički bogoslovni

constantly worsened due to the Ottoman threat, as well as the internal conflicts which favored the increasing Ottoman influence on its domestic policy, such as the conflict within the Kosača family.⁴⁵ The developments in Serbia after the death of the despot George Branković in 1456, and his son Lazar in 1458, resulted in further Ottoman conquests of Serbian lands. This was followed by the fall of Golubac in 1458 and the Hungarian-Ottoman clashes in Syrmia in the same year, which defined Matthias's initial approach towards the southern defensive issues in the midst of his fight for the legitimate reign.⁴⁶ The initiative was at the same time coming from the Bosnian king, Stephen Tomaš, whose interests in making his own son, Stephen Tomašević, a new despot of Serbia matched Matthias's interests in pacifying his own kingdom, as well as returning to the policy of buffer states to secure the southern borders of the state. Eventually, the treaty was arranged by the January of 1459 making Tomašević the new despot and guaranteeing Matthias the relief of his dangerous uncle of any influence in Smederevo and the defense of that part of the kingdom he enjoyed previously. Simultaneously, Matthias granted the banate of Macsó to the new Serbian despot, thus discharging Nicholas of Ilok from the same office, as well as bestowing the Hungarian territorial base of the new vassal upon him.⁴⁷ Finally, the treaty agreed upon in Szeged put the Bosnian kingdom and Serbia, under the rule of the Bosnian Kotromanić dynasty at the time, in a newly arranged vassal position, a vassal to whom Matthias promised military help against the Ottomans.⁴⁸

A new situation in Hungarian-Bosnian relations emerged in 1459 after the fall of Smederevo, an event which anticipated the future of Bosnia and the eventual "creation" of the "Banate". After the new Serbian despot had surrendered the town in June 1459, the new

fakultet Sarajevo, 2013), 79-88; Mladen Tomorad, "Europska politika Matijaša Korvina: Matijaševa vanjska politika prvih godina vladavine (1458-1464)" [The European policy of King Matthias Corvinus: The foreign policy of King Matthias during the first years of his reign (1458-1464)], *Kroatologija* 2 (2011): 171-181

⁴⁵ Ćirković, *Ucmopuja*, 311-341.

⁴⁶ Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 328-329; Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background", 80-83.

⁴⁷ Ćirković, *Ucmopuja*, 317-319; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata* Vol. 4, 12-21; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 329-331; Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background", 81-83;

⁴⁸ Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 330.

Ottoman acquisition resulted in the immediate proximity of the Ottoman forces to the Danube and the Hungarian territory. This meant the collapse of the Serbian sector of the defensive system, leaving, after the fall of both Golubac and Smederevo, only Belgrade, a major fortress, in Hungarian hands.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the fall of Smederevo eventually resulted in the shift of Matthias's policy towards the Kotromanićes which deeply influenced their further relationship until the fall of Bosnia in 1463. For vague reasons, still debated in historiography, Matthias initiated a diplomatic "program" to accuse the Kotromanićes for treason, and simultaneously relieved them of their Hungarian estates which they had enjoyed as his vassals and as the despots of Serbia.⁵⁰ The situation further worsened with Stephen Tomaš's surrender of several fortresses, Srebrenica, Zvornik, Teočak and others, as well as the bridge across the Sava into Sirmia and Valkó county in the northeastern Bosnian Usora region in 1460.⁵¹ Simultaneously, stuck in an unfavorable position between the Ottomans and Hungary, Tomaš requested the papal crown and papal legates for the further Christianization of Bosnia in more of a political than religious sense.⁵² Such moves made by the Bosnian king did not suit Matthias, and the situation further worsened when he protested against the papal bestowal of the crown upon Tomaš which undermined the Hungarian suzerainty over the Bosnian kingdom, a land considered to be the part of the Hungarian *archiregnum* whose royal authority depended on the Holy Crown of Hungary.⁵³ Due to Matthias's protests Tomaš's request was unsuccessful, but Tomaš's son and successor, Stephen Tomašević, succeeded in getting the crown from the pope and was eventually crowned in 1461.⁵⁴ Tomašević was, at the same time, also successful in

⁴⁹ Ćirković, *The Serbs*, 107-108; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 333; Tomorad, "Europska politika," 181.

⁵⁰ Ćirković, *Исцопуја*, 318-319; Borislav Grgin, "Južne granice Ugarsko-Hrvatskog Kraljevstva u vrijeme Stjepana Tomaševića" [Southern borders of the Hungarian-Croatian Kingdom during the reign of Stephen Tomašević], in *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.-1463.): slom srednjovjekovnoga Bosanskog Kraljevstva*, ed. Ante Birin (Zagreb-Sarajevo: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Katolički bogoslovni fakultet Sarajevo, 2013), 69-77; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 333-334; Tomorad, "Europska politika," 181.

⁵¹ Ćirković, *Исцопуја*, 322; Mrgić, *Северна Босна*, 131.

⁵² Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 334-336.

⁵³ Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 112-113; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 335-336; Tomorad, *Europska politika*, 181.

⁵⁴ Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 112; Ćirković, *Исцопуја*, 324-325; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 341-348.

initiating the idea of the crusades against the Turks in Bosnia, but such a development resulted once again in Matthias's protest, and the eventual reconciliation between the two kings in 1462, a process intensively supervised by Pope Pius II himself.⁵⁵ The treaty between the two effected Tomašević's surrender of several fortresses to Matthias who included them into the existing defensive system, as well as the money needed for the "purchase" of the Hungarian Holy Crown which was in Frederick's III possession.⁵⁶ However, regardless of the reconciliation, the Ottoman threat intensified, and the Bosnian nobility, as well as the king, sought a peaceful resolution for the imminent invasion, as well as the eventually needed refuge.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, by 1462 the sultan already devised a plan of conquering Bosnia and the seemingly inevitable invasion occurred in the spring of 1463.⁵⁸ The invasion was swift, the important Bosnian fortresses, such as Ključ and Jajce, as well as the king's land were captured, and the king himself, after trying to find refuge in Jajce and Ključ, was beheaded.⁵⁹ The military aid from Matthias, whose army was occupied with the possibility of the Ottoman incursion into the Hungarian territory and patrolled the southern regions close to the Danube, never arrived.⁶⁰ The reasons for Matthias's behavior was and still is intensively discussed in the historiography. The current arguments include claims that Matthias was indeed prevented from acting in Bosnia because of his focus on the forces sent by the Sultan to occupy him on the Danube,⁶¹ Matthias's plan to focus on recapturing Smederevo and the papal diplomacy which succeeded in persuading Matthias to persevere with the Kotromanićes in Bosnia,⁶² and Matthias's

⁵⁵ Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 112-113; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 349-350.

⁵⁶ Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 349-350; Tomorad, "Europska politika," 182-183.

⁵⁷ Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 113-114.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 354-358; Ćirković, *Icmopuja*, 329-330; Klaić, *Povijesti Hrvata*, vol. 4, 40-42; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 65-71.

⁶⁰ Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 107-139; Grgin, "Južne granice," 72-77; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 359-360; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 72-73.

⁶¹ Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 358-360.

⁶² Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 107-139.

punishment policy towards the disobedient vassal.⁶³ Matthias's attitude towards the fall of Bosnia and during the Ottoman invasion is of great importance for the topic of this thesis and, thus, deserves a more in-depth study derived from the overview of the wider context of Matthias's contemporary policy. Thus, in the following I will provide my own explanation in order to clarify the situation and to offer an insight into the (in)direct relationship between Matthias's 1463 policy and the establishment of the Banate.

After Matthias's election at the diet held in Buda in January 1458, an election influenced by Szilágyi, Elisabeth Szilágyi and their cooperation with Palatine Ladislaus Garai,⁶⁴ the newly appointed king immediately faced the opposition to his rule. Upon returning to Buda in February 1458 from George Poděbrady's captivity, Matthias discharged his uncle from the office of regent, as well as Garai, who was promised a marriage between Matthias and his daughter, from the office of the palatine of the kingdom.⁶⁵ The king's moves moved the two to join the already existing opposition to Matthias's rule who contacted Frederick III, one of the initial candidates for the Hungarian throne and the keeper of the Holy Crown, and eventually confirmed him as the King of Hungary in Güssing (Németújvár) in 1459.⁶⁶ The conflict between the two parties started soon thereafter,⁶⁷ and even Poděbrady, still waiting for Matthias to confirm the conditions of his release, drew nearer to Frederick by supporting his efforts in Hungary.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, after Garai's death, Matthias succeeded in quelling the domestic rebellion, but the conflict with Frederick continued for four more years.⁶⁹ The

⁶³ Grgin, "Južne granice," 69-77.

⁶⁴ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 298-299; Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 24-25; Radu Lupescu, "The Election and Coronation of King Matthias," in *Matthias Corvinus the King: Tradition and Renewal in the Hungarian Royal Court, 1458-1490; Exhibition catalogue*, ed. Péter Farbaky and András Véghe (Budapest: Budapest History Museum, 2008), 191-192; Tomorad, "Europska politika," 171.

⁶⁵ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 299; Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 25; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 8-11; Lupescu, "The Election," 193-194; Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 81-82.

⁶⁶ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 299; Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 25; Tomorad, "Europska politika," 151.

⁶⁷ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 24; Tomorad, "Europska politka," 176.

⁶⁸ Tomorad, "Europska politika," 177.

⁶⁹ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 299; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 24-25.

mediation of Pope Pius II himself, who focused on motivating another crusade, initiated several peace talks once even John Jiskra and archduke Albrecht VI joined in the conflict on the side of Frederick III and Matthias, respectively.⁷⁰ Finally, the provisional peace was agreed upon in 1462 and the final agreement was achieved in July 1463; Frederick recognized Matthias as the legal ruler of Hungary, but has succeeded in acquiring Matthias's consent to inherit the kingship in Hungary if Matthias dies without heir. The agreement also included the surrender of the Holy Crown of Hungary to Matthias, a final element in confirming Matthias's legal rule, for which he paid 80 000 florins—a sum which contained Tomašević's contribution as well.⁷¹ Matthias's legitimate reign was finally confirmed six years after his election, on March 29, 1464, when he was crowned with the Holy Crown of Hungary, the royal insignia which granted the fully legitimate kingship over the *regnum* and all its *membra*, an insignia which also symbolically confirmed his now undisputable rule.⁷²

In the circumstances described above, Matthias had to tackle all the interwoven domestic and foreign problems which questioned his royal authority, and simultaneously take care of the southern situation. The cooperated dangers coming both from Frederick III and the domestic barons, as well as, occasionally, from Poděbrady, Jiskra and others, as well as the lack of the coronation forced Matthias to focus on pacifying the kingdom and legalizing his reign. One has to bear in mind that the bestowal of the Serbian despotate upon the Kotromanićes, as well as Matthias's conflict with them about both Tomaš's and Tomašević's

⁷⁰ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 25-28.

⁷¹ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 299-300; Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 26; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 28-29; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 349. A more detailed analysis of the period see in Jörg K. Hoensch, *Matthias Corvinus: Diplomat, Feldherr und Mäzen* (Graz: Styria, 1998), 45-76.

⁷² Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 27. On the importance and the role of the Holy Crown of Hungary in confirming the royal authority see Erik Fügedi, "Coronation in Medieval Hungary," in *Kings, Bishops, Nobles and Burghers in Medieval Hungary*, ed. János Bak (London: Variorum Reprints, 1986), I, 159-189; Josef Karpat, "Corona Regni Hungariae im Zeitalter der Arpaden," and "Die Idee der Heilige Krone Ungarns in neuer Beleuchtung," in *Corona Regni: Studien über die Krone als Symbol des Staates im späteren Mittelalter*, ed. Manfred Hellmann (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1961), 225-348 and 349-398; László Péter, "The Holy Crown of Hungary, Visible and Invisible", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 81 (2003): 421-510.

coronation, in late 1450s and early 1460s were going on at the same time when he put all of his efforts in preserving his rule in Hungary. The fall of Bosnia and Matthias's counterattack also happened just months before his coronation. Thus, while I am inclined to agree with the interpretation that Matthias never helped Tomašević in order to punish him for his disruption of the rights of the Hungarian crown in the vassal Bosnia,⁷³ I also recognize that many other factors contributed to his lack of support. While the Ottoman forces did indeed occupy Matthias on the "Serbian front", and his punishment-policy does indeed resemble his policy towards his disobedient vassal Vlad III Țepeș,⁷⁴ Matthias's behavior must have had something to do with his future plans with Bosnia and the southern defensive system in the midst of his problems around the coronation. It seems that Matthias wanted to relieve himself of at least one issue in the kingdom, a problem of Bosnia and its troublesome dynasty, especially if he wanted to fully focus on the problems on the north and, at least temporarily, settle the defensive system on the south. Agreeing with previous scholarship, I argue that Matthias's behavior towards Bosnia was intentional, and add that it could have been aimed at the full subjugation of Bosnia under a steady and firm Hungarian rule, so as to settle the four-year-long southern problems, as well as to temporarily deal with the defense of the kingdom until his fully legal authority is granted. Finally, even the idea present in the previous historiography⁷⁵ as well as in some earlier chronicles of Matthias's promise made to Nicholas and based in Nicholas's wish which implied the promise of the kingship already in 1459 after Nicholas withdrawn from the opposing party, even though unconfirmed by the sources, cannot be neglected. That issue will be dealt with in more detail later. Such plans are the starting point in the establishment of the "banate."

After signing a treaty about the cooperation against the Ottomans with Venice in Petrovaradin in September 1463 and summoning his army, Matthias invaded the Ottoman-

⁷³ Grgin, "Južne granice," 69-77.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ See Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 107.

occupied Bosnian territory and after four months managed to seize Jajce, Zvečaj and other fortresses.⁷⁶ The Ottoman counterattack on Jajce was unsuccessful, as was the Hungarian assault on Zvornik in 1464, but Teočak, Dobor, Novi, Srebrenik and, generally, the Usora region were retaken from the Ottomans in the same year.⁷⁷ The new acquisition, thus, demanded the administration and the integration of these areas into the existing Hungarian governmental system, and this issue is often vaguely but certainly incorrectly interpreted in current historiography. Since the administrative organization of the newly conquered territory, as well as the territory itself, was the basis for Nicholas's future kingship, this issue needs more attention here. Thus, in the following I will challenge the existing definition of the conquered territory as the "Bosnian" or "Jajce banate," which are both terms widely accepted and perpetuated in historiography.

After conquering Jajce and mostly the territory of northern Bosnia, i.e. the territory closest to Sava and the border between Hungary and Bosnia, Matthias entrusted Imre Szapolyai with the task of administering and defending the territory as its governor (*gubernator*), together with the banate of Croatia, Dalmatia and Slavonia, and the priory of Vrana.⁷⁸ After relieving him of that duty in 1465, Matthias entrusted the similar task, primarily Bosnia, to Péter Szobi, László Disznósi, Balázs Magyar and others until he eventually bestowed the kingship upon Nicholas in 1471.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ More about the Bosnian campaigns of 1463 and 1464 in Ćirković, *Istompuja*, 331-335; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 363-368; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata* Vol. 4, 52-56; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 74-96.

⁷⁷ Ćirković, *Istompuja*, 333-335; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, 55, Mrgić, *Северна Босна*, 136-137.

⁷⁸ Horváth, "The Castle of Jajce," 93; Vedran Klaužer, "Djelovanje Blaža Mađara, bana Bosne, Dalmacije, Hrvatske i Slavonije u njegovom prvom mandatu (1470.-1472.): Prilog poznavanju vršenja banske dužnosti u kasnom 15. stoljeću" [The agency of Blaise Magyar, the ban of Bosnia, Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia, during his first term of duty (1470-1472): A contribution to research into performing the duties of a ban in the late fifteenth century], *Zbornik Odsjeka povijesnih znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti HAZU* 30 (2012): 124; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 50.

⁷⁹ Horváth, "The Castle of Jajce," 94; Klaužer, "Djelovanje Blaža Mađara," 124-125.

It is a widespread opinion taken for almost granted in current historiography that the organization of the new territories implied the establishment of two defensive banates immediately after Matthias's actions in Bosnia, namely the Banate of Jajce and the Banate of Srebrenik, which goes back to nineteenth-century historiography.⁸⁰ It seems that Szapolyai's office, the *gubernator*, remains somewhat confusing in current historiography, even though the conquered territories after the end of his mandate are named as the Jajce and Srebrenik banates with utmost certainty. However, the sources pertaining to the administrative organization of Bosnia after 1464/1464 show something completely different.

In all the diplomatic sources produced by or mentioning Szapolyai, he is entitled as the *regnum Bozne gubernator ac Dalmacie, Croacie et totius Sclavonie banus*,⁸¹ and even Matthias himself addresses him as *fidelis nostri magnifici Emerici de Zapolya, gubernatoris Regni nostri Bosnae*,⁸² the only difference being that the office of *gubernator Bozne* (missing *regnum*) is cited in the very first extant mention of Szapolyai being the governor from April 3, 1464.⁸³ After Szapolyai lost his office of gubernator and the rule over Bosnia was given to the bans, even they are listed as the bans of the Kingdom of Bosnia, and not the Banate, either Jajce or Srebrenik. For example, Szobi is designated as the *magnificus Petrus de Zob, regnum Bozne, Dalmacie et Croacie banus* in 1466,⁸⁴ as is Magyar as *magnificus dominus*

⁸⁰ For example in Andrić, "Rijeka Sava," 232; Neven Budak, *Hrvatska i Slavonija u ranome novom vijeku* (Zagreb: Leykam international, 2007), 14; Vjekoslav Klaić, *Povijest Bosne do propasti kraljevstva* [The history of Bosnia until the fall of the kingdom] (Zagreb: Dionička tiskara, 1882), 341-342; idem, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 5, 15; Marija Karbić, "Hrvatsko plemstvo u borbi protiv Osmanlija: Primjer Berislavića Grabarskih iz Slavonije," [Croatian nobility in clash with the Ottoman Empire. Examples of the Berislavići Grabarski from Slavonia] *Povijesni prilozi* 31 (2006): 71; idem, "Uloga plemstva s područja današnje Slavonije u obrani Jajačke banovine," [The role of nobility from the territory of modern Slavonia in the defence of Banate of Jajce] in *Stjepan Tomašević (1461.-1463.): Slom srednjovjekovnoga Bosanskog Kraljevstva*, ed. Ante Birin (Zagreb-Sarajevo: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Katolički bogoslovni fakultet Sarajevo, 2013), 134-135; Raukar, *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovlje*, 94-95.

⁸¹ Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, Országos Levéltára [Hungarian National Archives, State Archives] (Henceforth: MNL OL), Diplomatikai fényképgyűjtemény [The Photo-Collection of Medieval Charters] (Henceforth: DF) 281483; MNL OL, DF 281725; MNL OL, DF 285509; MNL OL, Diplomatikai levéltár [The Collection of Medieval Charters] (Henceforth: DL) 16022; MNL OL, DL 45127; MNL OL, DF 288014 and others.

⁸² MNL OL, DL 16043.

⁸³ MNL OL, DF 292952.

⁸⁴ MNL OL, DF 236612.

Blasius Magyar Regnorum Bozne, Dalmacie, Croacie totiusque Sclavonie banus in 1470⁸⁵ or *regnorum Bosne, Dalmacie, Croacie et Sclavonie banus* in the same year.⁸⁶ In a single charter from 1467, Matthias designates John Thuz de Lak as *Johannes Thuz de Lak, Dalmacie, Croacie praedictorum ac Bozne et Sclavonie regnorum nostrorum banus* and confirms his suzerainty over Bosnia.⁸⁷ None of the sources mention either the Banate of Jajce or the Banate of Srebrenik, and the regal status of Bosnia is confirmed by these sources through the whole period from 1463 up to Nicholas's bestowal. This is of great importance in evaluating the kingship itself. Furthermore, while challenging the claims of present-day historiography, one has to bear in mind that the bans of either Croatia, Slavonia or Dalmatia as the "lands" of the Hungarian kingdom existing before 1463, are kingdoms and not banates, and the ban as the royal deputy administrates them on the king's behalf.⁸⁸ Their regal identity is confirmed in sources mentioned above, since all these are the bans of *regnorum* and not *regni* of Bosnia, Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia. In addition, Matthias himself, as the king of Hungary and, thus, the supreme ruler of Bosnia, the vassal state of the Hungarian crown, an issue intensively repeated by Matthias in these years, constantly stressed his suzerainty over Bosnia.⁸⁹ He immediately started enjoying his royal prerogatives in Bosnia, and started issuing charters in accordance with his office as the supreme ruler of Bosnia. He even requested Tomašević's possessions in Dubrovnik from the town council, i.e. he started to transfer all of the Kotromanićes' royal prerogatives to himself.⁹⁰ Perceiving his rule in Bosnia as his historical royal right, a right enhanced with his treaties with the Kotromanićes in 1459 and 1462, in 1465

⁸⁵ MNL OL, DL 107010.

