

Marija Karbić, *Plemićki rod Borića bana* [The Noble Kindred of Ban Borić] (Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest. Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2013)



Summary

The book discusses the history of a noble kindred from the area of present-day Slavonia, the noble kindred named after Ban Borić. While working on the book, the results and methodology of both Croatian and other historians, in the first place Hungarian ones, as well as results of archaeology, history of art and auxiliary disciplines (genealogy, heraldry, archontology, historical topography), were used.

The book covers the period from the appearance of the Ban Borić kindred in the sources to the fall of Slavonia under Ottoman rule, when the kindred lost its hereditary lands. Besides the history of that noble kindred, and the history of families and the agency of particular individuals belonging to them, research attention is accorded also to the functioning and structure of the kindred itself.

The first, introductory, chapter gives a survey of sources used for making this study and a review of the main trends and previous results of scholarship in researching medieval nobility. In more detail, it surveys the previous works dealing with the nobility in the area of present-day Slavonia, particularly those regarding the Ban Borić kindred and families descending from it.

The second chapter, with the title “History of the Ban Borić noble kindred from the appearance in the sources to the fall of Slavonia under Ottoman rule,” starts with a presentation of the data currently known on the ancestor of the kindred, Ban Borić. It concludes that Borić most probably originated from Požega County, where later there were situated the main estates of his descendants, and that he performed the function of the ban of Bosnia as vassal of the king of Hungary. The chapter then follows the history of the noble kindred. It emphasises the point that even though the kindred’s ancestor Ban Borić certainly belonged to the aristocracy, for most of the period under research the kindred belonged to the local nobility of the Požega County and that as late as the end of the fifteenth century some of its members managed to become magnates of the Kingdom of Hungary. The last part of the chapter is dedicated specifically to those individuals, the prior of Vrana Bartholomew Berislavić of Grabarje and his relatives, Ban Francis of Jajce and the Despots John and Stephen of Serbia, and to the family they all belonged to, and also to another family descending from the Ban Borić kindred, the Dessewffy of Cernik. The members of this family started to play a more important role at the beginning of the sixteenth century, in the period immediately preceding the fall of those areas under Ottoman rule.

The third chapter, "The structure of the noble kindred and its functioning," is divided into several sections. The first of them contains a reconstruction, as far as it was possible, of the genealogy of the kindred, its branches, and the families originating from it. Afterwards, there is an account of terminology used for the noble kindred and kinship ties in the sources, and of the changes that happened over time in its structure and functioning. In the first phase, one that lasted until the first half of the fourteenth century, the members of the kindred defined themselves as *de genere Borich bani*, and later started to style themselves with the preposition *de* and the name of the seat of their branch of the kindred (e.g. *de Grabaria*, *de Chernuk*), while in the third phase, which started at the end of the fifteenth century, several families separated themselves from the kindred and started to style themselves according to the name of the ancestor of their own branch, regardless of whether this was based on his name or on the function of his office (e.g. Berislavići from Berislav, Dessewffy from Dezső, or Ispanffy from the office held by their ancestor Andrew, son of Dezislav of Cernik, the *vicecomes* of the county of Požega in 1421). It appears that these changes in the manner of self-identification were reflections of deeper changes, and that in the first phase the basis of the connection between kinsmen was a relationship based on kinship, in the second it was common ownership over estates, and in the third, probably because of the increasing pressure of the Ottomans and the danger of losing estates, blood relations were again preferred. After that, the chapter discusses the issue of the existence or non-existence of a leading person of the kindred, and of the position of the captain of the Ban Borić kindred and his role.

The next section deals with relations within the kindred, cooperation, and common actions, but also with conflicts among the kinsmen, issues of paternal power, and the position and role of women. Events and examples taken from lives of the members of the kindred are then examined in relation to the legal framework that existed regarding such specific issues. Following the discussion of the position of women, there continues a discussion of the marital strategies of the members of the kindred. It is emphasised that the choice of marital partner for members of certain families is a good indicator of the economic and social status of that family, and its political connections and temporary interests, and that this is the case also with the data, even though only scarce, regarding the marital connections of the members of the Ban Borić kindred. Name-giving patterns also may provide a lot of information about the structure of a kindred and relations within it, but also about the society in general, which is also confirmed by the analysis of names of the members of this kindred. It is established that there is no rigid system for inheriting names, even though there are cases testifying to the transfer of names through generations, both in the direct descending line and indirectly from uncles to nephews. In cases when a name was inherited in the direct line, it served to preserve the memory of the ancestors, while the taking of names from uncles pointed to the existence of the sentiment of unity between living members of the kindred. It should be mentioned that in certain branches of the kindred, it is possible to speak about the existence of so-called leading names.

On the symbolic level, a kindred's coat-of-arms had great importance, and this issue is in the centre of interest of the last section of this chapter. It is established that,

even though there are no examples of the coat-of-arms of the whole kindred from the period before its division, it is probable that it was identical to the one used later by the members of the family of the Berislavići of Grabarje. The simplicity of this coat-of-arms (a shield on which there were three obliquely positioned rods) testifies that it is old, and it is normal that families originating from a kindred would continue to use the kindred's coat-of-arms, and in that manner preserve consciousness of their origin and history.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the estates that belonged to the kindred and its members. Their position, their extent and the types of ownership over them are surveyed, and the system of inheritance and right of the first offer by the relatives, as well as divisions of property that occurred over time (starting from the first one for which there is no direct information in the sources, but which may be deduced from the situation in the later periods), are analysed. The influence of property relations on the changes of kinship structures is particularly thoroughly discussed.

In the chapter dedicated to the kindred's estates, there is also a section on the officials and retainers of the Berislavići. It establishes that they mostly came from the areas in which the Berislavići held their estates, and they belonged to the lesser and middling nobility. The length of their service varied, and there were cases when several people from the same family were in the service of the Berislavići.

A chapter is dedicated to the relationship between the kindred and its branches and individual members with the Church. It discusses their connections to different Church orders, members of the kindred entering the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and their patronage over the Benedictine abbey of Rudina. The chapter maintains that the founder of that abbey was Ban Borić or one of his immediate descendants.

The basic question that the book tries to answer is whether, and if so to what extent, the kindred functioned as a unity, and what were the elements influencing changes of the cohesion within the kindred, strengthening and weakening connections among its members. At the same time, it also discusses changes in the social importance of the kindred and its particular branches over time (from belonging to the top of the noble society to occupying the position of the middling nobility important on the local county level, and again back to its particular branches rising into the magnate stratum)