⁸⁶ MNL OL, DL 45438.

⁸⁷ MNL OL, DL 90565.

⁸⁸ On the royal identities of medieval Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia see Tomislav Bali, *Slavonski mendar: Prostor i pojam Slavonije u XIII. stoljeću* [The Slavonian meander: The space and concept of Slavonia in the thirteenth century] (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2014); Raukar, "Hrvatska u dinastičkoj zajednici," 34-35; Attila Zsoldos, "Hrvatska i Slavonija u srednjovjekovnoj Ugarskoj kraljevini," [Croatia and Slavonia in the medieval Hungarian kingdom] in *Hrvatsko-mađarski odnosi 1102.-1918.*, ed. Ante Birin (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2004), 19-26.

⁸⁹ Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 112; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 368-369.

⁹⁰ Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 369.

Matthias even calls himself *dei gracia Hungariae, Dalmacie, Croacie, Rame... Rex* in the style of his predecessors.⁹¹

Thus, two important conclusions emerge from these sources. Firstly, the identification of the newly acquired territories as the Banate of Jajce and the Banate of Srebrenik in present-day historiography is completely incorrect. This historiographical construct did not exist in historical reality and was originally created by historians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who confused the organization established before and after Nicholas's reign. Secondly, and more importantly, the sources confirm that from the Hungarian perspective Matthias and his armies have only "retaken" or "liberated" a territory already under the rule of the Hungarian Holy Crown for centuries, and that Bosnia continued to exist as *regnum*, but was merely partitioned and occupied by the Ottomans. Thus, Bosnia kept its previous "internationally" recognized royal identity, and was, at least formally, a part of the *archiregnum* just as all the other lands were and was incorporated into the governmental system of Hungary as a kingdom. Thus, after the transitional period of governorship in 1464 and 1465, the bans continued to administrate it, just as they administrated the already existing *regna*. From Matthias's perspective no great difference was made in the political-administrational definition of the status of Bosnia within the Hungarian kingdom. He continued to rule it just as he, officially, had ruled it before as a *senior*. Finally, these claims point out that Bosnia was a "readily available" kingdom at the time when Nicholas was granted the kingship, a legal-administrational criterion which made it all the easier to name its new king, especially since it was now an even more secure part of the Hungarian *regnum*. This is further confirmed by a charter produced by Nicholas's own chancery, in which he is designated as *dei gracia Regnorum Bozne rex et Sclavonie banus* in 1473.⁹² Knowing this, it is not surprising that Jan

⁹¹ MNL OL, DL 84984; *Kolozsvár története: Oklevéltár*, vol. 1 [The history of Cluj: source collection], ed. Jakab Elek (Buda: 1870), doc. 121, 200-202.

⁹² MNL OL, DF 231600.

Długosz, reporting Matthias's actions in Bosnia in 1463, mistakenly calls Szapolyai a "king of Bosnia", rather than the governor: since it must have seemed rational to him to call a man who administrates a kingdom a king.⁹³

2.2 Why Nicholas? A Mutual Effort?

To fully understand Nicholas's acquisition of the kingship in 1471, it has to be observed from a more personal perspective as well. Beside the political-administrational and legal base, there are a number of other factors which resulted in the bestowal. These include Nicholas's and Matthias's personal relationship, both on the political and more intimate level, Nicholas's rise to prominence, his role within the administration of the Kingdom of Hungary, his importance in the decades of constant throne-related quarrels, his personal ambitions, his role in Matthias's early kingship and so on. In the following I will examine these issues and question the possibility of mutual effort both by Matthias and Nicholas in the bestowal of 1471 by introducing and examining new sources and (re)evaluating previous scholarship.

Nicholas of Ilok was from his youth one of the most important and most influential nobles of the mid- and late-fifteenth-century Kingdom of Hungary; a count of several counties, occasional voivode, ban of several kingdoms and banates, military captain and so on.⁹⁴ The exact date of his birth is unknown, but several sources testify, and scholars agree, that he must have been born sometime in the second decade of the fifteenth century.⁹⁵ He is mentioned in

⁹³ "Vexed by this occupation of Bosnia, Matthias King of Hungary captures five of its castles with their Turkish garrisons, and appoints a very rich and enterprising man, Emeric Diak, to be king of Bosnia." *The Annals of Jan Długosz*, ed. Maurice Michael and Paul Smith (Charlton: IM Publications, 1997), 546.

⁹⁴ For an overview of Nicholas's political career and biography see Pálosfalvi, "Miklós Újlaki," 267; Reiszig, "Az Újlaki-család," 56-60; Ivica Šute, "Iločki, Nikola" [Nicholas of Ilok], in *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, ed. Trpimir Macan (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, 2005), accessed April 4, 2016, <http://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak.aspx?id=99>.

⁹⁵ Andrić, "Oporuka," 45; Ugo Caleffini, *Croniche 1471-1494* [Chronicles 1471-1494], ed. Teresa Bacchi et. al (Ferrara: Deputazione provinciale ferrarese di storia patria, 2006), 102-103; Šute, "Iločki, Nikola," Reiszig, "Az Újlaki-család," 9; Wertner, "Nikolaus von Ilok," 257.

the sources for the first time in 1435⁹⁶ and the 1430s in general when, in his twenties, he already held the office of the ban of Macsó by 1438.⁹⁷ The circumstances of the period allowed him a rise to prominence during the quarrels over the throne in the years after the death of King Albert, and soon he had become one of the two most powerful magnates in the kingdom and a close associate of John Hunyadi, a relationship which will be discussed in detail later. In 1445 he became a member of a seven-member regency council which was to govern the kingdom in the absence of the young Ladislaus V.⁹⁸ He had become one of the two voivodes of Transylvania five years earlier,⁹⁹ and effectively became the most influential man and an unofficial governor of the western parts of the kingdom during Władysław Warneńczyk's reign.¹⁰⁰ Simultaneously, he was granted the office of the captain of Székesfehérvár and Belgrade, and has, throughout his life, held an office of ban and count of several counties, Fejér, Somogy, Baranya, Temes, Zala and others.¹⁰¹ Among others, he enjoyed the offices of ban of Slavonia, Croatia, Dalmatia, offices he held simultaneously from 1471 to 1473, ban of Slavonia earlier in his career, and ban of Macsó almost continuously from 1438 to his death in 1477.¹⁰²

Long before the acquisition of the kingship in 1471, Nicholas's political career reached its peak in the 1440s, when his rise was simultaneously followed and closely related to the rise of his close associate, John Hunyadi, father of the future king Matthias Corvinus. Hunyadi

⁹⁶ MNL OL, DL 12616.

⁹⁷ MNL OL, DL 44199; MNL OL, DL 95361. See also; Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1301-1457*, vol. 1 [Secular archontology of Hungary 1301-1457] (Budapest: História - MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 1996.), 30; Reiszig, "Az Újlaki-csalad," 9-10; Wertner, "Nikolaus von Ilok," 257-258.

⁹⁸ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 288.

⁹⁹ Szakály, "The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System," 146.

¹⁰⁰ Engel, "János Hunyadi," 117-119.

¹⁰¹ Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, 30; Wertner, "Nikolaus von Ilok," 257-258.

¹⁰² Andrić, *Čudesna svetog Ivana Kapistrana: Povijesna i tekstualna analiza* [The miracles of St. John Capistran: A historical and textual analysis] (Slavonski Brod-Osijek: Hrvatski institute za povijest – Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje – Matica Hrvatska Osijek, 1999), 39-40; Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, 15, 30, *passim*; Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 51-53; Klaužer, "Djelovanje Blaža Mađara," 124-126; Pálosfalvi, "Slavonski banovi," 48; Wertner, "Nikolaus von Ilok," 257-259.

started his career as the *familiaris* in the service of Stephen of Ilok (István Újlaki), Nicholas's older brother, the ban of Macsó in late 1420s and early 1430s.¹⁰³ This office must have introduced the two future associates and maybe even initiated a future friendship.¹⁰⁴ Anyhow, Hunyadi's early association with the Újlaki family must have been the basis for the future close cooperation of the two noblemen. After the death of King Albert in 1439, Nicholas initially joined the Elizabeth's party and has even participated in the crowning of young Ladislaus V and has knighted him in Székesfehérvár, a city he administrated as a captain on Elizabeth's behalf.¹⁰⁵ However, both John and Nicholas soon switched sides and jointly defeated the army of the Elizabeth's party in the Battle of Bătăszék in 1441, a win which improved Władysław's position in the struggle for the throne and resulted in the sudden rise of both winners.¹⁰⁶ As a result of the battle, Władysław recognized the two as his close supporters and associates, and in 1441 entrusted them with, among other offices, the joint office of the voivode of Transylvania, an office which the two would hold until 1456 and 1458.¹⁰⁷ Effectively, Władysław entrusted them with the pacification of the kingdom, and the pair divided their tasks according to their estates, i.e. Nicholas remained in the west where his main offices and estates were located, while John took upon himself the task of residing in and pacifying Transylvania itself.¹⁰⁸ The two continued to support each other even after the Władysław's death at Varna, and both became the members of the regency council in 1445.¹⁰⁹ Hunyadi's appointment as the governor of the kingdom in the absence of the (re)elected king Ladislaus V only helped Nicholas rise higher.¹¹⁰ They have fought together against the Ottoman forces on a number of

¹⁰³ Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, 30; Wertner, "Nikolaus von Ilok," 257, 271.

¹⁰⁴ Engel, "János Hunyadi," 118; idem, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 283.

¹⁰⁵ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol 3, 172; *The Memoirs of Helene Kottanner (1439-1440)*, trans. and ed. Maya Bijvoet Williamson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998), 40, 42-43.

¹⁰⁶ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 283; Held, *Hunyadi*, 83; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 3, 178-179.

¹⁰⁷ Engel, "János Hunyadi," 117-118; idem, Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája*, 15; idem, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 283-284.

¹⁰⁸ Engel, "János Hunyadi," 117-119; idem, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 283-285.

¹⁰⁹ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 288; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 3, 204-205.

¹¹⁰ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 288-289.

occasions, and John commanded Nicholas's troops while the latter was absent.¹¹¹ Nicholas's influence and power in the kingdom now reached its peak: his identification found in charters from 1445 aptly describe his position in the kingdom. In a charter produced by the council of Csanád county, Nicholas is designated as the *magnificus et potens dominus Nicolaus de Wylak inter cetera wayvoda Transilvanus (!), banus Machoviensis ac Sicularum et Temesiensis comes necnon vicarius et capitaneus Regni Hungariae generalis*.¹¹² He was one of the two most powerful noblemen in the Kingdom of Hungary. The level of John's and Nicholas's cooperation possibly blossomed into friendship, as is pointed in their correspondence, where John calls Nicholas a *frater noster charissimus* and *carissimus dominus* in 1443, either an expression of a symbolic political friendship or a more intimate one.¹¹³

Regardless of their close cooperation for a number of years, their interests obviously diverged soon after Hunyadi assumed the governorship and when Nicholas even made an agreement on mutual defense with the Cillis in 1446.¹¹⁴ He later returned to Hunyadi, and afterwards joined again the baronial league lead by Hunyadi's rivals in 1453.¹¹⁵ Their relationship remained unstable until Hunyadi's death in 1456, after which Nicholas possibly played a certain role in the murder of John's older son, Ladislaus, in the same year, and simultaneously led the royal forces against the mutinying Hunyadi supporters.¹¹⁶

The death of King Ladislaus in 1457 marked a new episode in the relationship between Nicholas and the Hunyadi family, now represented by young Matthias. As one of the most powerful men in the kingdom, Nicholas himself, still the voivode of Transylvania and the ban

¹¹¹ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 3, 308; Szakály, "The Phases" 88.

¹¹² MNL OL, DL 102827; MNL OL, DL 102831. See also: MNL OL, DL 13856.

¹¹³ György Fejér, *Genus, incunabula et virtus Joannis Corvini de Hunyad, Regni Hungariae gubernatoris* (Buda: Typographia Regiae Universitatis Hungaricae, 1844), 55-58; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata* Vol. 3, 191-192.

¹¹⁴ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 3, 208.

¹¹⁵ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 292.

¹¹⁶ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 296-297; Held, *Hunyadi*, 3; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 3, 290; János Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, ed. Denis Sinor, trans. Frank Mantello (Bloomington: Indiana University-Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1991), 197.

of Slavonia and Macsó,¹¹⁷ was considered to be an eligible candidate for the throne, along with the other domestic and foreign magnates. One of these men was Frederick III who later played an important role in Nicholas's future behavior towards Matthias's reign.¹¹⁸ Nicholas, however, attended Matthias's election in Buda in January 1458,¹¹⁹ but, as noted above, soon became one of the leaders of the opposition to Matthias's reign mentioned above. After joining the opposition league with Ladislaus Garai and Szilágyi, it was Nicholas himself who, among others, after a period of waiting, visited Frederick III and proclaimed him King of Hungary.¹²⁰ Nicholas even confirmed his loyalty by becoming the godfather of Frederick's son, the future Emperor Maximilian,¹²¹ by hosting the election party in his own castle at Güssing, and by clashing with Matthias's forces at Körmend.¹²² Matthias soon responded by relieving Nicholas of all of his offices, but the situation settled suddenly after the death of Garai early in 1459 when even Matthias and Nicholas settled all disputes.¹²³ From 1460 onwards, after Szilágyi had been neutralized by falling into the Ottoman captivity, Nicholas was surprisingly benevolent towards Matthias's rule.¹²⁴ The settlement of 1459 as well as their relationship throughout the 1460s indicate mutual collaboration that might have even led to the bestowal of the kingship in 1471, as was suggested in some earlier historiography, a possibility which will be discussed in more detail in the upcoming paragraphs.

Previous scholarship has also noted, in a somewhat prosaic manner, that the bestowal was also a result of Nicholas's arrogant, vain, opportunistic and ambitious personality, i.e. that

¹¹⁷ MNL OL, DL 13425; MNL OL, DL 66592; MNL OL, DL 100667; MNL OL, DL 81284.

¹¹⁸ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 4; Lupescu, "The Election," 191.

¹¹⁹ Lupescu, "The Election," 192.

¹²⁰ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 21-22; Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 81-84; Tomorad, "Europska politika," 173-177.

¹²¹ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 22.

¹²² Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 289; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 24; Lupescu, "The Election," 194; Tomorad, "Europska politika," 176.

¹²³ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 21-24.

¹²⁴ Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 84-85.

the kingship and power of any kind was Nicholas's ever-present wish.¹²⁵ These suggestions which imply Nicholas's ambitious character as one of the factors which influenced not only his relationship with Matthias and the decision on the bestowal, but his general political behavior as well, need to be reexamined as one of the driving forces that led to the bestowal and defined Nicholas's role in fifteenth-century Hungary.

There are several descriptions of Nicholas's personality and texts which can be interpreted to understand it coming from his own contemporaries. The earliest narrative mention of Nicholas comes from the memoirs of Helene Kottanner, queen Elizabeth's lady-in-waiting, a servant famous for stealing the Holy Crown in the midst of the 1439/1440 struggle for the throne.¹²⁶ While Nicholas was still a member of Elizabeth's and Ladislaus's V party, Helene writes that he "came to my gracious lady and said he wanted to serve her grace, and her grace made him Captain of Stuhlweissenburg (Székesfehérvár)."¹²⁷ While the crowning of young Ladislaus was in preparation and the party was riding towards Székesfehérvár, its captain "rode out to meet them with at least five hundred horses".¹²⁸ Nicholas played an important role in the ceremony of crowning itself, and the entries which describe it hint even more to Nicholas's personality.¹²⁹

When they were to celebrate the mass, I had to lift up the young king and hold his grace while they confirmed him. And Nicholas Újlaki... had been appointed to dub the young king a knight and thus make him rightly a true lord of the realm. And the noble count Cillei had a sword all mounted with silver and gold, on which was written the motto: "Invincible"... Then I, Helene Kottanner, took the king in my arms and the Lord of Freistadt [Nicholas] took the sword in his hand and made the king a knight, but he hit him so hard with the sword that I could feel the blow in my arm. The noble queen, who stood beside me, had noticed this, and she said to the Lord of Freistadt: "Az istenért, még ne sértsd!",

¹²⁵ For example in Ćirković, "Властела," 130; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 90; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 107; even in more recent historiography: Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 383.

¹²⁶ For more information on Helene herself see *The Memoirs of Helene Kottanner*, 1-3; James Ross Sweeney, "Helene Kottaner," in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Margaret Schaus (New York-London: Routledge, 2006), 445.

¹²⁷ *The Memoirs of Helene Kottanner*, 40.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

which means: “For God's sake, don't hurt him!”. Then he said: “Nem”, which means: “No”, and he laughed.

Furthermore, Helen notes Nicholas's dissatisfaction with his exclusion from the important talks between Elizabeth and other noblemen, primarily Cilli, by writing: “Meanwhile, many noblemen arrived in Raab. And every time my gracious lady needed to discuss something urgently in a secret meeting, her grace sent for Duke Albert and for Cillei, and this began to aggravate the Lord of Freistadt, Nicholas Újlaki, who became hostile because he was not included in the secret talks too.”¹³⁰ The passage aptly points to one of Nicholas's main characteristics noticed by some previous authors and easily recognizable in his acts, the immaculate ability to change sides and adapt in accordance with his personal ambitions. This personality trait was adeptly described by Lupescu, who pointed out that “Újlaki usually waited for events to develop, and then joined one company or another.”¹³¹ Indeed, Nicholas swiftly changed sides in 1440 and, together with John Hunyadi, became one of the most reliable supporters of Władysław, a move which paid out well since Władysław, as was mentioned, made him voivode, the count of several counties and, indirectly, a member of the regency council.¹³² The episode is described by Thuróczy, another Nicholas's contemporary, in his chronicle:¹³³

And when the ban, Miklós Ujlaki, observed that the groups of King Wladislas' partisans were increasing in size, and that the queen's party was despised, and when he determined that the infant king could then neither help nor hinder him, he defected from the queen, attached himself to the new king, and was more vigorous than anyone else on his behalf.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 49.

¹³¹ Lupescu, “The Election,” 194.

¹³² See previous text. Engel, “János Hunyadi,” 117-119; idem, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 283-285.

¹³³ Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, 111.

Nicholas repeated this strategy of changing sides in the moment when the odds were not favorable, and the other side offered an opportunity of a further advancement, at various times crucial for his career. He did the same in 1446 and later in 1453 to John Hunyadi, his almost lifelong associate, by joining the league of the king's supporters, and again in 1456 when he, possibly, participated in the fate of Ladislaus and Matthias Hunyadi. Again, as was described, he rather quickly changed sides after confirming his loyalty to Frederick III in 1459.¹³⁴ It is noteworthy that Nicholas even suggested to Matthias much later, in 1471, to wait and see the development of the situation and then to deal with the rebels.¹³⁵

Even though Nicholas's opposition to the Hunyadi family and Matthias himself during the 1450s is beyond the purview of this thesis, the following section will focus on interpreting Nicholas moves by looking at his more personal, identity- and character-based motives. As mentioned earlier, Nicholas probably acquainted John Hunyadi while both were young and John, a page of humble Transylvanian origin, served as a *familiaris* of Nicholas's brother Stephen.¹³⁶ Even though they seemingly rose in ranks simultaneously and by mutual help, Nicholas must have felt like and indeed was John's superior, the mentor of a long-standing family page, but eventually lost out in the pursuit of power to John because of John's rise to prominence was based on his military successes, either against the opposition to the king or, more importantly, against the Ottomans.¹³⁷ Therefore, I agree with Engel's interpretation of the pair's early relationship in which he describes Nicholas's effort to employ a known nobleman of lower rank to be his safe loyal ally and operative.¹³⁸ Furthermore, one has to bear in mind that Nicholas came from one of the most powerful, respected and important families of the

¹³⁴ See the previous text. Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 288-290; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 21-24; Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 81-84; Tomorad, "Europska politika," 173-177.

¹³⁵ Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricum Decades IV* (Bratislava: Typis Royerianis, 1744), 443.

¹³⁶ Engel, "János Hunyadi," 118; idem, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 283; Held, *Hunyadi*, 6-11.

¹³⁷ Engel, "János Hunyadi," 118-119.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.

medieval Hungary, a family which was a member of the highest political elite of the kingdom since at least the fourteenth century, and whose members held the offices of palatine, bans and counts for generations.¹³⁹ Nicholas himself was the son of Ladislaus of Ilok, ban of Macsó, and a great-grandson of Nicholas Kont, the palatine of the kingdom during Louis the Great's reign.¹⁴⁰ In 1487, ten years after Nicholas's death, as a testimony of its importance, the family was even included in the list of the *barones naturales* of the Hungarian kingdom, along with other twenty-two families.¹⁴¹ Thus, the element of personal envy, jealousy or arrogance has to be added to whatever practical reasons drove Nicholas to oppose John once he had surpassed his own achievements, power and influence in the kingdom. The continued pursuit of power, then, resumed after Hunyadi's death, and whatever Nicholas's role might have been in the subsequent murder of Ladislaus and the capture of Matthias, Nicholas certainly saw an opportunity to impose himself on a situation when the former page and recent rival was finally gone. Another passage from Thuróczy, even though coming from a writer biased towards Matthias, almost perfectly encapsulates Nicholas's profile discussed above:¹⁴²

When night came and changed the light of day into shadows, Miklós Újlaki, voivode of Transylvania, put on his cuirass and came there with an escort of his followers, eager to see the outcome of an event of such importance. He was at once admitted to the fortress of Buda, for that Miklós Újlaki, the voivode, was no less eager for the fall of count László, and he participated in the plan concocted to murder him. For since he was a man greedy for esteem and burning with no ordinary ambition, and born of the exalted blood of his parents, he took it ill that the late Count János [John Hunyadi] and his sons enjoyed a name and title of greater eminence in the kingdom, and in the eyes of the king. And thereafter he was made to feel for them no ordinary envy.

¹³⁹ Engel, "János Hunyadi," 118; Reiszig, "Az Újlaki-család," 1-13, 65-65; Wertner, "Nikolaus von Ilok," 250-257.

¹⁴⁰ Reiszig, "Az Újlaki-család," 8-9; Wertner, "Nikolaus von Ilok," 252-257.

¹⁴¹ Erik Fügedi, *Ispánok, bárók, kiskirályok: A középkori magyar arisztokrácia fejlődése* [Palatines, barons, oligarchs: The development of the medieval Hungarian aristocracy] (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1986), 385; idem, "The Aristocracy in Medieval Hungary," in *Kings, Bishops, Nobles, and Burghers in Medieval Hungary* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1986), IV, 14.

¹⁴² Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, 197.

Certain phrases of this paragraph, especially “born of the exalted blood”, “he took it ill”, and “put on his cuirass”, when combined with other accounts on Nicholas’s behavior suggest more details about his personality. Much later, in 1476, Nicholas attended Matthias’s and Beatrix’s wedding where he played an important role in the ceremony and had arrived there wearing a cape fully covered in gold and decorated with five hundred diamonds and other precious stones, with an estimated worth of 60 000 golden Marks.¹⁴³ According to the Ferrarese chronicler Ugo Caleffini, while traveling to Rome in 1475, Nicholas arrived at Ferrara followed by one hundred and ten beautiful horses and forty remuda-horses. He also arrived with a beautiful ironbound carriage and six “beautiful and dignified” harnessed horses which he presented to the duke.¹⁴⁴ Much earlier, in 1445, he visited Emperor Frederick III as the representative of the Hungarian estates to settle the disputes over the throne and to request the release of the young King Ladislaus V and the Holy Crown. Nicholas arrived in Vienna only after the emperor personally requested it and produced a *salvus conductus*, and then rode into town followed by five hundred light cavalry and two hundred heavy cavalry.¹⁴⁵ Upon meeting the emperor, he never dismounted his horse, considering himself, at that time at the peak of his power, to be an equal of Emperor Frederick III.¹⁴⁶ Thus, the man who was in a constant pursuit of power, after contributing to the solution of the “Hunyadi issue” in 1459, had to confront, once again, what was certainly for him merely the offspring of his former page:, intensely enjoyed “feeling of being oneself”, and represented and imposed his own identity and power as he perceived it by symbolism and visual representation.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Albert Berzeviczy, *Beatrix királyné (1457-1508)* [Queen Beatrix (1457-1508)] (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1908), 175-176; Gábor Kazinczy, *Mátyás király: Kortársai tanúsága szerint* [King Matthias according to his contemporaries] (Pest: Ráth Mór, 1863), 117-122.

¹⁴⁴ Caleffini, *Croniche*, 102-103; Banfi, “Romei ungheresi del Giubileo del 1475,” 504.

¹⁴⁵ Joseph Chmel, *Regesta chronologico-diplomatica Frederici III. Romanorum Imperatoris* (Vienna: Carl Gerold’s Sohn, 1859), 75, doc. 58; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 3, 206.

¹⁴⁶ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 3, 206. See also: Robert Kurelić, “The Uncrowned Lion: Rank, Status, and Identity of the Last Cilli,” MA Thesis (Budapest: Central European University, 2005), 34.

¹⁴⁷ See Wim Blockmans, “The Feeling of Being Oneself,” in *Showing Status: Representation of Social Position in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Wim Blockmans and Antheun Janse (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 1-16; Raymond van

Such a man, overly aware of his origin, elite social status, and probably frustrated in jealousy was in 1459, as mentioned above, one of the candidates for the Hungarian throne, but lost out to the son of John Hunyadi, young Matthias. Nicholas, thus, missed another chance for acquiring power, which he compensated for by approaching Frederick III, i.e. by applying once more his policy of changing sides in an effort to gain as much as possible by serving the winner, a policy that paid out in the 1440s. However, the swift pacification of Nicholas that occurred before 1460 indicates that Matthias offered him a favorable agreement and that he himself must have lost any hope and interest in Frederick's III party. The deal must have been extremely favorable to meet Nicholas's desires: the desires of a man who just year earlier had hoped for the throne.

Some older historiography mentions that Matthias promised the Bosnian crown to Nicholas much earlier than 1471 to satisfy his ambitions, either already in 1459, in 1464 or some time in between.¹⁴⁸ Matthias must have known Nicholas from his childhood due to Nicholas's earlier close relationship with John Hunyadi, but their relationship is noted in the sources only from 1460s onwards. As soon as the two settled their disagreements in 1459, Matthias returned Nicholas the honor of the ban of Macsó and the ban of Slavonia, the offices he held until 1477 and 1466, respectively.¹⁴⁹ Simultaneously, Nicholas still held the office of the voivode of Transylvania until 1465, but Matthias, in accordance with his politics and, possibly, to control Nicholas, gave all of those offices to Nicholas to hold them jointly with other office-holders.¹⁵⁰ More importantly, Matthias's and Nicholas's cooperative coexistence

Uytven, "Showing of One's Rank in the Middle Ages," in *Showing Status: Representation of Social Position in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Wim Blockmans and Antheun Janse (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 20, 29-34.

¹⁴⁸ Juraj Rattkay, *Memoria regum et banorum Regnorum Dalmatiae, Croatiae et Slavoniae* (Vienna: 1652), 97; Maximilian Schimek, *Politische Geschichte des Königreichs Bosniens und Rama, vom Jahre 867 bis 1741* (Vienna, 1787), 158. See also Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 380; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 107.

¹⁴⁹ See MNL OL, DL 15390; MNL OL, DL 15497; Nicholas is mentioned as the ban of Slavonia for the last time in July 1466, and later no longer holds the office: MNL OL, DL 103696; MNL OL, DL 59548; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 21-24; Klaužer, "Djelovanje Blaža Mađara," 124; Pálosfalvi, "The Political Background," 84.

¹⁵⁰ Nicholas held the office of the ban of Slavonia jointly with Jan Vitovec, then with Szapolyai and again with Vitovec until 1466: MNL OL, DL 49377; MNL OL, DF 231430; MNL OL, DL 44949; MNL OL, DF 288178;

is visible for the first time in sources from 1463, namely the agreement which settled the conflict of Matthias and Frederick III.¹⁵¹ Even though previously Frederick's supporter, Nicholas was present at the ratification as a member of the Matthias's party where he possibly played a role of the mediator.¹⁵² Nicholas also served as the king's mediator in the peace talks with the Ottomans during the decade.¹⁵³ From that point on, his future political career was closely associated with cooperation with Matthias and with Bosnia itself.

Previous scholarship argues that Nicholas was personally present during the counterattack in Bosnia and at the siege of Jajce,¹⁵⁴ but several contemporary sources from between October and December 1463, show that Nicholas was mainly staying in Slavonia performing his duties as a ban.¹⁵⁵ Certainly, his personal participation in the campaign is not completely improbable, or he might have only sent his own troops just as he did exactly twenty years earlier to Matthias's father during the Long Campaign.¹⁵⁶ Just before initiating the campaign of Jajce, during the Ottoman invasion of Bosnia and fighting off the Ottoman troops sent towards Hungary, Matthias spent several days in Ilok, Nicholas's central fortress and estate.¹⁵⁷ He did the same in 1464,¹⁵⁸ in a year when Matthias's army, as mentioned previously, retook the fortresses of Usora region, and when another alteration in the offices held by Nicholas increased his influence in Bosnia.

MNL OL, DL 103674; MNL OL, DL 35100; MNL OL, DF 268180; MNL OL, DL 33815. Nicholas was given firstly Sebastian and John Rozgonyi MNL OL, DL 15432; MNL OL, DL 15506, and then John Pongrácz as a co-voivode in Transylvania: MNL OL, DL 27040.

¹⁵¹ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 299-300; Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 26; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 28-29.

¹⁵² János M. Bak, *Königtum und Stände in Ungarn im 14.-16. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1973), 148-159; József Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, vol. 11 (Pest: Gusztáv Emich, 1855), 63-70, 70-74, docs. 348, 349.

¹⁵³ Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 432-433.

¹⁵⁴ Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 363; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 77.

¹⁵⁵ MNL OL, DL 34900; MNL OL, DL 34877; MNL OL, DL 81542.

¹⁵⁶ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 3, 191-192.

¹⁵⁷ Richard Horváth, *Itineraria regis Matthiae Corvini et reginae Beatricis de Aragonia (1458-[1476]-1490)* (Budapest: História-MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 2011), 74.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

By the end of 1464 Nicholas lost the honor of the voivode of Transylvania,¹⁵⁹ an office he held for more than two decades, but was soon, probably before May 1465, compensated with the title of *comes perpetuus* of Teočak, a town captured by Matthias the year before, situated in the Usora region in northeast Bosnia.¹⁶⁰ This compensation seems to be Matthias's usual *modus operandi*, a policy he applied once again in the same year when he relieved Szapolyai of the honor of the governor of Bosnia and bestowed on him the perpetual countship of Szepes,¹⁶¹ an extremely rare perpetual title which resembled western feudal countships which, to an extent, violated the tradition of the socio-political structure of *honores* in the medieval Hungarian kingdom.¹⁶² The perpetual countship given to Nicholas needs, however, more clarification, since the sources and scholarship argue and show quite different information. All of the most important works on Nicholas, his family or his kingship, both Reiszig¹⁶³ and Wertner,¹⁶⁴ Kubinyi¹⁶⁵ and other authors,¹⁶⁶ argue that he acquired the title of the *comes perpetuus* already in 1448 but either lost and regained it again in 1465, or enjoyed it until his death in 1477. All of these authors, especially Reiszig, Wertner and Kubinyi, base their arguments on a single document kept in the Hungarian National archives,¹⁶⁷ published in the Zichy source collection.¹⁶⁸ Incidentally, all of them used the transcribed and published version of the charter and, it seems, never consulted the original which is the reason why they, and not the king, made Nicholas perpetual count already in 1448. The problem lays in the

¹⁵⁹ Nicholas is mentioned as the voivode of Transylvania for the last time in December 1464: MNL OL, DL 14630, and in January 1465 he is designated only as the ban of Slavonia: MNL OL, DL 107576.

¹⁶⁰ Nicholas is designated as *comes pepetuus* for the first time on May 5, 1465: MNL OL, DL 100746. The sources, thus, refute Kubinyi's previous argument that Nicholas received the title sometime in August in the same year: Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 55.

¹⁶¹ See MNL OL, DF 281757.

¹⁶² Rady, *Nobility*, 31-32, 141-143.

¹⁶³ Reiszig, "Az Ujlaki-család," 10.

¹⁶⁴ Wertner, "Nikolaus von Ilok," 258.

¹⁶⁵ Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 55.

¹⁶⁶ See Mrgić, *Северна Босна*, 123-124.

¹⁶⁷ Under MNL OL, DL 80898.

¹⁶⁸ Ernő Kammerer, *A zichy és vásonkeői gróf Zichy-család idősb ágának okmánytára: Codex diplomaticus domus senioris comitum Zichy de Zichy et Vasonkeo*, vol. 9 (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1899), 180-181, doc. 137.

datatio of the charter, which in the published version reads *anno domini millesimo quadringentesimo quadragesimo octavo*.¹⁶⁹ However, a look at the original reveals that the datation is heavily abbreviated, but reads as *anno d[...] mllmo qadmo sxmo octavo*, i.e. *millesimo quadringentesimo sexagesimo octavo*.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, if any other arguments are indeed needed, it seems strange that Nicholas gained the title already in 1448 and never used it until May 1465, and then began to use it intensively thereafter.¹⁷¹ Even more surprising fact is that some of those historians believed he lost and regained it in 1465, despite the fact that the countship is *perpetuus*, i.e. perpetual, lifelong, never-ending, and could not be lost and regained. Therefore, Nicholas certainly did not gain the title of the perpetual count before 1465, but from then on he used it until his death—for it is indeed perpetual. Thus, as a perpetual title, it even occurs in 1474 when he was already elected as the king: Matthias designates him as *Rex Bosnae, alias comes de Thelchak*.¹⁷²

The hidden agenda behind this bestowal of 1465 becomes apparent by looking at the broader context of the period. As was noted previously, Matthias gave the perpetual countship to Nicholas, and has removed him from the position of the ban of Slavonia the very next year, as was mentioned earlier. At the practically identical time, Matthias removed Szapolyai from the office of the governor of the Kingdom of Bosnia, and gave the administration of Bosnia over to the bans who were usually bans of both Bosnia and Slavonia with Croatia and Dalmatia.¹⁷³ One also has to bear in mind that, as was mentioned, until 1465 Nicholas the ban of Slavonia jointly with Szapolyai, the governor of Bosnia and the ban of Croatia and Dalmatia,¹⁷⁴ and continued to enjoy this office until 1466, one year after Szapolyai's removal.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 181

¹⁷⁰ MNL OL, DL 80898.

¹⁷¹ In almost every single charter produced by his chancery between 1465 and 1471: MNL OL, DL 100746; MNL OL, DF 260093; MNL OL, DL 16258; MNL OL, DF 260097; MNL OL, DF 260095; MNL OL, DL 103694; MNL OL, DF 260100 and many others.

¹⁷² MNL OL, DL 24975.

¹⁷³ See previous chapter.

¹⁷⁴ See, for example: MNL OL, DL 107576.

Therefore, Nicholas briefly co-ruled the Kingdom of Bosnia, i.e. its northeastern part, with Szapolyai controlling its northwestern territory, and has cooperated with him as the ban of Slavonia, the duty he continued to exercise until 1466. He, of course, continued to rule the northeastern part bestowed upon him in 1465 until his death, as the count of Teočak, the king of Bosnia and a quite vague office “the lord of the land of Usora,”—an office mentioned only in his own testament.¹⁷⁵ Thus, by giving him the perpetual countship of Teočak and, possibly, the rulership over Usora, Matthias transferred Nicholas’s resources and power from Transylvania to Bosnia in as early as 1465 and integrated him into the defensive system both as the ruler of the northeastern territory of Bosnia and the ban of Slavonia. Furthermore, Nicholas was at the same time the ban of Macsó, the banate on the southern bank of the Sava closely connected to both Usora and Bosnia, and had his main estates located in Ilok and its surrounding territory situated in southern Hungary along the Danube and Sava.¹⁷⁶ Finally, by 1466, having lost the offices of the ban of Slavonia and voivode of Transylvania, Nicholas remained concentrated almost exclusively on Bosnia and the southern Hungarian territory pertaining to it, i.e. the promising new acquisitions in Usora. Thus he was involved in the Bosnian situation, five years before acquiring the kingship itself.

Another two important sources which reveal the relationship of Matthias and Nicholas at the time and further suggest Nicholas’s focus on Bosnia come from the very same period, 1466 and 1467. Matthias produced a charter dated December 21, 1466, in which he forgives Nicholas all his misconduct, a symbolic reconciliation which must have had a practical reason.¹⁷⁷ The very next year, Matthias issued another charter in which he allows “his loyal and servile” Nicholas to freely and legally trade with the “Turks,” i.e. the occupied Bosnian

¹⁷⁵ MNL OL, DL 17162; Andrić, “Oporuka,” 47.

¹⁷⁶ On estates owned and controlled by Nicholas and the family see Kubinyi, “A kaposújvári uradalom,” 3-27, especially 17-19.

¹⁷⁷ Ferdo Šišić, “Iz arkiva hercega Batthyányja u Körmendu” [From the archives of Duke Batthyány in Körmend], *Vjesnik Kraljevskog hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinskoga zemaljskoga arkiva* 13 (1911): 225-226, doc. 3.

territory, by using his own port on the Sava named Apayoch/Apayach as soon as the peace treaty with the Ottomans is achieved.¹⁷⁸

The information on Nicholas's activities after 1467 and before the bestowal of 1471 are rather scarce, but they do suggest that Nicholas mainly focused on his duties in the territories of Hungary proper, i.e. on his duties as the ban of Macsó¹⁷⁹ and the count of Baranya¹⁸⁰ and Valkó¹⁸¹ counties. This deduction based on the existing sources may not, however, completely fit the reality since Nicholas's activities must have been recorded in the sources which do not exist anymore due to the disappearance of the family's archives which must have existed, as well as the disappearance of many Hungarian diplomatic sources due to the Ottomans-related issues.¹⁸² Thus, it is not entirely justified to assume that Nicholas completely ignored his new acquisitions on the south bank of the river Sava, but the sort and frequency of his activities remain unknown. In February 1471, only months before acquiring the kingship, Nicholas had his last will written, the sole source depicting the situation before the bestowal itself.¹⁸³ The testament reveals once more the role he gained in administrating the northeastern territories of Bosnia, since he fashions himself as the *comes perpetuus de Telchak necnon terre Uzure dominus et Machoviensis banus etc.* Here Nicholas is primarily identified as the administrator of the territory he recently gained and the county-related offices held by him in Hungary proper are secondary. The office (or title) of the lord (*dominus*) of the land of Usora remains, however, quite vague, since the name of the office does not resemble any Hungarian office related to the government of a certain territory *pro honore*, such as the ban, ispán (*comes*) or voivode, but uses a generic Latin noun for lord, manager, owner, master, territorial prince, administrator and

¹⁷⁸ MNL OL, DL 100772; Lajos Thallóczy, Antal Áldásy, ed. *Codex diplomaticus partium regno Hungariae adnexarum: A Magyarország és Szerbia közti összeköttetések oklevéltára 1198-1526* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1907), 257-258, doc. 356.

¹⁷⁹ MNL OL, DL 81687.

¹⁸⁰ MNL OL, DL 80898.

¹⁸¹ MNL OL, DL 17057.

¹⁸² Rady, *Nobility*, 8-10.

¹⁸³ MNL OL, DL 17162; Andrić, "Oporuka," 45-54.

the like.¹⁸⁴ However, a comparison with the sources from the similar period and the usage of the noun therein helps in understanding the title and the possible administrative implications. Besides being used as a traditional way of addressing barons and bishops, the word *dominus*, when designating a lord, owner or administrator of a certain territorial-administrative unit of medieval Hungary, denotes the holder whose possession rights do not depend on the precepts of the *honores*, i.e. whose authority does not indirectly come from the crown, is not temporary (*durante beneplacito regis*) and is officially irreversible (*iure perpetuo et irrevocabiliter*).¹⁸⁵ This seems to be the case, for example, of Martin Frankapan, the perpetual count of Modruš, Krk and Senj,¹⁸⁶ who enjoyed the title of *dominus terrae naturalis*, as recorded in 1462.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, the administrative organization, the archontology and the political-legal characteristics of Usora itself are quite vague, but it is certain that the land was occasionally under the direct Hungarian control and was, during Sigismund's reign, controlled by the appointed *voivode*.¹⁸⁸ The region is both in the source material and in the historiography defined as *zemlja* (land/*terra*) traditionally administered by its voivodes, either of Hungarian or local origin.¹⁸⁹ Lacking any certain information on the socio-political organization of the land itself, we must assume it certainly had a traditional legal and political specificity as one of the Bosnian "lands," using Otto Brunner's term, and was ruled under the Bosnian or

¹⁸⁴ See Antal Bartal, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis regni Hungariae*, s.v. "Dominus directum," "D. feudi," "D. terrestris;" J. F. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis lexicon minus*, s.v. "dominus;" C. T. Lewis, C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "dominus;" *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "dominus."

¹⁸⁵ On the system of *honores* and perpetual titles in medieval Hungary see Engel, "A honor: (A magyarországi feudális birtokformák kérdéséhez)" [The honor: (The question of feudal possessions in Hungary)], *Történelmi szemle* 23 (1981): 1-19; Rady, *Nobility*, 31-32, 81, 132-143.

¹⁸⁶ See MNL OL, DL 83746; MNL OL, DL 37109 in Glagolitic script, he entitles himself as *Mi knez Martin Frankapan*; MNL OL, DL 25991 (the same intitulation) and others.

¹⁸⁷ MNL OL, DL 35637.

¹⁸⁸ Andrić, "Rijeka Sava," 210.

¹⁸⁹ Pavao Anđelić, "O usorskim vojvodama i političkom statusu Usore u srednjem vijeku" [On the voivodes of Usora and the political status of Usora in the Middle Ages], *Prilozi instituta za istoriju u Sarajevu* 13 (1977): 32-42; See also: Pavao Živković, "Usora i Soli: Poprište značajnih historijskih događaja u XIV i XV stoljeću" [Usora and Soli: Places of the important historical events of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries], *Članci i građa za kulturu istočne Bosne* 15 (1984): 33-45.

Hungarian kings' more or less intensive suzerainty of the Bosnian or Hungarian kings, depending on the strength of the ruler.¹⁹⁰

Since his own testament is the only source in which the title appears, the definition of Nicholas's rulership over Usora remains vague. It is impossible to definitively determine its administrative implications or judicial competence, its official bestowal by the king or an implied title adjacent to the title of the count of Teočak. Neither it is known to what extent the traditional local political-legal institutions affected Nicholas's rulership, whether it resembled the former voivodeship, and whether he adapted to them or he implemented some form of "feudal" personal judicial, monetary and political jurisdiction. In my view, the rulership over Usora, mentioned only in the intimate document of his last will, was part of the perpetual countship of Teočak, one of the most important towns, fortresses and strongholds of the Usora region. It might never have been officially bestowed upon Nicholas which means that the title *dominus* lacked official recognition, but the countship of Teočak was a territorial base, i.e. the legal justification needed for making Nicholas the ruler of the northeastern part of the newly acquired Bosnian territory as a co-ruler of the whole of Bosnian territory together with Szapolyai and the bans later. As such, as was mentioned earlier, Nicholas controlled the whole territory of Usora, at least what was left of it after the Ottoman invasion and Matthias's counterattack in 1464. More precisely, Nicholas controlled all of the fortresses retaken during the campaign of 1464 when Matthias's forces retook the already mentioned Teočak, Dobor, Novi, Srebrenik and others. Thus, it can be assumed with certainty that Nicholas controlled at least those towns, but the extent of the territory of the land of Usora mentioned in the testament remains ultimately unknown, which allows only approximate determination of the territory

¹⁹⁰ See Otto Brunner, *Land and Lordship: Structure of Governance in Medieval Austria*, trans. Howard Kaminsky and James Van Horn Melton (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 139-199.

controlled by Nicholas *ultra Savam*. Nevertheless, locating the Usora fortresses retaken in 1464 gives a sufficient picture of such a territory.

Finally, it is important to note once more that the countship of Teočak and the control over Usora were understood completely differently than Szapolyai's governorship or later the bans' jurisdiction in the northwestern parts of Bosnia under Hungarian control. Having that in mind, and combining it with the everything written above, it seems that the centuries-old historiographical works mentioned earlier were not completely wrong in suggesting that Matthias promised the kingship to Nicholas already in 1464. As no original sources survive to confirm this suggestion, it is necessarily speculative. However, it seems certain that Matthias (and Nicholas) transferred Nicholas's resources to Bosnia in 1465 and, since Nicholas lost all major honors in Hungary proper besides the ispánság, he was completely occupied with his Bosnian estate in this period. It is also noteworthy that Nicholas never protested against Matthias's decision to relieve him of the voivodeship of Transylvania or even the banate of Slavonia in 1465 and 1466, respectively. This confirms that the transfer to Bosnia was indeed a mutual agreement and a promising deal for Nicholas, especially since he had no estates in Transylvania and his main estates were connected to the Bosnian territory, as was explained earlier. Whether this promising deal implied the eventual kingship is difficult to ascertain for several reasons. Firstly, no sources definitively confirm this promise; secondly, it remains questionable why Matthias never bestowed the kingship upon Nicholas earlier than 1471, for example, after Szapolyai's governorship ended in 1465. The latter could be explained by Matthias's decision to reward Szapolyai or to control the newly conquered territory by appointing the trusty associate, former treasurer, the participant of the campaigns of 1463 and 1464, a loyal and capable soldier and a later palatine,¹⁹¹ rather than the still dangerous and fickle Nicholas. In connection to this, it could be also explained by Matthias's reluctance to

¹⁹¹ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 314; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 50; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 85-87.

give away the control over Bosnia, a kingdom which was a part of the Holy Crown that he acquired only recently, just after the campaigns in Bosnia.¹⁹²

A claim found in the previous scholarship about Nicholas's participation in the rebellion of 1471 further contributes to the clarification of the issue.¹⁹³ Even though scholars assert that Nicholas had a decisive role in the rebellion led by Janus Pannonius, there is no firm source-based evidence for it. It is, however, certain that Nicholas's bestowal was closely related to the events in 1471.¹⁹⁴ The issue will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter, but it is important to note in regard to the problem of the promise that even Nicholas's role in the events of 1471 and its repercussions can be interpreted in two different ways. On one hand, Matthias could have, as scholars suggest, conferred the kingship on him for the sake of pacifying the rebellious count. On the other hand, he could have done so for the sake of finally fulfilling the promise in an unfavorable situation and granting the control of a large part of the kingdom itself as well as Bosnia to a loyal nobleman who remained peaceful for eleven years and was closely related to Matthias throughout the last decade. Once again, these questions need to be examined in a broader context and the sources have to be revisited.

Antonio Bonfini (1434-1503), Matthias's court historian and Nicholas's contemporary who resided in Hungary from 1486 onwards, reported the events of 1458/1459 and the opposition against Matthias's rule in which, as noted previously, Nicholas played an important role. He wrote about Matthias's policy towards his opponents in his famous *Rerum Hungaricarum decades IV* and has noted there that the king pacified and won over the disobedient nobles by agreeing upon their future and promising them certain positions, titles and privileges. More precisely, he promised the kingship in Bosnia to Nicholas, a certain

¹⁹² See the previous subchapter. Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 301-302; Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 27; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 50.

¹⁹³ See the chapter on previous scholarship.

¹⁹⁴ Ćirković, "Властела", 130; Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 304-305; Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 49-50; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 381; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 107.

lordship over “Pannonia” to Sigismund (Zsigmond) Szentgyörgyi, and the voivodeship of Transylvania to Sigismund’s brother John (János)—all three supporters of Frederick III.¹⁹⁵ A look into diplomatic sources shows that Matthias issued a charter dated June 8, 1464, in which he forgives all misconduct and wrongdoings against himself to both Sigismund and John,¹⁹⁶ a similar document to the one presented to Nicholas two years later. Sources further reveal that both brothers became joint voivodes of Transylvania and the *comites Siculorum* by no later than September 1465, just as promised and testified by Bonfini’s entries.¹⁹⁷ Comparing the pattern to that of Nicholas’s case reveals obvious similarities; as a criterion for the acquisition of the promised position, Nicholas was forgiven all of the bad deeds he had done before Matthias’s coronation, just as the brothers were, and was completely transferred to Bosnia and given a base for the future kingship even before this “reconciliation”. Although the explicit promise made by the king is lacking in the sources, in both cases, that of the Szentgyörgy brothers and that of Nicholas, the retroactive analysis of the sources proves the existence of some kind of a deal, agreement or even promise so plainly mentioned by Bonfini.

Taken together, factors discussed above such as Nicholas’s cooperation with Matthias after 1459/1460, the bestowal of the title of *comes perpetuus* and the transfer to Bosnia, the reconciliation of 1466, the similarities between the Nicholas’s case and that of the Szentgyörgyis, the information by Bonfini as well as some other older historiography,¹⁹⁸ suggest that Nicholas’s role in Bosnia after 1464 was indeed a result of mutual effort, an agreement of some sort. It is, however, impossible to definitively argue whether the promise implied the kingship or another sort of honor or title, but, following the pattern described above, Nicholas seems to have been still awaiting the promised title after the reconciliation in 1466.

¹⁹⁵ Antonio Bonifini, *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades IV* (Bratislava: Typis Royerianis, 1744), 407-409.

¹⁹⁶ MNL OL, DL 15699

¹⁹⁷ MNL OL, DL 203692; MNL OL, DF 277596; MNL OL, DL 203698; MNL OL, DL 27686 and others.

¹⁹⁸ Rattkay, *Memoria*, 97; Schimek, *Politische Geschichte*, 158.

The reconciliation itself had to have a practical reason, i.e. it was the basis on which he returned into the king's grace and, more importantly, established the legal basis for the possibility of the bestowal. In addition, regardless of his bias towards Matthias, Bonfini can be considered a trustworthy source here: on one hand, there is no reason why he or even Matthias would completely construct the story of promise, a story which does not favor neither of them, on the other hand because diplomatic sources confirm his entries as well. Therefore, I do agree with the assumption that Nicholas was "promised" a title or an honor sometime in the early 1460s. Further, I suggest that Matthias's and Nicholas's joint activities in the 1460s lead towards Nicholas's introduction into the Bosnian affairs. Also, considering Nicholas's personality described above, as well as his peaceful cooperation with Matthias even when he lost almost all of his previous honor to gain influence in Bosnia, it seems reasonable that Matthias indeed promised Nicholas a kingship, a title which could satisfy the ambitious lord, Nicholas's characteristic even Bonfini mentions several times.¹⁹⁹ Bearing this in mind, several passages from Nicholas's testament, for example, "omnia et quedlibet castra, castella, ffortalitia, civitates, oppida, posesiones portionesque et iura possessionaria et generaliter omnia bona nostra mobilia et immobilia que habemus et possidemus **vel etiam in futurum habebimus et possidebimus** Laurencio filio nostro... committimus,"²⁰⁰ could be seen not only as a simple chancery formula, but as Nicholas's awareness of his future acquisitions.

¹⁹⁹ Bonfini characterizes Nicholas as *regni vadus* and as a man "qui regnum prae nobilitate generis, opibus et auctoritate nimis anhelerat." In *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 402, 407-409, 433.

²⁰⁰ MNL OL, DL 17163; Andrić, "Oporuka," 48.

Chapter III: Nicholas's kingship

Apart from the fact that it existed, not much more is known about Nicholas's kingship itself, as was noted in the chapter about the previous scholarship. The existing historiography merely more or less correctly reported the information from the several available sources pertaining to the kingship, but has never analyzed its organizational, political, archontological, territorial or other elements in more details. Therefore, by reevaluating the known sources within the contemporary political context and governmental systems, both theoretical and practical, and by introducing new sources never analyzed before, the following subchapters will analyze the nature of Nicholas's kingship from both autonomy-related, defense-related, personal and archontological perspectives. They will define Nicholas's kingship in relation to the Holy Crown, Matthias himself, "international" recognition, and Nicholas's royal policy, both foreign and domestic. The goal of these closing subchapters is to offer an exhaustive analysis of the kingship and to answer the questions asked in the introduction; most importantly, was Nicholas a "real" king?

3.1 Questioning the Authority

It is a well-known and widespread historical fact present in the existing historiography that Matthias bestowed the kingship of Bosnia upon Nicholas in the second half of 1471, precisely during the diet of September 1471 when the king settled all disputes with the rebellious Estates and pacified the opponents by granting and confirming their privileges, estates, honors, titles and so on, and by confirming their rights in relation to the king and the crown.²⁰¹ There is, however, only one source which discusses the bestowal, and the sources

²⁰¹ Ćirković, "Властела", 130; idem, *Историја*, 339; Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 304-305; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 83-86; Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 50; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 380-381; Reiszig, "Az Ujlaki-család," 58; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 107 and others.

originating from the September diet itself do not contain any references to the bestowal, the election or anything in this vein.²⁰² The sole source which does mention the bestowal and discusses it in several lines is a legation letter sent from Ragusa to Ferdinand I of Naples in November 1471.²⁰³ Among other things, mostly focusing on Ottoman issues and the quarrel between Matthias and the Polish prince Casimir, the letter also contains the information that “la Maesta del Re de Hungaria con consenso de tuti e Prelati et Baroni creato Re de Bosina lo Illustrissimo Signor Voyvoda Nicolo de Illoch, el quale se expecta che venga ad Jajcza ad coronarse” [His Majesty the King of Hungary made the Illustrious Lord Voivode Nicholas of Ilok the King of Bosnia with the consent of all the Prelates and Barons, and he is expected to come to Jajce to be crowned].²⁰⁴ Even though the letter is dated two months earlier than the September diet, current historiography unanimously agrees that Nicholas was made king during the diet itself, as was mentioned above. I agree with this proposal for several reasons, mostly because the letter mentions the consent of prelates and barons and because the diet election implies other issues important for establishing the legal authority, a problem which will be discussed below. The other issue is, however, a dubious claim made by certain scholars that Matthias finally made Nicholas the king of Bosnia because of his role played in the rebellion of 1471.²⁰⁵ This claim implies the notion that Nicholas, even though he was promised the kingship, joined the rebellion either because he simply could not wait for the fulfillment of the deal anymore and was frustrated with the king, or because the king made him the king to weaken the rebels.²⁰⁶ However, the conclusions taken for granted about Nicholas’s

²⁰² See the documents produced at the diet which confirm the privileges of the Estates: Ferenc Döry, ed., *Decreta Regni Hungariae: Gesetze und Verordnungen Ungarns 1458-1490* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989), 192-202.

²⁰³ Vičentije Makušev, *Monumenta historica Slavorum meridionalium vicinorumque populorum*, vol. 2, *Monumenta Ragusina* (Belgrade: Štamparija Kraljevine Srbije, 1882), 95-96, doc. 10.

²⁰⁴ Ibid. See also: Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 85-86; Kubinyi, “Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva,” 49-50, 56, note 24; Reizig, “Az Ujlaki-család,” 58; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 107-108.

²⁰⁵ See previous chapter; Ćirković, “Властела,” 130; Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 304-305; Kubinyi, “Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva,” 49-50; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 381; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 107.

²⁰⁶ See Ćirković, “Властела,” 130; idem, *Историја*, 339; Kubinyi, “Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva,” 50; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 381; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 107.

participation in the rebellion seem to be based on the relationship between the king and Nicholas before the reconciliation process of 1460s, as well as on the supposed implication that Nicholas must have been, as Lovrenović and Ćirković put it, “the most dangerous enemy”²⁰⁷ and “the loudest among the oppositionists”²⁰⁸—a conclusion based on anachronistic premises not backed by the sources. Furthermore, regardless of their view on Nicholas’s participation in the rebellion, all authors agree that Matthias was the one who rushed back to Hungary from Moravia to secure his position and to “win over” Nicholas, an “old enemy of his”.²⁰⁹ However, another glimpse into the sources and the broader contextualization, both diachronic and synchronic, allow for another view of the bestowal’s connection to the rebellion and the September diet.

Most importantly, there are no sources which mention and confirm Nicholas’s participation in the rebellion. The most exhaustive source on the rebellion, Bonfini’s writings, never mention Nicholas as a member of the Pannonius-led rebellion,²¹⁰ but only note that Matthias eventually, in the midst of the problem, sent envoys to Nicholas to ask him whether to attack immediately or to wait and observe the development of the situation.²¹¹ In his own manner, Nicholas suggested him to wait, of course.²¹² Only after consulting Nicholas has Matthias convoked the diet to finally deal with the problem, the diet at which Nicholas was made the king.²¹³ Therefore, having this chronology as well as the information from the sources in mind, Matthias never tricked Nicholas into abandoning the rebellion and joining him by offering him the kingship, but has consulted the man who was his close associate and a loyal baron with whom he had closely cooperated for more than a decade. These claims are further

²⁰⁷ Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 381.

²⁰⁸ Ćirković, “Властела,” 130.

²⁰⁹ See Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 84-85.

²¹⁰ Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 441-443.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 443.

²¹² *Ibid.*, See also: Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, 85.

²¹³ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 85-86.

backed by the wider political context of the time and of the rebellion. Matthias has been intensively occupied with the conflict with Poděbrady since 1468, and Poděbrady's death in 1471 introduced a new danger coming from Poland and the Jagiellonian dynasty: the young princes Casimir and Vladislaus, the sons of Casimir IV of Poland.²¹⁴ The former threatened Matthias plans in Bohemia and initiated a conflict which would not be resolved until 1474,²¹⁵ and the latter was invited by the rebellious Hungarian Estates in 1471 to claim the Hungarian crown and overthrow Matthias.²¹⁶ Thus, in such a dangerous situation, Matthias was suddenly threatened to lose not only his future in the north, but the Hungarian kingship itself. In such a desperate situation has Matthias consulted Nicholas and has bestowed the kingship upon him at the diet during which he settled all the disputes with the Estates. It is important to note that both this source²¹⁷ and diplomatic sources inform us that Matthias made Nicholas not only the king of Bosnia, but also granted him the office of the ban of Croatia and Slavonia, as well as control over the estates of the Priory of Vrana.²¹⁸ Matthias has thusly made Nicholas the administrator and the ruler of all of the Hungarian and Hungarian controlled territory stretching along almost the whole borderline with the Ottoman-occupied territories, except for the easternmost ones. It seems, then, quite odd that Matthias would grant such power to his “loudest and most dangerous enemy.”

On the contrary: after consulting him on the possible moves, Matthias entrusted his associate with the important task of administrating and defending the southern borders of the

²¹⁴ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 304-305; Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 33-34; Hoensch, *Matthias Corvinus*, 97-137; Mladen Tomorad, “Vanjska politika Matijaša Korvina od 1464. do 1490.” [Foreign policy of King Matthias Corvinus from 1464 to 1490], *Kroatologija* 2 (2011): 182-188.

²¹⁵ Hoensch, *Matthias Corvinus*, 119-137.

²¹⁶ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 305; Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 34; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 83-88.

²¹⁷ The letter continues: “El dicto Signore è possente in Hungaria et etiam la Mesta Regia gli ha aggiointo el priorato de Aorana et tutto lo Banato de Slovigna et de Croatia.” [The said Lord (Nicholas) is powerful in Hungary, and the Majesty has given him the Priory of Vrana, and the whole banates of Slavonia and Croatia, as well.]; Makušev, *Monumenta historica, Monumenta Ragusina*, 95-96, doc. 10.

²¹⁸ Nicholas is designated as the ban for the first time (in his second mandate) in a charter from December 24, 1471: MNL OL, DL 100821.

kingdom, and has improved his influence and position within the administration hierarchy of the kingdom not to merely satisfy his ambitions and weaken his rebellious nature, but to secure his associate the favorable status and, thusly improve his own strength in the realm. Matthias's previously closest associates, Janus Pannonius, János Vitéz as well as Szapolyai were estranged from the king,²¹⁹ and Nicholas, a former enemy, but recently a close ally, remained one of his rare powerful supporters in 1471, for both his own and the king's interest. It is probable that Matthias did not only consult Nicholas on his moves against Casimir's supporters, but the two have also thoroughly planned Nicholas's future in the administrative reorganization of the realm that was to occur after he quelled the rebellion, as well as finally settled the agreement from the early 1460s. The right time arrived for the fulfillment of the agreement and the execution of the bestowal. By the end of 1471, thus, Nicholas became one of, or was rather restored as one of, the *homines novi* Matthias employed in the new administrative structure of the kingdom, together with Johann Beckenschlager, John Filipec and others.²²⁰ It is not strange, then, that older historiography qualifies Nicholas as Matthias's right hand and the second most powerful man of the king in the 1470s.²²¹

Matthias, though, had another reason for entrusting Nicholas with the administration of the southern territories, including Bosnia, a reason which is interpretable by looking at another bestowal he made in the same year. Simultaneously with making Nicholas the king of Bosnia, he bestowed the title of the despot of Serbia to Vuk Grgurević and restored the despotate which disappeared in 1459.²²² Thus, he reorganized the southern defensive system by effectively creating two buffer rulers one of which was his trusted associate to whom he gave the old

²¹⁹ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 304-305; Grgin, *Počeci rasapa*, 34; Hoensch, *Matthias Corvinus*, 123-127; Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 83-84.

²²⁰ See János Bak, "Hungary: Crown and Estates," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 7, ed. Christopher Allmand (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 721-722; Antonín Kalous, *John Filipec: His life and personality* (Budapest: Central European University, 2000).

²²¹ Ćirković, "Властела," 130. See also: Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 381.

²²² [Sima Ćirković] Сима Ћирковић, *Срби у средњем веку* [The Serbs in the Middle Ages] (Belgrade: Idea, 1995), 247; Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 50; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 381.

defensive offices, the banate of Croatia and Slavonia, as well. By doing so, the king relieved himself of the care for the south of the kingdom and now had his hands free to return his focus to the northern plans. Everybody's plans and ambitions were thusly satisfied.

Once Nicholas has been made the king of Bosnia, a more detailed analysis of the authority he enjoyed is in order, more precisely the sources, the levels and the nature of his royal authority within the Kingdom of Bosnia. Previous scholarship never addressed this issue in detail, and has generically described Nicholas's kingship as merely a titular kingship, an ephemeral episode with no palpable political and administrative effects on the territory of the Kingdom of Bosnia under Hungarian control, but only Nicholas's "feudal" administration of the territory as if it was a private estate.²²³ Kubinyi's important study, the widely accepted authority in the question,²²⁴ as well as other works,²²⁵ interprets the regulations of the contract between Matthias and Nicholas signed in May 1472²²⁶ as the most important source of Nicholas's royal authority, and qualifies it as one stemming from the feudal subordination and the familial connection to Matthias and his mother achieved by Nicholas's adoption regulated by the same document. Thus, according to them, Nicholas's kingship was highly dependable on his vassal status in relation to Matthias, and all of his authority stemmed only from their exclusively personal agreement.²²⁷ However, these authors' focus on the document which regulated the kings' personal relationship left a more important source in the background, even

²²³ See Ćirković, "Властела," 130; Ćorović, *Историја Босне*, 593; Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 51-52; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 382; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 107-109.

²²⁴ Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva." 50-51.

²²⁵ Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 382; Radić, "Povijest velikaškog roda Iločkih," 40.

²²⁶ MNL OL, DL 17316; Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora*, vol. 11, 469-471, doc. 538. See another transcription in Phillip Ernst Spieß, *Aufklärungen in der Geschichte und Diplomatie* (Bayreuth: Zeitungsdruckerei, 1791), 274-275.

²²⁷ Lovrenović even hardly tries to argue that Nicholas's kingship could not have possibly had any other legal basis but the personal agreement between the two kings since the agreement itself refutes any legality contained in the rights of the Holy Crown or the decision of the September diet, as was suggested by Thallóczy. See Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 382, note 288; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 107-108. This interpretation is in my view based on clumsy interpretation and reading of the sources, as well as the authors' personal interests rather than serious analysis, and will be refuted in the following text.

though it was well known and utilised to associate the bestowal with the September diet. It is the already mentioned Ragusan letter, of course.

The above mentioned part of the letter contains crucial information on Nicholas's bestowal, information which is even confirmed by the diplomatic sources. In addition to reporting it, it is crucial to notice, point out and interpret the information that Nicholas was made king "**con consenso de tuti e Prelati et Baroni.**"²²⁸ Furthermore, Nicholas sent a letter to Ragusa the very next year, in 1472, in which he noted that he was burdened with the kingship by "multiplices dominorum Baronum prelatorumque et aliorum catholicorum instantias."²²⁹ Though minor, these pieces of source information contain immense amount of data accessible by interpreting them within the contemporary political system, especially that of the representation and the role of the diet in the fifteenth-century Hungarian politics.

Firstly, it is important to note that Nicholas describes his election as the result of the will of the barons and the prelates, which is itself the result of his own constant care for the defense of the Catholic faith and the Catholics in general, as he noted in the letter.²³⁰ When this information is combined with some of the motives for the rebellion, i.e. Matthias's negligence towards the Ottoman-related problems in the south, the problem the nobility saw as more important than the Matthias's personal quarrels in the north,²³¹ it becomes quite clear that Nicholas's bestowal was an issue of great importance at the diet. Specifically, the nobility required the resolution of the southern issue, and Matthias presented them the resolution in the form of the Kingdom of Bosnia under Nicholas's control, i.e. the functioning defensive system under his command to which they agreed and elected Nicholas the king.

²²⁸ Makušev, *Monumenta historica, Monumenta Ragusina*, 95, doc. 10.

²²⁹ Thallóczy, *Studien zur Geschichte, Urkunden*, 433-434, doc. 91.

²³⁰ Ibid., "Quamvis semper defensio fidei catholice ac populi catholici nobis cure fuerit."

²³¹ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 83.

Secondly, and more importantly, a closer look is necessary at the issue of the election itself, a legal-political criterion which is crucial to the further discussion about the sources and the nature of Nicholas's royal authority. Both the aforementioned information from the sources and historiography indicate that Nicholas's election occurred during the diet sessions in the interest of both sides, Matthias (with Nicholas) and the rebellious Estates. The royal power in the kingdom gradually diminished from the fourteenth century onwards due to the complex of mutual influences coming from both the nobility and the royal centre among which are the disappearance of the Árpád dynasty, the struggle for the throne afterwards and, especially, due to the conflicts after the death of Sigismund and Albert. These developments allowed for the rise of the nobility's influence not only in the royal politics, but in the process of the election of the king as well, a domain in which they had been intensively and practically involved since the beginning of the fourteenth century.²³² Furthermore, by the mid-fourteenth century, the nobility as a corporation considered themselves to be the constituent of the *regnum*, and the mystification of the Holy Crown allowed for the distinguishing between the king and his *corona*, a royal status which implied all regal prerogatives and became crucial for the legality of one's reign.²³³ By default, the *ország*, at least officially unified nobility, together with other corporations perceived themselves as the caretakers of the *regnum*, the totality of the *ország*, counties, territories and regal prerogatives, which they managed through representation in the diet and by electing kings whose full legality was confirmed only by acquiring the visible Crown and its implied invisible characteristics.²³⁴ Therefore, the authority resided not only within the king's prerogatives, but in the nobility, a corporation organized primarily in counties

²³² See Bak, *Königtum und Stände*, 1-61; Fügedi, "The Aristocracy," 8-14; Kubinyi, "Stände und Staat in Ungarn in der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts," *Bohemia* 31 (1990): 312-325.

²³³ See Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 446; Péter, "The Holy Crown of Hungary," 421-510; Rady, *Nobility*, 158-159, 172-173.

²³⁴ Péter, "The Holy Crown of Hungary," 434-435; Rady, *Nobility*, 158-161.

and active in the diet through their representatives, as well.²³⁵ Their influence within the diet markedly increased in the mid-fifteenth century, when the nobility, especially the barons, enjoyed great power due to the series of weak kings.²³⁶

Finally, one also has to bear in mind that, as far as the Hungarian king and the rights of the Holy Crown were concerned, the Bosnian kingship as a vassal kingship depended exclusively on the Hungarian crown, and the Hungarian king was the ultimate ruler of Bosnia through the right of the Holy Crown in this associated kingdom.²³⁷ Therefore, he officially disposed the Bosnian kingship according to his will, and there were no any legal obstacles for Matthias's bestowal of the kingship upon Nicholas.

Thus, Nicholas's royal authority stemmed from the two interwoven and inseparable sources, both from the "ancient" Hungarian king's suzerainty over the Bosnian kingship, and from the consent of the Hungarian *ország*, i.e. their authority in the issues of the regal policy. There is, however, a possibility that only the highest noble and political elite of the Kingdom participated in Nicholas's election (or approval of Matthias's suggestion), since the sources primarily mention "tuti e Prelati et Baroni"²³⁸ and "dominorum Baronum prelatorumque,"²³⁹ phrases denoting the members of the royal council, i.e. the bans and voivodes, the high justices, the king's household officers, and the archbishops and bishops of the realm.²⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Nicholas was elected under the previously described, Ottoman- and rebellion-related circumstances, and his royal authority and legality stemmed from the two aforementioned

²³⁵ Péter, "The Holy Crown of Hungary," 444-448; Rady, *Nobility*, 158-161

²³⁶ Bak, *Königtum und Stände*, 27-53; Fügedi, "The Aristocracy," 8-14; Rady, *Nobility*, 172.

²³⁷ See previous chapter. Ančić, *Na rubu zapada*, 112; idem, "Od zemlje do kraljevstva," 9-88; Ćirković, "The Double Wreath: A Contribution to the History of Kingship in Bosnia," *Balkanica* 45 (2014): 120, 124-133; Engel, "Neki problemi," 58; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 368-369.

²³⁸ Makušev, *Monumenta historica, Monumenta Ragusina*, 95, doc. 10.

²³⁹ Thallóczy, *Studien zur Geschichte, Urkunden*, 433-434, doc. 91.

²⁴⁰ Fügedi, "The Aristocracy," 1-2; Kubinyi, "Stände und Staat," 315.

sources, and not *exclusively* from the agreement achieved by the two kings in 1472, an issue which will be discussed in the following subchapter.

3.2 The “Preconditions of Rule”

The document in question, an agreement which the previous scholarship perceived as the most important if not sole source of Nicholas’s authority, was signed on May 7, 1472 in Buda.²⁴¹ The document is closely related to the election and the bestowal, just as previous scholarship has assumed, but it is not the sole description and arrangement of Nicholas’s authority, and it has to be analyzed on various levels matching the layers it contains.

Firstly, it has to be noted that the document is written in a way that it represents Nicholas’s sole authorship, i.e. that it was not an agreement of two sides, but Nicholas’s sole expression of his duties towards primarily Elizabeth, Matthias’s mother. Its basic purpose is to list Nicholas’s duties towards Elizabeth who accepted him as *filium suum adoptivum et spiritualem*; her adopted and spiritual son.²⁴² Thus, it reassures her that Nicholas will make available all of his estates, towns and fortresses to her, as well as subdue all of his castellans, either in Hungary or Bosnia, to her will. Finally, he obliges himself to defend the queen from both domestic and foreign enemies, both presently and after Matthias’s death, should he die before his mother.²⁴³ Importantly, he simultaneously confirms the same duties owed to Matthias and his Holy Crown, but exclusively *through* Elizabeth and her rights as his spiritual and adoptive mother.

²⁴¹ See the datation of the document: MNL OL, DL 17316; Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora*, vol. 11, 469-471, doc. 538; Spieß, *Aufklärungen*, 274-275. See also: Kubinyi, “Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva,” 50-51.

²⁴² MNL OL, DL 17316; MNL OL, DL 26003; Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora*, vol. 11, 469, doc. 538.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

Secondly, the document itself never even mentions the Bosnian kingship or any of Nicholas's or Matthias's specific duties towards one another as a suzerain and a vassal, besides Nicholas's generic loyalty to Matthias by the mediation of their now shared mother.

To fully understand the purpose and the importance of the document for Nicholas's bestowal, several other diplomatic sources have to be introduced and analyzed. From December 1471, when Nicholas first appears in the sources as the King of Bosnia, to May 1472, he is entitled as the *Rex Bozne electus*²⁴⁴ or *electus Rex Bozne*.²⁴⁵ Then from May 1472 onwards he is designated in the charters as *dei gracia Rex Bozne*²⁴⁶ or as the variant *dei gracia Bosne rex*.²⁴⁷ An important piece of information comes from an undated letter by an associate of Bishop Beckenschlager written sometime in the middle of 1472, where he reports that the Hungarian king made Nicholas the king of Bosnia and that he will be crowned the following Sunday.²⁴⁸ As mentioned above, the Ragusan letter, sent in late 1471, contains the information that "se expecta che venga ad Jajcza ad coronarse," i.e. that Nicholas is expected to come to Jajce for the crowning.²⁴⁹ When these are combined with another important and somewhat hidden source, they reveal the further inputs needed for the interpretation of the document here discussed. The document itself contains an inscription on the *verso*, the back side of the charter, which is barely visible and reads *Obligamen Nicolai (?) wayvod(ae) tempore coronationis sue*,²⁵⁰ which indicates that the coronation itself occurred at approximately the same time as

²⁴⁴ MNL OL, DL 100821.

²⁴⁵ MNL OL, DL 103733; MNL OL, DL 103834.

²⁴⁶ MNL OL, DL 100822; MNL OL, DF 231650; MNL OL, DL 102593.

²⁴⁷ MNL OL, DL 81741.

²⁴⁸ Constantin Höfler, "Fränkische studien IV," *Archiv für Kunde österreichischer Geschichts-Quellen* 7 (1851): 76-77, doc. 60.

²⁴⁹ Makušev, *Monumenta historica, Monumenta Ragusina*, 95-96, doc. 10.

²⁵⁰ MNL OL, DL 17316. Kubinyi reads the inscription as "Certum obligamen cum Nicolao rege tempore coronationis sue;" in "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 56, note 28, and Thallóczy reads it as "Obligamen cum Nicolao rege tempore coronationis sue;" in *Studien zur Geschichte*, 118, note 2. However, although damaged, it is completely clear that the inscription does not contain the word *Certum*, as Kubinyi suggests nor does it contain "cum" or "rege" as both authors assert. There is no difference between the abbreviations written at the end of *Obligam* and *Nico*, so it might as well be *Obligaciones Nicolai* or something similar. However, the third syllable certainly ends with *-am* which indicates *obligamen*. Instead of *rege*, the inscription contains *wayvod(ae)* as Nicholas's designation.

the ratification of the agreement between the two kings. If the abovementioned letter contains correct information, the coronation itself might have happened the very next Sunday, on the *exaudi* Sunday, May 10, 1472. Since no further sources mention the coronation itself, it cannot be definitely dated, but it must have taken place in the first half of May 1472, either on May 7, three days later, or sometime in between. The same could be said about the place of the coronation; the document is produced in Buda “at the time of the coronation” so it is probable that the crowning took place in Buda too, more probable than what the Ragusan anticipated months earlier when they expected Nicholas to come to Jajce.²⁵¹

The dates and the sources which inform us that Nicholas enjoyed the title *dei gratia rex Bosnae* only after May 1472 indicate that the agreement between the two kings is the final element of the bestowal, the criterion needed for the coronation which itself gave Nicholas the full authority as the king of Bosnia. Even though some earlier works question whether the coronation itself happened,²⁵² the switch from the term “elected king” to the “king by God’s grace” confirms that the crowning ceremony and the bestowal of the royal rights upon Nicholas by adorning him with the royal insignia and anointing him indeed happened.²⁵³ The ceremony itself must have resembled the contemporary Hungarian coronation ceremony based on the Roman *ordo*.²⁵⁴

Further analysis of the document points to its multiple purposes. Contrary to what the conclusions of the existing scholarship suggest, the document does not resemble any kind of “feudal commendation”. However, as demonstrated above, it was certainly needed for the

²⁵¹ For other interpretations see Klaić, “O krunisanju ugarskih Arpadovića za kraljeve Dalmacije i Hrvatske (1091.-1207.)” [On the coronations of the Hungarian Árpáds for the kings of Dalmatia and Croatia (1091-1207)], *Vjesnik arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu* 8 (1905): 114; Kubinyi, “Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva,” 50; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 380-381; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 108.

²⁵² See Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 108.

²⁵³ For more information on the importance of the crowning and the royal prerogatives bestowed by it see Walter Ullman, *Principles of Government and Politics in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen & Co., 1966), 117-137.

²⁵⁴ Fügedi, “Coronation in Medieval Hungary,” 159-189.

finalization of the bestowal and investing Nicholas as a completely legal Bosnian king. Therefore, the agreement primarily functions as a personal agreement between two men, rather than the two kings, and finally secures Nicholas's fidelity towards Matthias, a goal that had been worked on for more than a decade.

This claim is further corroborated if another layer of the document is analyzed thoroughly. Nicholas, as was mentioned, primarily promises his loyalty to Matthias's mother, and only indirectly to him, so that he, crucially, promises to help and support her even in the event of Matthias's death. When this information is combined with another important layer of the agreement which effectively makes the two men adoptive brothers, the lack of any elements of a true "feudal" subjugation, as well as Nicholas's promise of fidelity to Matthias and his crown, it suggest that this agreement functioned as Nicholas's promise to support the king in his kingship and his mother's regnal and dynastic rights in the future, as opposed to the possible rebellions and disobedience similar to those the king experienced from 1458 onwards. In addition, the adoption might have seemed favorable for Nicholas and for his own future possible royal ambitions in Hungary. Therefore, Matthias secured the perpetual support of a powerful man whom he was about to make even more powerful and autonomous, almost regardless of the office he was about to confer upon him. The document, thus, was not a "feudal" basis upon which Nicholas's kingship was legally justified, it even had only microscopic elements hardly comparable to the "commendations" of previous Bosnian kings, but was Matthias's personal "insurance policy." Finally, the form of the document and its content confirm that it was neither a confirmation of Nicholas's vassalage in relation to the Hungarian king, since a real document which represents such a subjugation would be produced, nor merely an adoptive contract.

Nicholas's consent with such an agreement, and the five-months gap between the election and the coronation confirm that the document was being well and long prepared, as well that it was a mutual effort and a compromise. However, it was never meant to be a "regulation of Nicholas's legal status towards Matthias" as a king of Bosnia, as Kubinyi and others suggest.²⁵⁵ That is the reason why they found such a "regulation" odd in comparison to the previous regulations of Bosnian kings. This was not one of those, at least not completely. The dependence of the coronation confirms, finally, that the two agreed that they will produce such an agreement probably even before the election itself happened, a criterion Matthias must have set to Nicholas during their talks which Bonfini mentions.

That is why it was merely a "precondition" of rule, and not its legal definition. The gap, furthermore, suggests that the decision about the fulfillment of Matthias's promise and a long standing agreement with Nicholas was hastened by the dangers coming from the rebellious nobility and prelates, which further strengthens the claims above about the (un)favorable conditions which initiated the bestowal itself.

3.3 The Rulership

That Balázs Magyar was last mentioned as the ban of Bosnia on June 25, 1471²⁵⁶ and lost the office of the ban of Slavonia by November in the same year²⁵⁷ suggests that Nicholas must have effectively taken over the administrations of Bosnia and Slavonia by that time, i.e. by the beginning of December 1471 the latest. As mentioned above, Nicholas is identified as the ban of Slavonia for the first time on December 24, and as the king in the very same

²⁵⁵ Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 50; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 381-382.

²⁵⁶ MNL OL, DL 100815. See also: Klaužer, "Djelovanje Blaža Mađara," 125-126.

²⁵⁷ See MNL OL, DL 100820; MNL OL, DL 100818.

charter.²⁵⁸ Historians astutely note that this way Nicholas occupied the same offices that were once held by Szapolyai or recently by Magyar,²⁵⁹ but the already existing eastern estates acquired by Nicholas in 1465 are always forgotten. Nicholas controlled a much larger territory than Governor Szapolyai, since Nicholas already controlled the northeastern Bosnian territory already in 1465 when Szapolyai controlled only its northwestern parts. Nevertheless, by assuming the title, Nicholas took over the territory of the whole Hungarian-controlled Bosnian kingdom, more specifically the territory that remained under the control of the bans of the Kingdom of Bosnia from 1464 onwards, probably together with the counties of Sana and Vrbas, a territory he certainly controlled either as the king or the ban of Slavonia.²⁶⁰ It was argued in the second chapter that Nicholas took over the existing kingdom (and not banate) of Bosnia as its king, and no alterations of Bosnia's status were needed, especially not the "creation" of the "so-called" Bosnian kingdom as Horváth argues.²⁶¹

Previous scholarship, as noted in the literature review above, strongly argues that Nicholas never controlled Jajce or the part of Bosnia which was earlier under Szapolyai's and bans' jurisdiction, i.e. the northwestern territory retaken by Matthias's army in 1463. Thallóczy claims in both his works, especially in the *Studien*, that Nicholas only controlled Teočak with its surrounding territory stretching to Zvornik, meaning the territory which he controlled since 1465, because Jajce continued to be ruled by the bans.²⁶² This claim perpetuated in other works,²⁶³ and has contributed to the misinterpretation of Nicholas's reign. However, as Kubinyi points out, Nicholas mentioned his Bosnian castellans as early as May 1472 in his contract with Matthias discussed above.²⁶⁴ The source does not, of course, confirm Nicholas's direct rule

²⁵⁸ MNL OL, DL 100821.

²⁵⁹ Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 50.

²⁶⁰ See Rady, *Nobility*, 137; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 128.

²⁶¹ Horváth, "The Castle of Jajce," 94.

²⁶² Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 108; idem, *Studien zur Geschichte*, 118-119.

²⁶³ See Đuro Basler, "Stari gradovi u Majevidi i Trebovcu" [Old towns in Majevidica and Trebovac], *Članci i građa za kulturnu istoriju istočne Bosne* 9 (1972): 63; Ćirković, "Властела," 130.

²⁶⁴ MNL OL, DL 17316; MNL OL, DL 26003; Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora*, vol. 11, 469, doc. 538.

over Jajce, but another charter produced by his chancery the very next year, on August 14, 1473, contains an order to “fidelibus nostris universis et singulis castellanis vicesgerentibus ubivis et in quibusvis castris nostris in ipso Regno nostro Bozne existentibus,” which requires them to deliver the goods from their Bosnian fortresses to “egregio Ambrosio Therek, **provisori curie nostre de Jaycza**,” and not to keep them for themselves.²⁶⁵ Furthermore, Nicholas confirms by two charters produced on February 2 and September 8 1477, that John (János) Surány, “provisor curie nostre de Wylak”²⁶⁶ delivered the goods to Jajce and to Ilok from elsewhere.²⁶⁷ Another charter, seemingly unrelated to Nicholas or his Bosnian kingship, issued by the incumbent ban of Slavonia, Peter Bocskai,²⁶⁸ on August 10, 1476 offers further crucial information for evaluating Nicholas rule over Jajce. The charter contains information that a certain claimant Ladislaus is not able to attend the court since he is “in castro Jaycza in serviciis domini Nicolai regis Bozne.”²⁶⁹

The archontological organization of Nicholas’s realm can only be partially reconstructed by minutely analyzing the sources, both those produced in his own and other chanceries. Kubinyi points out that Nicholas employed his long-standing *familiares* who served in his Hungarian estates, towns and fortresses into the newly acquired royal administration.²⁷⁰ This claim can be backed by the example of Ambrose *Therek* (Török), a man who was in Nicholas’s service as early as the late 1450s,²⁷¹ but his strong claims that Nicholas never used anybody but his existing retainers within the Bosnian administration, that the elementary administrative units of the kingdom were the estates, and that it was ruled jointly by Nicholas and a council composed of his relatives,²⁷² are not at all supported by the sources and are a

²⁶⁵ MNL OL, DL 88544.

²⁶⁶ MNL OL, DL 95397; *Collectio Kaprinaiana*, series B, vol. 50, 78-79, doc. 43.

²⁶⁷ *Coll. Kapr.* series B, vol. 50, 73-74, doc. 39; 78-79, doc. 43.

²⁶⁸ See Klaužer, “Djelovanje Blaža Mađara,” 126-172; Pálosfalvi, “Slavonski banovi,” 49.

²⁶⁹ MNL OL, DL 102190.

²⁷⁰ Kubinyi, “A kaposújvári uradalom,” 29; idem, “Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva,” 51-52; Rady, *Nobility*, 117.

²⁷¹ Kubinyi, “A kaposújvári uradalom,” 29; Rady, *Nobility*, 117.

²⁷² Kubinyi, “Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva,” 51-52.

construct of logical informal fallacy. The sources do not contain information about any of Nicholas's Bosnian castellans by name except the two already mentioned, Török and possibly Surány, former being certainly the administrator of Jajce, even though a multitude of castellans administering a multitude of fortresses and towns are confirmed by Nicholas himself in the order he gave in 1473 by promouncing "fidelibus nostris universis et singulis castellanis vicesgerentibus ubivis et in quibusvis castris nostris in ipso Regno nostro Bozne,"²⁷³ as well as in his contract with Matthias, where he mentions "Castellani vero Castrorum nostrorum ubivis in dicto Regno Hungarie et eius partibus sibi subiectus, et in Bozna existentium."²⁷⁴ Therefore, even though it would only seem rational, it is not certain whether Nicholas used his old retainers exclusively, an assumption which is not only refuted by the lack of sources and information contained in the discussed charters, but by common sense itself, since some kind of the interaction and cooperation with the local existing administrative system, whatever it may be, must have existed. It was at least necessary for the normal and functioning tax collecting, an element of Nicholas's administration which certainly functioned since it is confirmed by the charters mentioning Nicholas's provisors.²⁷⁵ Any form of Kubinyi's *council of relatives* is not confirmed by the sources whatsoever, and his assumptions on the role of Nicholas's retainers recorded in his testament is completely constructed as well.²⁷⁶ The only Nicholas's retainer which was mentioned in the testament as the castellan of Orahovica and possibly had an important role within the Kingdom of Bosnia is Nicholas de Dombo.²⁷⁷ The other one, Thomas Pázmány, mentioned in the testament as one of the castellans of Ilok,²⁷⁸ and believed by Kubinyi to have had an important role in the kingdom,²⁷⁹ indeed became one of Nicholas's

²⁷³ MNL OL, DL 88544.

²⁷⁴ MNL OL, DL 17316; MNL OL, DL 26003; Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora*, vol. 11, 469, doc. 538.

²⁷⁵ See above. MNL OL, DL 88544; MNL OL, DL 95397; *Coll. Kapr.* series B, vol. 50, 73-74, doc. 39; 78-79, doc. 43.

²⁷⁶ Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 51.

²⁷⁷ See MNL OL, DL 17162; Andrić, "Oporuka," 48.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 51.

closest associates; together with his family, he followed the king to Rome in 1475,²⁸⁰ and retained the office of the castellan of Ilok, Nicholas's central estate, even long after Nicholas's death serving his son, Lawrence.²⁸¹ However, he is never mentioned as an office-holder in the Kingdom of Bosnia in the sources, and, as a long-standing castellan of Ilok, he probably never enjoyed such an office. Nicholas de Dombo, on the other hand, is mentioned as the *palatine* of the Kingdom of Bosnia in 1477,²⁸² an office already existing in the Kingdom of Hungary as the highest-ranking officer and the king's representative.²⁸³ From 1471 to 1473, when Nicholas enjoyed the office of the ban of Slavonia jointly with the kingship in Bosnia, Dombo served as his *vicebanus*.²⁸⁴ Another one of Nicholas's associate known by name and employed into the royal administration was Stephen (István) Isztrói,²⁸⁵ Nicholas's chancellor who exercised the office regardless of Nicholas's titles and political status.

These several scarce pieces of information, therefore, are not enough for a detailed analysis of the administrative system of Nicholas's kingdom, and certainly not for the strong claims made by Kubinyi about the structure and institutions of Nicholas's reign, especially since he must have employed a much larger number of retainers and officers due to the number of fortresses and towns he controlled, which is indicated by the sources discussed above. Nevertheless, these pieces of information do indicate a certain pattern not much different from the usual system of administering private estates. Bosnian fortresses and towns under Nicholas's rule were obviously controlled and administered by castellans, officers he mentions

²⁸⁰ Fedeles, "Die Rohmwallfahrt," 111.

²⁸¹ See MNL OL, DL 102207, a charter produced in 1481 in which Thomas is still mentioned as "egregius Thomas de Paczman, castellanus de Wylak."

²⁸² MNL OL, DL 33432; Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 52.

²⁸³ On the office of palatine in medieval Hungary see Fügedi, "The Aristocracy," 1-14; Rady, *Nobility, passim*.

²⁸⁴ See MNL OL, DF 231600; MNL OL, DL 103733; MNL OL, DL 100822; MNL OL, DL 103740 and other documents produced by Nicholas as the ban of Slavonia from 1471-1473.

²⁸⁵ Augustinus Theiner, *Vetera monumenta historica Hungariam sacram illustrantia* Vol. 2 (Rome: Vatican, 1860), 447-448, doc. 632. See also: Fedeles, "Die Rohmwallfahrt," 112; Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 52.

in both the command given to them in 1473²⁸⁶ and in his contract with Matthias from 1472.²⁸⁷ The office of the *provisor curiae* given to Török and Surányi in Jajce and Ilok, respectively, and the information that Nicholas orders the castellans to hand over the goods and taxes to Ambrose,²⁸⁸ as well as the information that Surányi delivered the goods to Jajce,²⁸⁹ suggest that the administrators of Nicholas's *curiae* enjoyed a higher place in the archontological hierarchy than the castellans, and were, at least in the domain of taxes and economy, the representatives of the king himself, and acted on his behalf.

The only officer superior to them was probably the palatine, Nicholas de Dombo, a representative of the king who administrated the kingdom in any given domain: an officer who might have exercised the royal judicial competence on the king's behalf, a task modeled on the roles of the Hungarian palatines. However, since no sources confirm such a competence, it remains only a possibility.

Sources reveal that Ilok, Nicholas's and family's main town, a town whose religious, political, and economic importance rose since the death of John of Capistrano in 1456 after which Ilok became an important pilgrimage centre,²⁹⁰ enjoyed a certain centrality in relation to Nicholas's Bosnian territories. The confirmation produced in relation to Surányi's task from 1477 shows that all of the goods collected, namely "de et super pecuniis, frugibus, farinis, vinis, lardis, salibus" [money, crops, flour, wine, fat, salt], were transmitted to Jajce probably from Ilok, since Surányi was the provisor of Ilok's *curia*.²⁹¹ The Bosnian centre was, of course, Jajce, since all of the goods from the Bosnian fortresses and towns, as was said earlier, were collected

²⁸⁶ See above. MNL OL, DL 88544.

²⁸⁷ MNL OL, DL 17316; MNL OL, DL 26003; Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora* Vol. 11, 469, doc. 538.

²⁸⁸ MNL OL, DL 88544.

²⁸⁹ *Coll. Kapr.*, B series, Vol. 50, 78-79, doc. 43.

²⁹⁰ On the process of canonization of Saint John of Capistrano and its importance for medieval Ilok see Andrić, *Čudesas*.

²⁹¹ *Coll. Kapr.*, series B, vol. 50, 78-79, doc. 43.

there.²⁹² Therefore, the two towns and *curiae*, together with their *provisores*, created an axis upon which Nicholas's control over Bosnian territory under his rule was established.

Even though Nicholas's administrative pattern in Bosnia resembled the system by which he administered his private estates,²⁹³ it is an overly bold conclusion made by Kubinyi²⁹⁴ and repeated by others²⁹⁵ that Nicholas behaved towards Bosnia as if it was part of his personal belongings, especially since such a conclusion is based on the assumption that he never employed locals into his administration. Lovrenović's attempted contribution to such an interpretation of Nicholas's behavior towards Bosnia, which he backs by the line from Nicholas's letter to Ragusa from 1472 mentioning *Regni nostri Bozne*,²⁹⁶ is especially out of place.²⁹⁷ Lovrenović himself dedicates a whole subchapter to point out that Matthias calls the Kingdom of Bosnia "his Kingdom of Bosnia," Jajce "his town of Jajce" and the Bosnian nobility "his faithful" already in 1463,²⁹⁸ but never argues that Matthias saw Bosnia as his "private estate". Needless to say that Matthias calls even the Kingdom of Hungary *regnum nostrum* in a myriad of charters,²⁹⁹ just as, for example, does King Stephen V,³⁰⁰ Albert,³⁰¹ Ladislaus the Posthumous,³⁰² and even Frederick III.³⁰³ A chancery formula which might in certain circumstances contain a number of symbolic and palpable meanings, does not, however, make those kings owners of the kingdom as if it was their private estate, nor did they try to

²⁹² MNL OL, DL 88544.

²⁹³ See Kubinyi's seminal work on that issue: "A kaposújvári uradalom," 3-44.

²⁹⁴ Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 52.

²⁹⁵ See Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 382.

²⁹⁶ Thallóczy, *Studien zur Geschichte, Urkunden*, 433-434, doc. 91.

²⁹⁷ Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 382.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 368-369.

²⁹⁹ See, for example: Fejér, *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*, vol. 5 (Buda: Typographia Regiae Universitatis Hungaricae, 1829), 139-143; Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora*, vol. 10, 598-599, doc. 292; vol. 11, 23-24, doc. 327; 26-27, doc. 329; 332; 30-33, doc. 332; 35-36, doc. 334; 48-49, doc. 340; 154-156, doc. 386.; 355-357, doc. 482, and countless others.

³⁰⁰ Fejér, *Codex diplomaticus*, vol. 5, 28-29.

³⁰¹ Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora*, vol. 10, 14-15, doc. 5.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 356-363, doc. 175.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 621-625, doc. 305.

impose such a meaning, not to mention the socio-political implications of the *regnum* discussed briefly above.

As the king of Bosnia, Nicholas had every right to distribute the offices according to his own will, a right that even the king of Hungary enjoyed in granting the offices of bans, voivodes, palatines and others as *honores*.³⁰⁴ He had a group of thrustworthy men, just as the Hungarian or any other king had, to whom he gave the offices within the Kingdom of Bosnia. However, the complexity of the existing contemporary local administrative and judicial traditions, inaccessible for modern eyes because of the lack of sources, must have produced an amalgam of Nicholas's judicial and other royal prerogatives and the local traditional specifics in the cases of their mutual interests. It is, then, completely unduly to equalize a complex societal system the Kingdom of Bosnia was with Nicholas's private estates, regardless of their size.

By the end of 1473 Nicholas lost the office of the ban of Slavonia and Croatia, an office he held jointly with Damian (Damjan) Horvat.³⁰⁵ Current historiography claims that Nicholas, by losing the office in the banate, lost the estates of the priory of Vrana, i.e. the office of their governor, in the same year, as well.³⁰⁶ Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski does not even mention Nicholas as the governor of the priory's estates in his monograph,³⁰⁷ nor does more recent historiography,³⁰⁸ listing quite different governors, but both "skipping Nicholas. According to the Ragusan letter to Ferdinand I from November 1471, beside the kingship and the banate

³⁰⁴ Rady, *Nobility*, 132-143.

³⁰⁵ Nicholas is last mentioned as the ban of Slavonia in a charter from November 1473: MNL OL, DL 103745. See also: Klaužer, "Djelovanje Blaža Mađara," 126; Pálosfalvi, "Slavonski banovi," 49.

³⁰⁶ Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 53, 57, note 61.

³⁰⁷ Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, *Priorat vranski sa vitezi Templari i Hospitalci sv. Ivana u Hrvatskoj* [The Priory of Vrana and the Knights Templar and the Hospitallers of St John in Croatia] (Zagreb: Dionička tiskara, 1886).

³⁰⁸ For example, Ljubica Andrijanić, "Ivanovci u hrvatskim zemljama u srednjem vijeku," [Knights of Saint John in Croatian lands in the Middle Ages], *Povijesni zbornik: Godišnjak za kulturu i povijesno nasljeđe* 2 (2008), 241-255; Lelja Dobronić, *Viteški redovi: Templari i Ivanovci u Hrvatskoj* [Military orders: Templars and the Knights of Saint John in Croatia] (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1989); Joško Zaninović, "Ivanovci (Malteški vitezovi) na tlu Hrvatske do 1526. Godine," [Knights of Saint John (Knights of Malta) in Croatia until 1526], *Croatica Christiana periodica* 31 (1993), 25-41.

Nicholas was given the estates of the priory of Vrana, as well: a bestowal noted in historiography.³⁰⁹ Nevertheless, Kubinyi bases his own claims on contemporary historiography which does mention Nicholas, yet fails to define his governorship in more detail by mentioning Bartholomew Berislavić (Bertalan/Bartolomej Beriszló) as the new governor from 1475.³¹⁰ Thus, he concluded, lacking any sources, that Nicholas must have lost the estates simultaneously with losing the office of the ban of Slavonia. However, all of the authors lacked an important source, a charter seemingly not directly connected to Nicholas, but important for both the history of the priory and the analysis of Nicholas's status after 1473. The charter in question was issued by King Matthias on December 27, 1477 after Nicholas's death, a fact that even the charter itself notes by saying "qdam Illustri Nicolao Regi Regni Bozne," an important precondition for the legal act performed by the charter.³¹¹ By producing it, Matthias bestows the estates of the priory upon "venerabilis Bartholomeus de Zenthgyergh" for his role in fighting the enemies of the "religionis Regnorumque et terrarum corone hungarie," meaning both the Ottomans and Frederick III.³¹² Furthermore, Matthias notes that the estates were returned to the King "per mortem ipsius condam Nicolai Regis" who held all the castles, fortresses, cities, towns, villages and other possessions for the duration of his life.³¹³ Thus, only then had Matthias the right and an opportunity to give the same estates in the same manner to Bartholomew who was supposed to enjoy the estates for his lifetime. It is quite clear, then, that Nicholas did not lose the priory's estates in 1473, but continued to control them until 1477, for the whole duration of his kingship.

³⁰⁹ Makušev, *Monumenta historica, Monumenta Ragusina*, 95-96, doc. 10. See Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 85; Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 50; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 381; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 108.

³¹⁰ Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 53, 57, note 61; Reiszig, "A magyarországi János-lovagok a Hunyadiak korában" [The Hungarian Knights of Saint John in the Hunyadi period], *Századok* 52 (1918), 22-55, especially 45-46.

³¹¹ MNL OL, DL 18001.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

Nicholas's regnal activities are firstly noted in his contract with Matthias from May 1472, even though he was identified as the (elected) king of Bosnia in the sources months earlier, as discussed above. The first action of an autonomous "foreign" royal policy is expressed in Nicholas's abovementioned letter to Ragusa from October the same year.³¹⁴ Both Thallóczy and later Kubinyi recognized this letter as a of Nicholas's future foreign policy to the Ragusans which was, allegedly, to focus on fighting the Ottomans and liberating the rest of the Bosnian territory.³¹⁵ Uncritically trusting the reliability of these two scholars, others merely repeat their claims and argue that Nicholas's primary task, both personal and given by Matthias, was to liberate the rest of the Kingdom of Bosnia and to "protect the religion."³¹⁶ In Thallóczy's writings this claim is based on a passage from Nicholas's letter reading: "Quamvis semper defensio fidei catholice ac populi catholici nobis cure fuerit tamen multo magis nunc cum onus regiminis afflicti Regni Bozne and ratione protectionis prefati Regni nostri Bozne quam catholice fidei zelo in maius succreverunt."³¹⁷ Neither Thallóczy nor Kubinyi enlisted other sources to justify Nicholas's "offensive" policy towards the Ottomans and the occupied Bosnian territory. Even though it does contain an expression of "care" towards Catholics and the Kingdom of Bosnia, this part of the letter is rather a symbolic *arena* than a detailed plan of his future activities, especially if the first half of the letter is taken as a whole. It reads:³¹⁸

Quamvis semper defensio fidei catholice ac populi catholici nobis cure fuerit, tamen multo magis nunc cum onus regiminis afflicti Regni Bozne. Non tam cupiditate altarum dignitatum quam per multiplices dominorum Baronum prelatorumque et aliorum catholicorum instancias suscepimus cure nostre haud tam ratione protectionis prefati Regni nostri Bozne quam catholice fidei zelo in maius succreverunt.

³¹⁴ Thallóczy, *Studien zur Geschichte, Urkunden*, 433-434, doc. 91.

³¹⁵ Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 52; Thallóczy, *Povijest*, 109.

³¹⁶ See Ćirković, *Icmopuja*, 339; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 382, and others.

³¹⁷ Thallóczy, *Studien zur Geschichte, Urkunden*, 433-434, doc. 91.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

It is quite clear from the text that the first part of the letter is really a justification of his election and the bestowal itself. Furthermore, even if the symbolic expression of care towards the Catholics and Bosnia contains any practical defensive plans, the offensive actions towards the Ottomans are not even mentioned. Therefore, the letter itself cannot be taken as an expression of Nicholas's practical and detailed plans, although it does contain a general statement of his regnal role—the defense of Bosnia, and the indirect defense of the southern Hungarian borders, a task which was implied to be part of the kingship and one of the criteria for the election itself, as discussed in the section on the authority above.

The second half of the letter, however, contains important information. The purpose of the letter was Nicholas's attempt to establish a constant relationship with Ragusa through a representative of his, who probably even carried the letter itself. By sending the letter, Nicholas suggested *Gallus de Gaara* as his representative, a man whom they should hear and use as a mediator in their mutual relations.³¹⁹ The visit of Nicholas's ambassadors is also registered in the Ragusan *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, where they are first noted in an entry from December 5, 1472 which contains further crucial information.³²⁰ The entry contains the information that the answer to the ambassadors should be delayed until they return from “cherzech Vlatko et ab Juano Cernoevich.”³²¹ The ambassadors are once more noted in the *Acta* on December 21 the same year, where they are identified as the “ambassatori de Nicolai Regis Bosne,” when they were given a certain answer to the relation probably sent on October 14.³²² However, even though the action of giving an answer is noted in the entry, the contents of the Ragusan senate's answer to the king is not known. Nevertheless, the information on their visit to both *herceg*

³¹⁹ Ibid. See also: Atanasovski, *Пад Херцеговине*, 87; Kubinyi, “Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva,” 52.

³²⁰ Državni arhiv u Dubrovniku [State archives in Dubrovnik] (Henceforth: DAD), *Acta Consilii Rogatorum* (Henceforth: Cons. Rog.), 21, fol. 277r.

³²¹ The full entry reads: “Prima pars est de induciando super responso faciendo ambassatori Regis Bosne usque ad reditum suum a cherzech Vlatko et ab Juano Cernoevich.” Ibid. The text is heavily abbreviated and the full version is given here.

³²² DAD, Cons. Rog., 21, 279v.

Vlatko Kosača and Ivan Crnojević, the lord of Zeta, both strong possible anti-Ottoman allies,³²³ which took place sometime between December 5 and 21 1472, sheds light on Nicholas's Ottoman and defense policy, more than the original letter to Ragusa itself does.

Nicholas must have contacted Peter (Petar) Zrinski at approximately the same time, since he visited Venice in December 1472 and, among other things, acted as Nicholas's legate in supplicating for the republic's help in the retaking the the Bosnian kingdom, "ad acquisitionem regni predicti", a request which the republic refused suggesting Nicholas to attack soon since the Ottomans are occupied with the war against the republic itself.³²⁴ It is important to note that Peter was a member of a recently organized defensive alliance between himself, the Frankapan family, the Kurjakovićeš of Krbava and the emissaries of King Ferdinand of Naples, Venice and the pope, which Nicholas must have approached too.³²⁵ It is possible that Nicholas found out about these actions and approached the noblemen through his own connection to the Kurjakovićeš, namely one of his daughters, Catherine (Katalin), who was married to Ivan Kurjakovićeš.³²⁶ Anyhow, it is clear that Nicholas attempted and apparently succeeded in joining this "defensive league."

Venice once more returned to their answer to Nicholas's emissary the very next year, when the senate of the republic used Nicholas's role in the anti-Ottoman struggles to refuse to

³²³ On Vlatko's and Ivan's activities in this period see Atanasovski, *Пад Херцеговине*; Ćirković, *Херцег Стефан Вукчић-Косача и његово доба* [Herzeg Stephen Vukčić-Kosača and his time] (Belgrade: Naučno delo, 1964); idem, *The Serbs*, 108-110; John V. A. Fine, Jr., *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 532-534, 556-561, 599-604; Senad Mičijević, "Od Kosača do Hercegovića" [From the Kosačas to the Hercegovićes], in *Herceg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača i njegovo doba* (Mostar: BZK Preporod-Gradsko društvo Mostar, 2005), 155-178; Enes Pelidija, "O odnosima Osmanlija i Kosača u XV stoljeću" [On the relations of the Ottomans and the Kosača family in the 15th century], in *Herceg Stjepan Vukčić Kosača i njegovo doba* (Mostar: BZK Preporod-Gradsko društvo Mostar, 2005), 49-60.

³²⁴ Josip Florschütz, "Stridon i Zrin" [Stridon and Zrin], *Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu* 6 (1902): 92; Klaić, *Povijesti Hrvata*, vol. 4, 92; Kukuljević-Sakcinski, *Zrin grad i njegovi gospodari* [Zrin and its owners] (Zagreb: Narodne novine, 1883), 46-47; Šime Ljubić, *Opis jugoslavenskih novaca* [The description of Yugoslavian money] (Zagreb: Dragutin Albrecht, 1875), 230.

³²⁵ Klaić, *Povijesti Hrvata*, vol. 4, 92; Kukuljević-Sakcinski, *Zrin*, 46.

³²⁶ Wertner, "Nikolaus von Ilok," 263. This remains only a possibility as the exact date of their wedding, which might have taken place sometime after 1472, is not known.

help *herzeg* Vlatko by suggesting to turn to Nicholas and the newly appointed despot of Serbia, Vuk Grgurević, both of whom “non minore ardent desiderio recuperandorum statuum suorum.”³²⁷ The senate certainly based this opinion on the recent requests sent by Nicholas merely a month before.

Therefore, these several sources certainly do suggest that Nicholas put an effort in his either offensive or defensive attitude towards the Ottoman-occupied territories of the Kingdom of Bosnia. Even more importantly, the sources reveal that Nicholas devised a pattern, i.e. immediately after assuming the kingship, he started his collaboration with the nobility involved in the conflicts with the Ottomans, the nobility whose estates, together with his kingdom, surrounded the Ottoman territory either in Bosnia or further to the southeast. By the end of 1472 he contacted Ragusa, *herzeg* Vlatko, Ivan Crnojević and the members of the “league” and used their previous involvement in the conflicts to join their requests sent to Venice. It is also important to note that Gallus de Gaara, Nicholas’s ambassador to Ragusa and probably to Vlatko and Ivan, had been in the service of none other than the *herzeg* earlier.³²⁸ Thus, by this time Nicholas had either allies in or at least some kind of relation with Zeta, Ragusa, Hercegovina and Croatia, the zone surrounding the Ottoman territory. One has to bear in mind that he still held the offices of the ban of Croatia and Slavonia and controlled the largest portion of that zone.

Despite these early efforts, however, the lack of any sources indicating Nicholas’s further anti-Ottoman actions suggests that he completely abandoned any kind of offensive policy immediately after 1473. Modern historians concur that Nicholas did not achieve much during the first two years of his reign and that Matthias must have relieved him of the honors

³²⁷ Janko Šafárik, *Acta archivi Veneti spectantia ad historiam Serborum et reliquorum Slavorum meridionalium*, vol. 1 (Belgrade, 1860), 543-545, doc. 514. See also: [Ivan Božić] Иван Божић, “Млечани према наследницима херцега Стевана” [The Venetians towards the successors of *herzeg* Stephen], *Zbornik Filozofskog fakulteta u Beogradu* 6 (1962): 122.

³²⁸ Atanasovski, *Пад Херцеговине*, 52, 87, 151.

of ban on account of his failure to meet Matthias's "wishes."³²⁹ However, such a simple claim lacking any references does not suffice, so Nicholas's passivity after 1473 needs further analysis.

Firstly, it has to be pointed out that Nicholas was almost in his sixties when he acquired the kingship, and was certainly sixty-odd years old or even older later in the 1470s, as noted by Caleffini who mentions Nicholas's age saying that the king was already seventy in 1475.³³⁰ The chronicler also notes another important information in his entry where he indicates that Nicholas was carried into the city on some kind of litter (*sbara*) by four horses since he was seventy, gouty and ill.³³¹ As it suits the occasion, Nicholas himself notes in his testament from 1471 that his body is ill, but his soul intact,³³² and he sought help in the miracles of John of Capistrano for an ulcer between his *scapulae*.³³³ Albeit much later than 1473, Bonfini also reports that Matthias often talked about his visit to Nicholas and how he rubbed the toes of the old and sick king.³³⁴ Furthermore, while reporting to a much younger Nicholas on the actions of the Long Campaign of 1443/1444, John Hunyadi mentions that Nicholas's soldiers are fighting and are healthy and happy, and that he wishes Nicholas to join him since it is said that he feels better and is recovering from illness.³³⁵ It seems then, that Nicholas was often ill, not only in his older age.

The almost intimate relationship of the two kings which was apparent from the early 1460s, as was discussed in the previous chapter, and was expressed by both the bestowal, Matthias's visits, Nicholas's role in Matthias's and Beatrix's wedding ceremony where he

³²⁹ Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 53.

³³⁰ Caleffini, *Croniche*, 102. Caleffini notes that Nicholas "era vecchio di anni 70."

³³¹ Ibid. The full entry: "*Et se faceva portare suso una sbarra cum quatro cavali, perché era vecchio di anni 70, et gotoso et amaladizo.*"

³³² MNL OL, DL 17162; Andrić, "'Oporuka,'" 47.

³³³ Andrić, "'Čudesna,'" 210, 285.

³³⁴ Bonfini, *Rerum Ungaricarum*, 494.

³³⁵ György Fejér, *Genus, incunabula et virtus*, 55-58.

stood on the king's right side, held the scepter and the orb and has crowned the queen together with the bishop of Veszprém and the palatine,³³⁶ contradicts any possibility of Matthias's personal fear and dissatisfaction with a "dangerous magnate" Nicholas, as was suggested by Kubinyi.³³⁷ If anything, the two kings seem to have had an intimate, cooperative and peaceful relationship, and Matthias himself considered Nicholas to be one of the most important noblemen in the Kingdom of Hungary, at least equal to the palatine. It only contributes to the claims on the pair's collaboration stated above.

It is, however, possible that by 1473 Nicholas had fulfilled the task given to him by the bestowal, the tool with which Matthias settled the defense-related disputes with the rebellious nobility in 1471, as well that the old and sick king decided to quit the offices of ban together with Matthias. It is also possible that he himself saw his disability to bear with the exhausting everyday task of administrating the defense as well as the usual ban's administrative tasks in such a vast territory, a disability which faced Matthias's eager will to firmly organize the defense of the kingdom, especially since the peace treaty between him and the Ottomans was not extended in 1473 and the Ottoman incursions intensified.³³⁸ Nicholas, then, settled for ruling the Kingdom of Bosnia only, together with his private estates and the estates belonging to the priory of Vrana, a decision he must have partaken in under the pressure of his own disability and the king's wishes. Anyhow, I doubt that the dismissal of 1473 was solely Matthias's decision and completely disagree with the claim that it had to do with Matthias's fear of an untrustworthy nobleman. Nicholas was for a long time one of his closest allies.

Judging from the extant sources, apart from the ones related to Jajce and the castellans discussed above, Nicholas mainly focused on his estates within the boundaries of the Kingdom

³³⁶ Berzeviczy, *Beatrix királyné*, 171-175; Reiszig, "Az Ujlaki-család," 58.

³³⁷ Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 53.

³³⁸ Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata*, vol. 4, 92-94.

of Hungary and the offices he still held there for the remainder of the 1470s.³³⁹ It is possible that his soldiers participated in Matthias's assault and capture of Šabac in 1476,³⁴⁰ but no sources indicate Nicholas's offensive or defensive activities against the Ottomans in Bosnia until his death in 1477. In the end, if the lack of sources indeed confirms a peaceful period from 1471 to 1477 in Nicholas's Bosnia, it was certainly secured by Matthias's own diplomacy and the peace treaty arranged between him and the Ottomans in 1465 and later in 1468.³⁴¹ Nevertheless, the lack of any information on possible clashes around Jajce or elsewhere in Nicholas's Bosnia even after 1473 suggests his well-organized defense, or even his own diplomatic efforts which were complemented by Matthias's actions.

The only possibility for a threat that could have endangered Nicholas's kingship after 1473 came from the activities of the Ottomans and their Bosnian policy, i.e. the Ottoman-appointed king of Bosnia, second of such a kind,³⁴² and not the war activities themselves. On July 3, 1476, Lupus Lukács (*Lucas*) compiled a letter sent to the Milanese duke in which he informed him about the political situation in Hungary and Bosnia.³⁴³ The central content of the letter focused on the newly appointed king of Bosnia, a man Lukács calls *Mathia Christianissimo*, who was appointed by the Ottomans, but sought help from King Matthias since he wanted to "legalize" his "Christian" rule over Bosnia with Matthias's recognition.³⁴⁴ The Ottomans have, however, found out about his intentions and initiated a military action, capturing six fortresses belonging to him and besieging the castle where he took refuge. Nevertheless, according to Lukács, Matthias did send the Archbishop of Kalocsa and Stephen

³³⁹ See MNL OL, DL 100848; MNL OL, DF 252094; MNL OL, DF 252053; Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 53.

³⁴⁰ Klaić, *Povijesti Hrvata*, vol. 4, 95-96; Kubinyi, "Pitanje bosanskog kraljevstva," 53.

³⁴¹ Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 307.

³⁴² On the Ottoman-appointed Bosnian kings see Ćirković, *Властела*, 123-131; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 378-380, 387-388.

³⁴³ Iván Nagy and Albert Nyáry, *Monumenta Hungariae historica: Mátyás király korából 1458-1490* [The period of King Matthias 1458-1490] (Budapest: MTA, 1877), 316-318, doc. 219.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 317.

Báthory, *Barone potente d'Ungheria*, to his aid, and by the time the letter was being written, they successfully relieved the *Christianissimo* of his besiegers.³⁴⁵ Even though Matthias's help to a different nobleman designated as the king of Bosnia, later identified as Matija Vojsalić in scholarship,³⁴⁶ might seem as a threat to Nicholas's own kingship, Lukács himself offers an insight into this possibility in the continuation of the letter. He mentions that it is thought that the Ottomans have made a Christian the king of Bosnia as an opposition to Nicholas, and because they thought they would more easily subjugate the rest of Bosnia, i.e. the part under the Nicholas's rule, if they elected a Christian king.³⁴⁷ However, the explanation lies in Lukács's own information that “una parte della Bosna data per il Re mio a Nicolo suo Vajvoda, et havendolo il Re mio facto Re de Bosna.”³⁴⁸ Such an information confirms that that *part* of Bosnia was given to Nicholas and that there was no possibility for Vojsalić to claim rule in that *part* of Bosnia. However, the other, occupied *part* of Bosnia still remained, and if any Matthias's plans pertaining to a possibility to confirm Vojsalić as the king ever existed, they were certainly focused on the occupied part of Bosnia or merely on making a strong ally within the Bosnian nobility rebelling against the Ottoman rule. The former could have endangered Nicholas's eventual plans on retaking the occupied territory of Bosnia, but that the fact that no sources confirm any further actions related to Vojsalić and that he practically disappeared after 1476 suggest that no further dangers threatened Nicholas's kingship, if any ever existed.

Nicholas's remaining major activities pertain to his efforts to improve the Observants' position in Hungary and probably in Bosnia during his visit to Pope Sixtus IV while on pilgrimage to Rome during the Jubilee Year of 1475.³⁴⁹ While in Rome, Nicholas beseeched

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 317-318.

³⁴⁶ See Ćirković, *Властела*, 126-129; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 387.

³⁴⁷ Nagy and Nyáry, *Monumenta*, 318, doc. 219.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Nicholas's travel to Rome has been researched in detail by other authors, so I will not deal with it here. See the most important works in the topic: Banfi, “Romei ungheresi del Giubileo del 1475,” 499-512; Fedeles, “Bosniae... rex... apostolorum limina visit.”, 99-117.

the pope to confirm all the privileges given to them by previous popes, which he indeed does.³⁵⁰ Even though the document mentions exclusively “in Regno Hungariae,” Nicholas must have acted on behalf of the Observants in Bosnia as well for several reasons. Firstly, he was a strong supporter of the Observant movement, a role firmly connected to the cult of John of Capistran as well as to his personal efforts invested in the process of canonization of one of the “pillars of Observance” whose resting place was located in Ilok.³⁵¹ Secondly, the rising cult of John of Capistran and the related pilgrimages contributed to the economic rise of Ilok, a result whose premises implied the work of the Observants on promoting the cult, possibly even in Bosnia.³⁵² Finally, the Hungarian Observant movement was from its beginnings tightly related to the Bosnian vicary, and the jurisdictions of the two observant vicaries overlapped in the territory of the Drava-Sava interamnum after their official division in 1447.³⁵³ Thus, Nicholas probably not only supported the Observants of the Hungarian vicary where the custody of Ilok belonged, but has supported the Observants in the Kingdom of Hungary, whatever this may have implied, as well as the activities of the Observants in his part of Bosnia.

The remaining sources pertaining to Nicholas’s travel to Rome are an important contribution to the evaluation of his kingship. These, together with the written and visual sources not yet mentioned in the thesis, as well as the contextualization of the sources already mentioned, will be used in the following and final chapter, the conclusion whose goal is to finally define Nicholas’s kingship and to summon the new findings to establish a different and

³⁵⁰ Theiner, *Vetera monumenta*, 443-444, doc. 629.

³⁵¹ See Andrić, *Čudesas*, 139-174; Gábor Klaniczay, “Matthias and the Saints,” in *Matthias Rex 1458-1490: Hungary at the Dawn of the Renaissance*, 3-4, accessed May 1, 2016, <http://renaissance.elte.hu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Gabor-Klaniczay-Matthias-and-the-Saints.pdf>.

³⁵² On the economic benefits the cult implied as well as the territorial spread of the cult see Andrić, *Čudesas*, 267-281; Erik Fügedi, “Kapisztránói János csodái: A jegyzőkönyvek társadalomtörténeti tanulságai” [The miracles of John of Capistrano: The lists of miracles as sources for the social history], *Századok* 111 (1977): 858-894.

³⁵³ Andrić, *Čudesas*, 26-27.

well-argued description of the kingship, different from that found in the unconvincing existing historiography.

Final Remarks

As argued in this thesis, Nicholas's kingship was a product of several simultaneous factors which gradually developed into favorable preconditions for the bestowal of the kingship in the moment most appropriate for several participants of the act itself; Nicholas, Matthias and the rebellious nobility. All three of them had their own motivations for desiring and allowing the bestowal and the kingship to happen, ranging from personal interests and the defense of the Realm, to creating allies and the defense of the private estates. Likewise, all three influenced the character Nicholas's kingship both by practical measures of administration and by granting the authority through the election and subsequent coronation.

Nevertheless, if we are to qualify Nicholas's kingship as a *true* reign over a *true* Kingdom, whatever it may mean, then we have to set a pattern, a set of theoretical criteria which should be juxtaposed to Nicholas's practical actions within the Kingdom of Bosnia, both the *invisible* and *visible* elements, and evaluate them by comparison to describe the kingship. If we are to set such criteria, we have to return once more to the question of the *Kingdom* of Bosnia, i.e. the territorial and political basis which allowed for Nicholas's kingship to take place. As was demonstrated earlier,³⁵⁴ the land that was given to Nicholas to rule it in 1471 never lost its regnal identity, and was continued to be recognized as *regnum Bosnae* after Matthias's actions from 1463/1464. This identity certainly implied all the traditional judicial, customary, territorial and administrative preconditions for the establishment of the "community of realm" and the division of authorities among its "corporations" generally concentrated in the *regnum/ország/rusag*.³⁵⁵ Furthermore, as was shown earlier, the Bosnian kingdom, even

³⁵⁴ See the Chapter 2 on the establishment of the territorial basis.

³⁵⁵ See Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 250-331; also Lovrenović, "Bosanski rusag i sveta krana bosanska" [The Bosnian *rusag* and the holy crown of Bosnia], *Bosna Franciscana* 19 (2003), 79-106.

though it lost its immediate king, never “disappeared” after 1463 as some modern historians claim, but continued to exist under the intensified Hungarian control, i.e. under the administration of its ultimate ruler, the bearer of the Holy Crown of Hungary. The sources presented above show that even the Hungarian authorities never missed to identify Bosnia as *regnum*, that the “banate of Bosnia/Jajce” is a historiographical construct and that such banate(s) never existed in the period from 1464 to 1477 (and possibly even afterwards). Even though Bosnia lost its immediate king from the Kotromanić dynasty, other traditional institutions, including the Hungarian suzerainty, conserved its regnal identity. No alterations were needed for the bestowal of 1471, but Nicholas was given an existing kingdom.

The second layer of this evaluation implies the qualification of the kingship itself, i.e. its legal basis, recognition, practical administrative actions and other characteristics of a medieval kingship, a group of features itself immensely varied. It has been argued previously³⁵⁶ that the legalization of Nicholas’s kingship came primarily from the two important sources: the election and the approval by the Hungarian diet as the representative institution of the Hungarian *regnum/ország*, and the historical right of the Crown of Hungary to rule over Bosnia. From the Hungarian vantage point, the Kingdom of Bosnia still existed, but was merely partitioned after 1463 and partly occupied by the Ottomans. The disappearance of the Kotromanić dynasty meant merely a change of the ruling dynasty whose authority itself was anyway granted by the suzerainty of the Hungarian king. Such a view was especially strong during the reign of Matthias Corvinus for the reasons discussed above. Thus, the Hungarian diet and the Hungarian king had every right to choose and elect the king of Bosnia, a land which belonged to the lands of the Holy Crown. As far as they were concerned, Nicholas’s rule was completely justified and legal, regardless of the will of the Bosnian nobility.

³⁵⁶ See Chapter 3, the section on authority.

In addition, Nicholas was both locally and “internationally” recognized as the *rex Bosnae*. This is not only clear from the sources produced by the local, either royal, Nicholas’s or other chanceries, but from the sources pertaining to the authorities outside the Kingdom of Hungary as well. As mentioned above, Ragusan institutions recognized him as the *Re de Bosina* and *Rex Bosnae* both in their letters to Ferdinand of Naples and their entries pertaining to the discussions in the senate,³⁵⁷ and Lukács does the same in his letter to the duke of Milan.³⁵⁸ The same could be said about the source coming from Austria in the same period, which mentions the date of the coronation.³⁵⁹ In 1475, Caleffini and the Ferrarese authorities identify the visiting pilgrim as the *Re de Bossina* and welcome him in the city with high honors as befits a royal visitor.³⁶⁰

Most importantly, even though it is not known whether Nicholas was crowned by any Hungarian or other ecclesiastical authorities, he was recognized even by Pope Sixtus IV as his “filius Nicolaus Rex Bosnae several times,”³⁶¹ as well as by others who witnessed the arrival of the noble pilgrims in Rome in 1475 and identified him as the king of Bosnia.³⁶² In the end, Nicholas’s visit was marked on a fresco in the Ospedale di Santo Spirito in Sassia, where he is depicted kneeling before the pope with an original inscription identifying him as “Bossinae... Rex ac Valachiae, licet aetate gravis senioque confectus,” i.e. as the old king burdened by age and exhausted by infirmity.³⁶³ Even though the inscription was slightly changed in 1650, the identification remained the same.³⁶⁴ After leaving Rome, Nicholas visited Renaissance Florence as well, where he was certainly greeted with the same honors as in Ferrara since non

³⁵⁷ DAD, Cons. Rog., 21, 277r, 279v; Makušev, *Monumenta historica, Monumenta Ragusina*, 95-96, doc. 10

³⁵⁸ Nagy and Nyáry, *Monumenta*, 316-318, doc. 219.

³⁵⁹ Höfler, “Fränkische studien IV,” 76-77, doc. 60.

³⁶⁰ Caleffini, *Croniche*, 102-103, 104.

³⁶¹ Theiner, *Vetera monumenta*, 444, doc. 629, 447, doc. 632.

³⁶² Sigismondo dei Conti, *Le storie de’ suoi tempi* [The stories of his time], vol. 1, bk. 5 (Rome: 1883), 205, Vol. 2, Lib. 9, 17; Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, vol. 4 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1900), 281-282.

³⁶³ Banfi, “Romei ungheresi del Giubileo del 1475,” 509.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

other than Giorgio Vasari himself mentions that in 1531 Fra Giovanni Montorsoli renewed the damaged wax figures of Pope Leo, Pope Clement and the *Re di Bossina*, among others, which were placed earlier in the Basilica della Santissima Annunziata belonging to the Servite order.³⁶⁵

Therefore, even though it is not possible to ascertain whether Nicholas was indeed crowned under the church's approval and by any of the local ecclesiastical authorities, the pope's subtle recognition of Nicholas's royal legality is implied not only in the pope's identification of Nicholas as *Rex Bosnae* but also in their joint legal actions. The abovementioned confirmation of rights of the Observant order in Hungary is a result of their interaction, a legal action which is certainly based on the legality of Nicholas's title and rule as recognized by the pope.

In connection to the pope's recognition is Nicholas's title itself, *dei gratia rex Bosnae*. It was already argued that the changes in Nicholas's official intitulation between 1471 and 1472 indicate that Nicholas was indeed crowned.³⁶⁶ Furthermore, the coronation and the title itself, even though it has by that time become standard, contains important information on the legality, the characteristics and the range of Nicholas's rule. It is highly improbable that the title was used by Nicholas and that this change occurred between the time before and after May 1472 unless he was indeed granted the "divine favor" and the symbolic authority stemming from none other than God, which was probably bestowed upon him by unction, a part of the ceremony.³⁶⁷

It is clear from the sources discussed in the previous chapter that, in practice, Nicholas indeed controlled and ruled the territory of Bosnia given to him by the bestowal. He did not

³⁶⁵ Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori et architettori* [The lives of the most excellent painters, sculptors and architects] (Florence: 1568), 611.

³⁶⁶ See the section "The Preconditions of Rule".

³⁶⁷ Fügedi, "Coronation in Medieval Hungary," 159-189; Ullman, *Principles of Government*, 117-137.

only delegate his authority to office-holders, palatine, castellans and provisors, but has possibly even freely collected the taxes in his kingdom which was unthreatened by the Ottomans for reasons discussed earlier. In addition, there is one more, hitherto undiscussed, element of Nicholas's rule that is highly relevant in the evaluation of his autonomy: coinage. As was shown by previous scholarship, Nicholas minted his own silver denars in the period of his reign which were based on the coins of Antonio II Panciera and Louis of Teck, the patriarchs of Aquileia, and on the coins of King Matthias, the widespread and known types of the period.³⁶⁸ Furthermore, scholarship has shown that he not only minted the coins, but also that they were indeed used in the territory of the Kingdom of Bosnia.³⁶⁹ However, even though Nicholas's minting activities may seem extremely important in arguing his "monetary autonomy" which contributed to the autonomy of the kingdom, one has to bear in mind that even the bans of Slavonia enjoyed the right of minting their own coins, an activity rooted in the rights of the kingdom.³⁷⁰ Nevertheless, even though mintage does not represent the ultimate sign of autonomy, it certainly does indicate a certain level of autonomy, high enough to motivate Nicholas to attempt even this form of separation from the Kingdom of Hungary. Similarly important is the fact that the coins were certainly used, either actively or passively, in the process of Nicholas's royal self-identification and as a token of both his practical and symbolic royal prerogatives, *visible* and *invisible* alike. The production and dissemination of the coins implied the same dissemination of Nicholas's royal identity markers throughout the kingdom and the confirmation of his royal status as well as his practical rule. They "signified the identity and power."³⁷¹

³⁶⁸ Korčmaroš, "Nepoznat dinar Nikole Iločkog," 47-50; Ljubić, *Opis jugoslavenskih novaca*, 229-230; Rengjeo, "Novci Nikole Iločkog," 98-111.

³⁶⁹ Ivo Bojanovski, "Einige Ergebnisse in der Erforschung Mittelalterlicher Burgen in Bosnien mit besonderer Beachtung der Transformation der Burgen in Artilleriefestungen," *Balcanoslavica* 7 (1978): 75, 82; Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti*, 383.

³⁷⁰ See: Zsoldos, "Hrvatska i Slavonija," 22-23.

³⁷¹ Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, "Medieval Identity: A Sign and a Concept," in *Medieval Coins and Seals: Constructing Identity, Signifying Power*, ed. Susan Solway (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 23-63.

Other important symbols which signified Nicholas's firmly constructed royal identity are depicted on his tombstone. Here Nicholas is depicted holding the orb, the ultimate royal insignia, as well as lying next to the coat-of-arms depicting the three crowns and symbolizing the Kingdom of Bosnia.³⁷² It is quite clear, then, that these markers, together with the intitulations, constructed the identity Nicholas completely subscribed to and used for the last six years of his life. He was known to both himself and to others as Nicholas, the king of Bosnia, and it is shown here that he actively embraced and propagated the identity which was such an intensive part of his *selfness*. This identity was not only active during his life, as Nicholas was continued to be regarded as the king even after his death—so much so that even his son Lawrence was often designated as *filius Nicolai Regis Bosnae*.³⁷³ Eventually, Lawrence's own tombstone displays the same Bosnian coat-of-arms as he was *dux Bosnae*, an issue still awaiting detailed analysis.³⁷⁴

Finally, even though Nicholas assumed the kingship and completely embraced the royal identity, even though he effectively controlled the territory of his kingdom of Bosnia and was recognized both locally and “internationally” as king by chroniclers, dukes, kings and the ope, the afterlife of his kingdom sheds further light on the features of his kingship. Nicholas was the last king of the Kingdom of Bosnia in any of its forms, and almost five decades after his death the complete territory of his kingdom would be conquered by the Ottomans. His son never managed to acquire the same title and the control over Bosnia was returned into the hands of King Matthias. Such an afterlife confirms that Nicholas's kingship was an exception which resulted from the specific context of the period characterized by his personal rise to prominence, his ambition, relationship with the both Hunyadis, as well as the specific

³⁷² Thallóczy, “Az Ujlakyak síremlékei” [The tombs of the Ujlakis], *Archaeológiai értesítő* 9 (1889): 1-8. See also Radić, “Prilozi rasvjetljavanju heraldičke ostavštine iločkih knezova 15. i 16. stoljeća” [Contributions to the research of the heraldic legacy of the dukes of Ilok], *Osječki zbornik* 29 (2010): 143.

³⁷³ See, for example: MNL OL, DF 252072.

³⁷⁴ Radić, “Prilozi,” 144; Thallóczy, “Az Ujlakyak síremlékei” 1-8.

circumstances of Matthias's struggle for the throne and against the rebellious nobility in 1471. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Nicholas has indeed freely ruled his kingdom on a territory much larger than previous scholarship assumed. He was a Hungarian king of Bosnia appointed and elected by the Hungarian *regnum*, and his kingdom was exclusively reserved for him. Although King Matthias's planned no future for this kingdom, for a brief moment Nicholas was indeed the true *ruler* of the Kingdom of Bosnia, an honor which was the result of a decade-long agenda.

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Appendices

Figure 1 - Map of Nicholas's Kingdom of Bosnia in 1471. Davor Salihović.

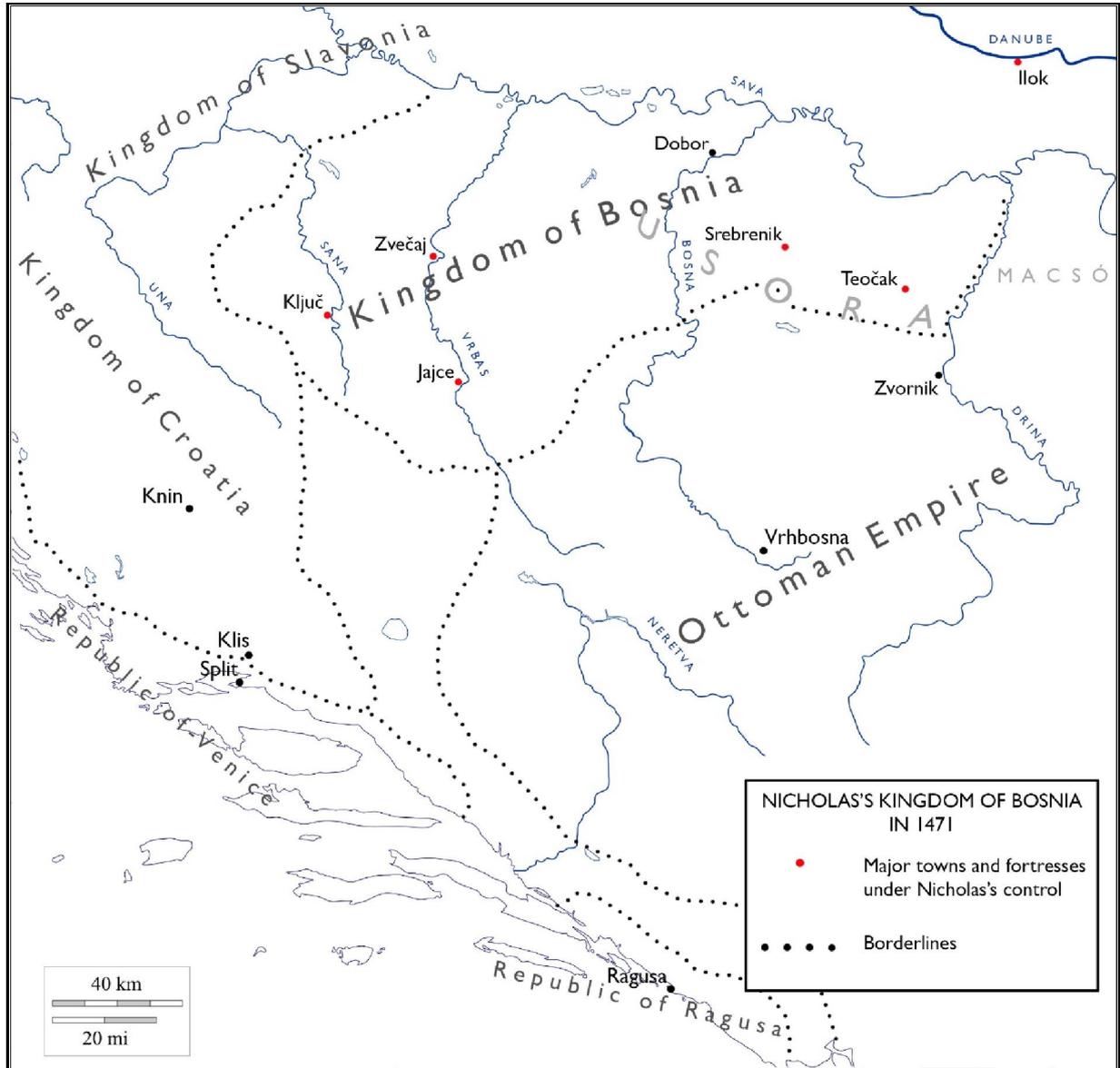


Figure 2 - Map of the territory controlled by Nicholas as the ban of Slavonia and Croatia, and the King of Bosnia 1471-1473 (1477). Davor Salihović.

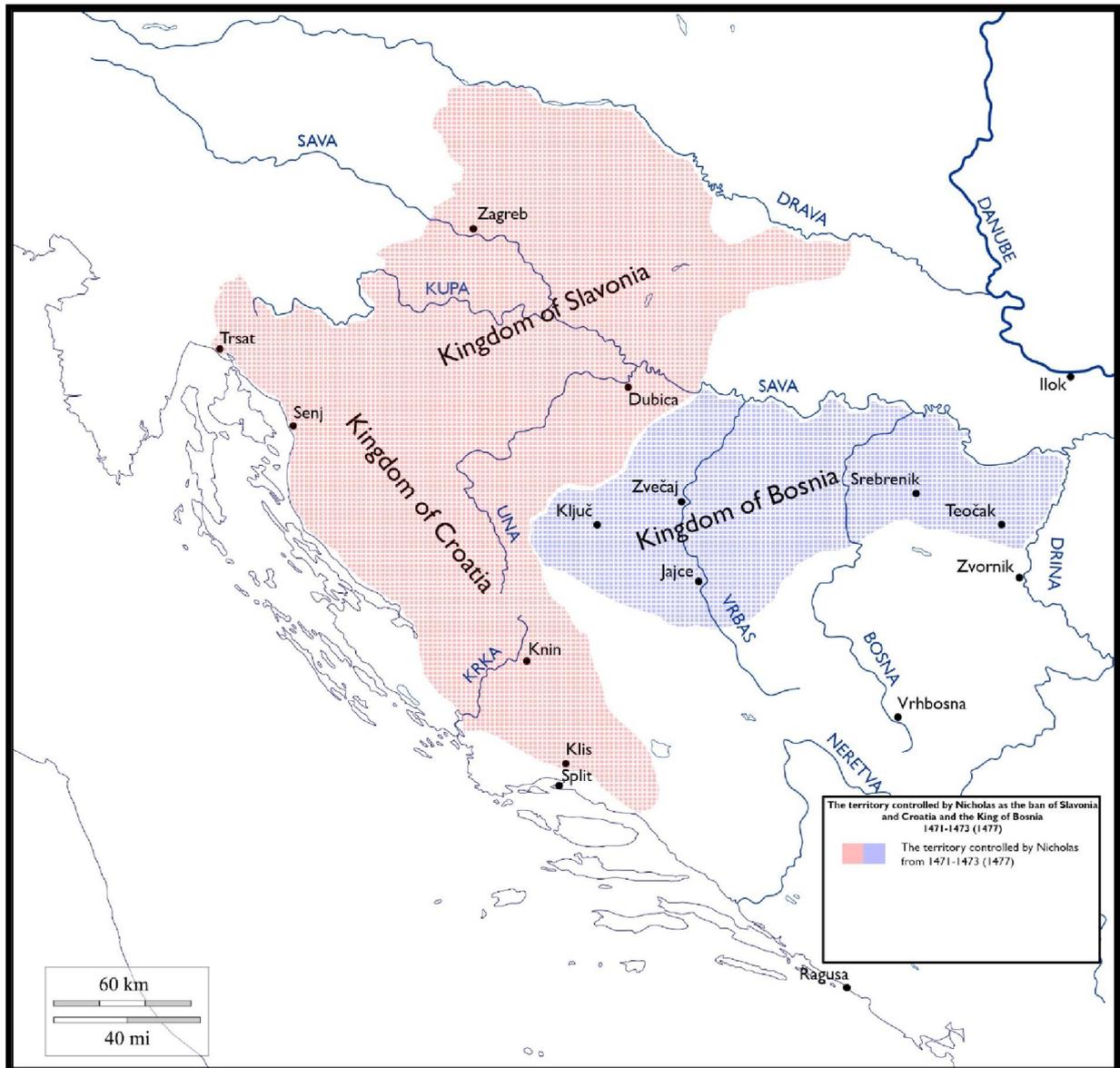


Figure 3 – Gazetteer of the most important fortresses and towns mentioned above. Davor Salihović

Modern toponym	Hungarian modern version	Medieval version (found in the sources)	Absolute location
?	?	Apayoch	?
Ilok	Újlak	Illoch/Vylak/Wylak	45° 13' N / 19° 22' E
Jajce	Jajca	Jajza/Jajcza	44° 20' N / 17° 16' E
Ključ	/ (Kljucs)	Clue/Cluz/Kljuc/Ključ	44° 32' N / 16° 46' E
Srebrenik	Szerbernik	Srebrnik/Zrebernek	44° 42' N / 18° 29' E
Teočak	Telcsák	Thelchak	44° 36' N / 18° 59' E
Zvečaj	/ (Zvecsáj)	Zvečai	~ 44° 40' N / 17° 9' E
Zvornik	Zvornik	Zvonik/Zwonnyk/Zwoynyk	44° 23' N / 19° 6' E

Figure 4 - The tombstone of Nicholas of Ilok depicting the coat-of-arms of Bosnia and the coat-of-arms of the family. Image reproduced from Mladen Radić, “Prilozi rasvjetljavanju heraldičke ostavštine iločkih knezova 15. i 16. stoljeća“ [Contributions to the research of the heraldic legacy of the dukes of Ilok], *Osječki zbornik* 29 (2010): 136.



Figure 5 - The fresco depicting King Nicholas before Sixtus IV. Image reproduced from Florio Banfi, “Romei ungheresi del Giubileo del 1475: Niccoló Ujlaki Re di Bosnia in un affresco nell’Ospedale di Santo Spirito dell’Urbe” [Hungarian pilgrims of the 1475 Jubilee: Nicholas of Ilok, king of Bosnia, in the fresco in the Hospice of Santo Spirito dell’Urbe], *Corvina – Rassegna Italo-Ungherese* 3 (1941): 507.

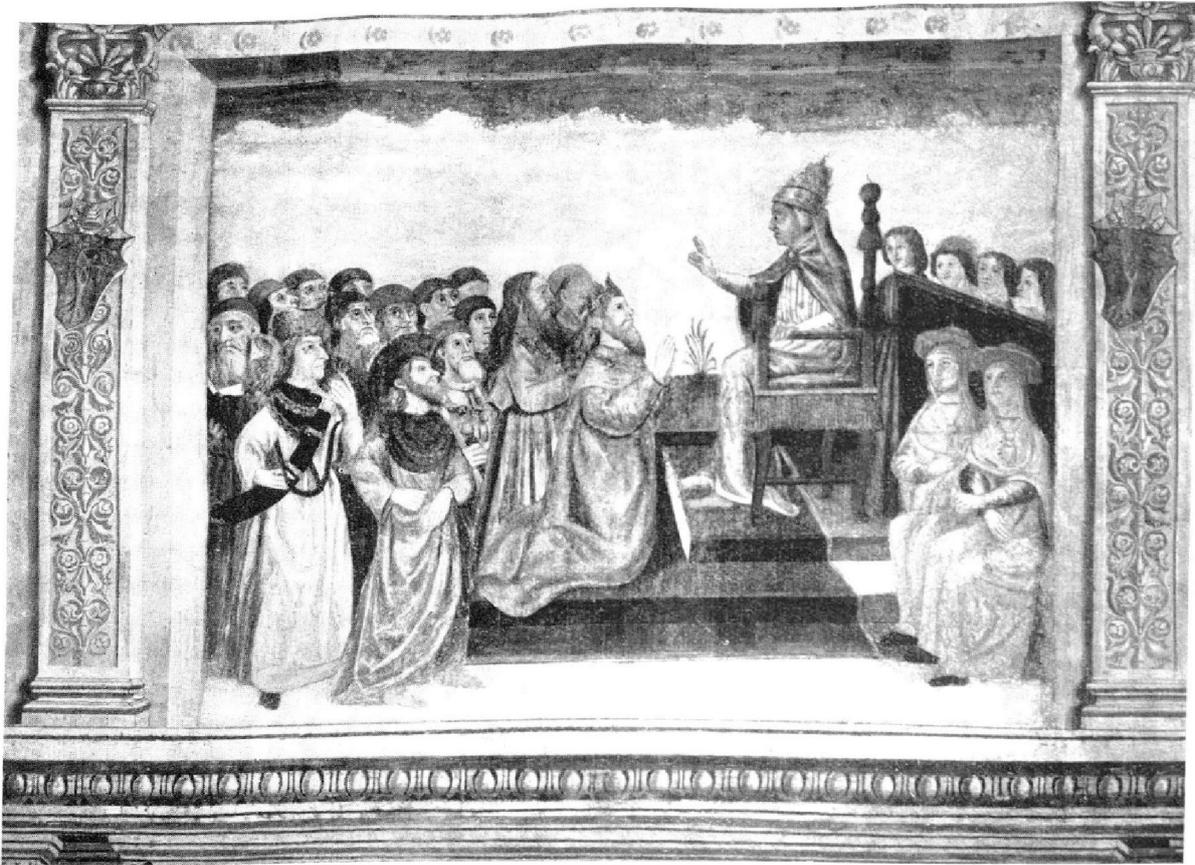


Figure 6 - An example of Nicholas's official intitulation after May 1472 (Nos Nicolaus dei gratia Rex Bozne). Detail from MNL OL, DL 100822.

08 Nicolaus dei Gratia Rex Bozne

Figure 7 - Genealogical table of the Újlaki family (members not closely related to Nicholas are omitted). Davor Salihović

